



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

June 18, 2019

Ms. Lisa Ruiz
Paralegal
City of Dallas
1500 Marilla, 5DS
Dallas, Texas 75201

OR2019-16496

Dear Ms. Ruiz:

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# 771458 (C002827-032819).

The City of Dallas (the "city") received a request for communications between the city and staff of a specified entity and communications between city employees referencing that specified entity during a stated period of time. You state the city will release some information to the requestor. You state the city is withholding information pursuant to Open Records Decision No. 684 (2009).¹ You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.107 and 552.111 of the Government Code.² We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted representative sample of information.³

¹Open Records Decision No. 684 is a previous determination to all governmental bodies authorizing them to withhold certain categories of information without the necessity of seeking a decision from this office.

²Although the city also raises Texas Rule of Evidence 503, we note the proper exception to raise when asserting the attorney-client privilege in this instance is section 552.107 of the Government Code. *See* Open Records Decision No. 676 at 1 -2 (2002).

³We assume the "representative sample" of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the

Section 552.107(1) of the Government Code protects information coming within the attorney-client privilege. When asserting the attorney-client privilege, a governmental body has the burden of providing the necessary facts to demonstrate the elements of the privilege in order to withhold the information at issue. Open Records Decision No. 676 at 6-7 (2002). First, a governmental body must demonstrate that the information constitutes or documents a communication. *Id.* at 7. Second, the communication must have been made “to facilitate the rendition of professional legal services” to the client governmental body. TEX. R. EVID. 503(b)(1). The privilege does not apply when an attorney or representative is involved in some capacity other than that of providing or facilitating professional legal services to the client governmental body. *In re Tex. Farmers Ins. Exch.*, 990 S.W.2d 337, 340 (Tex. App.—Texarkana 1999, orig. proceeding) (attorney-client privilege does not apply if attorney acting in a capacity other than that of attorney). Governmental attorneys often act in capacities other than that of professional legal counsel, such as administrators, investigators, or managers. Thus, the mere fact that a communication involves an attorney for the government does not demonstrate this element. Third, the privilege applies only to communications between or among clients, client representatives, lawyers, and lawyer representatives. TEX. R. EVID. 503(b)(1)(A), (B), (C), (D), (E). Thus, a governmental body must inform this office of the identities and capacities of the individuals to whom each communication at issue has been made. Lastly, the attorney-client privilege applies only to a *confidential* communication, *id.* 503(b)(1), meaning it was “not intended to be disclosed to third persons other than those: (A) to whom disclosure is made to further the rendition of professional legal services to the client; or (B) reasonably necessary to transmit the communication.” *Id.* 503(a)(5). Whether a communication meets this definition depends on the *intent* of the parties involved at the time the information was communicated. *Osborne v. Johnson*, 954 S.W.2d 180, 184 (Tex. App.—Waco 1997, orig. proceeding). Moreover, because the client may elect to waive the privilege at any time, a governmental body must explain that the confidentiality of a communication has been maintained. Section 552.107(1) generally excepts an entire communication that is demonstrated to be protected by the attorney-client privilege unless otherwise waived by the governmental body. *See Huie v. Deshazo*, 922 S.W.2d 920, 923 (Tex. 1996) (privilege extends to entire communication, including facts contained therein).

You state the submitted information consists of communications between city attorneys, city employees, and members of a city-created commission with which the city shares a privileged relationship. You state the communications were made for the purpose of facilitating the rendition of professional legal services to the city. You further state these communications were intended to be and have remained confidential. Based on your representations and our review, we find you have demonstrated the applicability of the

extent those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

attorney-client privilege to the submitted information. Accordingly, the city may withhold the submitted information under section 552.107(1) of the Government Code.⁴

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,



Blake Brennan
Attorney
Open Records Division

BB/mo

Ref: ID# 771458

c: Requestor

⁴As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address your remaining argument against disclosure of this information.