



KEN PAXTON  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

July 24, 2019

Mr. Braden W. Metcalf  
Counsel for the Kaufman County Appraisal District  
Nichols, Jackson, Dillard, Hager & Smith, L.L.P.  
500 North Akard Street, Suite 1800  
Dallas, Texas 75201

OR2019-20183

Dear Mr. Metcalf:

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# 774732.

The Kaufman County Appraisal District (the "district"), which you represent, received a request for appraisal records for each account to whom a Notice of Appraised Value was sent. The district claims the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.111 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception the district claims and reviewed the submitted information. We have also received and considered comments from a representative for the requestor. *See* Gov't Code § 552.304 (interested party may submit comments stating why information should or should not be released).

Initially, the authorized representative of the requestor states his client seeks "appraisal information that has already been shared with the property owners receiving" the notices of appraised value. We understand the district has not previously released the submitted information. Further, we note the district has not submitted information that was shared with property owners. Thus, although the district states it has submitted a representative sample of the requested information, we find the submitted information is not representative of all of the types of information to which the requestor seeks access. Please be advised, this open records letter ruling applies only to the types of information the district submitted for our review. This ruling does not authorize the district to withhold any information that is substantially different from the types of information the district submitted to this office. *See*

*id.* § 552.302 (where request for attorney general decision does not comply with requirements of Gov't Code § 552.301, information at issue is presumed to be public). Accordingly, to the extent any additional such information existed on the date the district received the request, we assume the district has released it. If the district has not released any such information, it must do so at this time. *See id.* §§ 552.301(a), .302; *see also* Open Records Decision No. 664 (2000) (if governmental body concludes no exceptions apply to requested information, it must release information as soon as possible).

Section 552.111 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure “[a]n interagency or intraagency memorandum or letter that would not be available by law to a party in litigation with the agency[.]” Gov't Code § 552.111. This exception encompasses the deliberative process privilege. *See* Open Records Decision No. 615 at 2 (1993). The purpose of section 552.111 is to protect advice, opinion, and recommendation in the decisional process and to encourage open and frank discussion in the deliberative process. *See Austin v. City of San Antonio*, 630 S.W.2d 391, 394 (Tex. App.—San Antonio 1982, writ ref'd n.r.e.); Open Records Decision No. 538 at 1-2 (1990).

In Open Records Decision No. 615, this office re-examined the statutory predecessor to section 552.111 in light of the decision in *Texas Department of Public Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ). We determined section 552.111 excepts from disclosure only those internal communications that consist of advice, recommendations, opinions, and other material reflecting the policymaking processes of the governmental body. *See* ORD 615 at 5. A governmental body's policymaking functions do not encompass routine internal administrative or personnel matters, and disclosure of information about such matters will not inhibit free discussion of policy issues among agency personnel. *Id.*; *see also City of Garland v. Dallas Morning News*, 22 S.W.3d 351 (Tex. 2000) (section 552.111 not applicable to personnel-related communications that did not involve policymaking). A governmental body's policymaking functions include administrative and personnel matters of broad scope that affect the governmental body's policy mission. *See* Open Records Decision No. 631 at 3 (1995).

Further, section 552.111 does not protect facts and written observations of facts and events that are severable from advice, opinions, and recommendations. *See* ORD 615 at 5. But if factual information is so inextricably intertwined with material involving advice, opinion, or recommendation as to make severance of the factual data impractical, the factual information also may be withheld under section 552.111. *See* Open Records Decision No. 313 at 3 (1982).

This office has also concluded a preliminary draft of a document that is intended for public release in its final form necessarily represents the drafter's advice, opinion, and recommendation with regard to the form and content of the final document, so as to be excepted from disclosure under section 552.111. *See* Open Records Decision No. 559 at 2 (1990) (applying statutory predecessor). Section 552.111 protects factual information in the

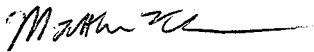
draft that also will be included in the final version of the document. *See id.* at 2-3. Thus, section 552.111 encompasses the entire contents, including comments, underlining, deletions, and proofreading marks, of a preliminary draft of a policymaking document that will be released to the public in its final form. *See id.* at 2.

The district states the submitted information consists of a draft of its tax roll that is intended for public release in its final form. Based on these representations and our review of the information at issue, we agree the district may withhold the submitted information under section 552.111 of the Government Code.

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](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,



Matthew Taylor  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

MHT/be

Ref: ID# 774732

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)