



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

June 14, 2022

Ms. Tasheena L. Byrd  
Assistant City Attorney  
City of Dallas  
1500 Marilla Street  
Dallas, Texas 75201

OR2022-17033

Dear Ms. Byrd:

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# 953566 (ORR# C001292).

The City of Dallas (the "city") received a request for information pertaining to a specified hotel. The city states it has released some of the requested information, but claims the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.103, 552.107, and 552.111 of the Government Code.<sup>1</sup> We have considered the claimed exceptions and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.103 of the Government Code provides, in relevant part, the following:

(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.

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<sup>1</sup> After receiving the request, the city sent the requestor an estimate of charges pursuant to section 552.2615 of the Government Code. *See* Gov't Code § 552.2615. The estimate of charges required the requestor to provide a deposit for payment of anticipated costs under section 552.263 of the Government Code. *See id.* § 552.263(a). The city states it received the deposit on March 22, 2022. *See id.* § 552.263(e) (if governmental body requires deposit or bond for anticipated costs pursuant to section 552.263, request for information is considered to have been received on date that governmental body receives deposit or bond).

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(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). The governmental body claiming section 552.103 has the burden of providing relevant facts and documents sufficient to establish the applicability of section 552.103 to the information it seeks to withhold. To meet this burden, the governmental body must demonstrate: (1) litigation was pending or reasonably anticipated on the date of its receipt of the request for information, and (2) the information at issue is related to that litigation. *See Univ. of Tex. Law Sch. v. Tex. Legal Found.*, 958 S.W.2d 479 (Tex. App.—Austin 1997, orig. proceeding); *Heard v. Houston Post Co.*, 684 S.W.2d 210 (Tex. App.—Houston [1st Dist.] 1984, writ ref'd n.r.e.). Both elements of the test must be met in order for information to be excepted from disclosure under section 552.103. *See Open Records Decision No. 551 at 4 (1990).*

To establish litigation is reasonably anticipated, a governmental body must provide this office “concrete evidence showing that the claim that litigation may ensue is more than mere conjecture.” *Open Records Decision No. 452 at 4 (1986).* In the context of anticipated litigation in which the governmental body is the prospective plaintiff, the concrete evidence must at least reflect that litigation is “realistically contemplated.” *See Open Records Decision No. 518 at 5 (1989); see also Attorney General Opinion MW-575 (1982) (finding that investigatory file may be withheld from disclosure if governmental body attorney determines that it should be withheld pursuant to section 552.103 and that litigation is “reasonably likely to result”).* Whether litigation is reasonably anticipated must be determined on a case-by-case basis. *See ORD 452 at 4.*

The city informs us it is investigating the hotel at issue pursuant to city code to determine whether the hotel is a Habitual Criminal Property as a result of reported code violations and abatable criminal activity. The city represents it will file a lawsuit against the owners of the property pursuant to chapter 125 of the Texas Civil Practice and Remedies Code if they fail to abate the crime and ordinance violations. Upon review, we conclude, for purposes of section 552.103, the city has established litigation was reasonably anticipated when it received the request for information. We also find the city has established the records at issue are related to the anticipated litigation for purposes of section 552.103(a). Therefore, section 552.103 of the Government Code is applicable to the submitted information.

However, once information has been obtained by all parties to the anticipated litigation through discovery or otherwise, no section 552.103(a) interest exists with respect to that information. *See Open Records Decision Nos. 349 (1982), 320 (1982).* Thus, information that has either been obtained from or provided to the opposing party in the anticipated litigation is not excepted from disclosure under section 552.103(a). We note the opposing party to the anticipated litigation at issue has seen or had access to some of the submitted information. Therefore, the city may not withhold this information pursuant to section

552.103 and, instead, must release it. However, we agree the city may withhold the remaining information at issue under section 552.103 of the Government Code.<sup>2</sup> We note 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 <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open-government/members-public/what-expect-after-ruling-issued> or call the OAG's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Public Information Act may be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the OAG, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,

James L. Coggeshall  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

JLC/jm

Ref: ID# 953566

c: Requestor

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<sup>2</sup> As our ruling is dispositive, we do not address the other arguments of the city to withhold this information.