



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

May 14, 2019

Ms. Elizabeth G. Neally
Counsel for the Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District
Walsh, Gallegos, Trevino, Russo, & Kyle P.C.
P. O. Box 460606
San Antonio, Texas 78246

OR2019-12871

Dear Ms. Neally:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act (the "Act"), chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 765418.

The Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District (the "district"), which you represent, received a request for information pertaining to a specified incident. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.103 and 552.116 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note the requestor asks the district to answer questions. The Act does not require a governmental body to answer factual questions, conduct legal research, or create new information in responding to a request. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 563 at 8 (1990), 555 at 1-2 (1990). However, a governmental body must make a good-faith effort to relate a request to any responsive information that is within its possession or control. Open Records Decision Nos. 561 at 8-9 (1990), 555 at 102. We assume the district made a good-faith effort to do so.

Section 552.103 of the Government Code provides as follows:

- (a) Information is excepted from [required public disclosure] if it is information relating to litigation of a civil or criminal nature to which the

state or a political subdivision is or may be a party or to which an officer or employee of the state or a political subdivision, as a consequence of the person's office or employment, is or may be a party.

...

(c) Information relating to litigation involving a governmental body or an officer or employee of a governmental body is excepted from disclosure under Subsection (a) only if the litigation is pending or reasonably anticipated on the date that the requestor applies to the officer for public information for access to or duplication of the information.

Gov't Code § 552.103(a), (c). A governmental body has the burden of providing relevant facts and documents to show the section 552.103(a) exception is applicable in a particular situation. The test for meeting this burden is a showing (1) litigation was pending or reasonably anticipated on the date the governmental body received the request for information, and (2) the information at issue is related to that litigation. *Univ. of Tex. Law Sch. v. Tex. Legal Found.*, 958 S.W.2d 479, 481 (Tex. App.—Austin 1997, orig. proceeding); *Heard v. Houston Post Co.*, 684 S.W.2d 210, 212 (Tex. App.—Houston [1st Dist.] 1984, writ ref'd n.r.e.); Open Records Decision No. 551 at 4 (1990). A governmental body must meet both prongs of this test for information to be excepted under section 552.103(a).

You state, and provide documentation showing, a lawsuit styled *Miranda v. Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District*, Cause No. C-4899-17-I, was pending against the district in the 398th Judicial District Court of Hidalgo County, Texas, when it received the instant request for information. You further state, and provide documentation demonstrating, a lawsuit styled *Miranda v. Harlingen Consolidated Independent School District*, Cause No. 7:18-cv-00348, was pending in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Texas, McAllen Division, when the district received the instant request. You state the submitted information relates to the pending lawsuits. Based on your representations, the submitted documentation, and our review of the submitted information, we find litigation was pending when the district received this request for information, and the submitted information is related to the pending litigation for the purposes of section 552.103. Therefore, the district may withhold the submitted information under section 552.103(a) of the Government Code.¹

Generally, however, once information has been obtained by all parties to the litigation through discovery or otherwise, no section 552.103(a) interest exists with respect to that information. Open Records Decision Nos. 349 (1982), 320 (1982). Thus, information that has either been obtained from or provided to the opposing parties in the pending litigation

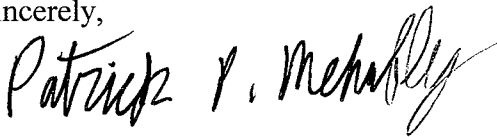
¹As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining argument against disclosure of this information.

is not excepted from disclosure under section 552.103(a), and it must be disclosed. Further, the applicability of section 552.103(a) ends once the litigation has been concluded. Attorney General Opinion MW-575 (1982); Open Records Decision No. 350 (1982).

This letter ruling is limited to the particular information at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other information or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at http://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl_ruling_info.shtml, or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Act may be directed to the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Patrick P. Mehaffy
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

PPM/jxd

Ref: ID# 765418

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)