



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

September 15, 2022

Ms. Coya L. Craig
Paralegal
City of Killeen
P.O. Box 7329
Killeen, Texas 76540

OR2022-28327

Dear Ms. Craig:

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# 972331 (ORR# W039681).

The City of Killeen (the "city") received a request for records related to legal services provided to the city by its outside counsel. The city states it is releasing some of the requested information. The city claims the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.107 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception the city claims and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note the submitted information is subject to section 552.022 of the Government Code. Section 552.022 provides, in relevant part:

(a) [T]he following categories of information are public information and not excepted from required disclosure unless made confidential under this chapter or other law:

...

(3) information in an account, voucher, or contract relating to the receipt or expenditure of public or other funds by a governmental body; [and]

...

(16) information that is in a bill for attorney's fees and that is not privileged under the attorney-client privilege [.]

Gov't Code § 552.022(a)(3), (16). The submitted information consists of information in an account, contract, or voucher relating to the receipt or expenditure of funds by the city that is subject to section 552.022(a)(3) and attorney fee bills that are subject to section 552.022(a)(16). This information must be released unless it is made confidential under the Act or other law. *See id.* § 552.022(a)(3), (16). The city seeks to withhold the information under section 552.107 of the Government Code. However, section 552.107 is discretionary in nature and does not make information confidential under the Act. *See Open Records Decision Nos. 676 at 10-11 (2002) (attorney-client privilege under Gov't Code § 552.107(1) may be waived), 665 at 2 n.5 (2000) (discretionary exceptions generally), 663 at 5 (1999) (waiver of discretionary exceptions).* Therefore, the city may not withhold the information under section 552.107 of the Government Code. However, the Texas Supreme Court has held the Texas Rules of Evidence are "other law" within the meaning of section 552.022. *See In re City of Georgetown*, 53 S.W.3d 328, 336 (Tex. 2001). We will therefore consider the city's assertion of the attorney-client privilege under rule 503 of the Texas Rules of Evidence.

Texas Rule of Evidence 503(b)(1) provides as follows:

A client has a privilege to refuse to disclose and to prevent any other person from disclosing confidential communications made to facilitate the rendition of professional legal services to the client:

(A) between the client or the client's representative and the client's lawyer or the lawyer's representative;

(B) between the client's lawyer and the lawyer's representative;

(C) by the client, the client's representative, the client's lawyer, or the lawyer's representative to a lawyer representing another party in a pending action or that lawyer's representative, if the communications concern a matter of common interest in the pending action;

(D) between the client's representatives or between the client and the client's representative; or

(E) among lawyers and their representatives representing the same client.

TEX. R. EVID. 503(b)(1). A communication is "confidential" if it is not intended to be disclosed to third persons other than those to whom disclosure is made in furtherance of the rendition of professional legal services to the client or those reasonably necessary for the transmission of the communication. *Id.* 503(a)(5).

Thus, in order to withhold attorney-client privileged information from disclosure under rule 503, a governmental body must (1) show the document is a communication transmitted between privileged parties or reveals a confidential communication; (2) identify the parties involved in the communication; and (3) show the communication is confidential by explaining it was not intended to be disclosed to third persons and it was made in furtherance of the rendition of professional legal services to the client. Upon a demonstration of all three factors, the information is privileged and confidential under rule 503, provided the client has not waived the privilege or the document does not fall within the purview of the exceptions to the privilege enumerated in rule 503(d). *See Pittsburgh Corning Corp. v. Caldwell*, 861 S.W.2d 423, 427 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1993, orig. proceeding).

The city argues the submitted information may be withheld under rule 503. The city states the information includes privileged attorney-client communications between the city's attorneys and city officials and staff in their capacities as clients. The city explains the communications at issue were made for the purpose of the rendition of legal services to the city. The city states the communications at issue have not been, and were not intended to be, disclosed to third parties. Based on these representations and our review of the information at issue, we find the city has established some of the information at issue, which we marked, constitutes privileged attorney-client communications under rule 503. Thus, the city may withhold the information we marked pursuant to rule 503 of the Texas Rules of Evidence. However, we find the city has failed to demonstrate any of the remaining information consists of privileged attorney client communications. Accordingly, the city may not withhold any portion of the remaining information at issue under rule 503. The city must release the remaining information.

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,

Claire V. Morris Sloan
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CVMS/mo

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Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)