

Office of the Attorney General  
State of Texas  
Informal Letter Ruling No. OR2017-20491  
September 7, 2017

Mr. Edward F. Guzman  
Deputy City Attorney  
City of San Antonio  
P.O. Box 839966  
San Antonio, Texas 78283

Dear Mr. Guzman:

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#674382 (COSA File Nos. W172566-061517, W173615-062317, W174946-070517, W175007-070617, W175548-071017, W177450-072517)

The City of San Antonio (the "city") received six requests from different requestors for information pertaining to a specified request for proposals. You state you have released some information. You state release of the remaining information may implicate the proprietary interests of 1797 Creative; Chamoy Creative; Creative Noggin, LLC ("Creative Noggin"); ESD & Associates; GDC Marketing & Ideation ("GDC"); KGB Texas Communications; Market Vision; Opt In Experts; and The Social Being ("Social Being"). Accordingly, the city states, and provides documentation showing, it notified these third parties of the request for information and of their right to submit arguments to this office as to why the information at issue should not be released. See [Gov't Code § 552.305\(d\)](#); see also Open Records Decision No. 542 (1990) (statutory predecessor to [section 552.305](#) permits governmental body to rely on interested third party to raise and explain applicability of exception in the Act in certain circumstances). We have received comments from Creative Noggin, GDC, and Social Being.<sup>1</sup> We have considered the submitted arguments and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note an interested third party is allowed ten business days after the date of its receipt of the governmental body's notice under [section 552.305\(d\) of the Government Code](#) to submit its reasons, if any, as to why information relating to that party should be withheld from public disclosure. See [Gov't Code § 552.305\(d\)\(2\)\(B\)](#). As of the date of this letter, we have not received comments from the remaining third parties explaining why the submitted information should not be released. Therefore, we have no basis to conclude these third parties have a protected proprietary interest in the submitted information. See *id.* § 552.110; Open Records Decision Nos. 661 at 5-6 (1999) (to prevent disclosure of commercial or financial information, party must show by specific factual evidence, not conclusory or generalized allegations, release of requested information would cause that party substantial competitive harm), 552 at 5 (1990) (party must establish *prima facie* case information is trade secret), 542 at 3. Accordingly, the city may not withhold the submitted information on the basis of any proprietary interest these third parties may have in the information.

[Section 552.104\(a\) of the Government Code](#) excepts from disclosure "information that, if released, would give advantage to a competitor or bidder." [Gov't Code § 552.104\(a\)](#). A private third party may invoke this exception. [Boeing Co. v. Paxton](#), 466 S.W.3d 831 (Tex. 2015). The "test under [section 552.104](#) is whether knowing another bidder's [or competitor's information] would be an advantage, not whether it would be a decisive advantage." *Id.* at 841. Creative Noggin states it has competitors. In addition, Creative Noggin states release of the information at issue would give competitors an unfair competitive advantage over the company in future

competitive scenarios. For many years, this office concluded the terms of a contract and especially the pricing of a winning bidder are public and generally not excepted from disclosure. [Gov't Code § 552.022\(a\)\(3\)](#) (contract involving receipt or expenditure of public funds expressly made public); Open Records Decision Nos. 541 at 8 (1990) (public has interest in knowing terms of contract with state agency), 514 (1988) (public has interest in knowing prices charged by government contractors), 494 (1988) (requiring balancing of public interest in disclosure with competitive injury to company). *See generally* Freedom of Information Act Guide & Privacy Act Overview, 219 (2000) (federal cases applying analogous Freedom of Information Act reasoning that disclosure of prices charged government is a cost of doing business with government). However, now, pursuant to *Boeing*, [section 552.104](#) is not limited to only ongoing competitive situations, and a third party need only show release of its competitively sensitive information would give an advantage to a competitor even after a contract is executed. *Boeing*, 466 S.W.3d at 841. After review of the information at issue and consideration of the arguments, we find Creative Noggin has established the release of the information at issue would give advantage to a competitor or bidder. Thus, we conclude the city may withhold the information we marked under [section 552.104\(a\) of the Government Code](#).

[Section 552.110 of the Government Code](#) protects (1) trade secrets and (2) commercial or financial information the disclosure of which would cause substantial competitive harm to the person from whom the information was obtained. *See Gov't Code § 552.110(a)-(b)*. [Section 552.110\(a\)](#) protects trade secrets obtained from a person and privileged or confidential by statute or judicial decision. *Id.* [§ 552.110\(a\)](#). The Texas Supreme Court has adopted the definition of trade secret from section 757 of the Restatement of Torts, which holds a trade secret to be:

any formula, pattern, device or compilation of information which is used in one's business, and which gives him an opportunity to obtain an advantage over competitors who do not know or use it. It may be a formula for a chemical compound, a process of manufacturing, treating or preserving materials, a pattern for a machine or other device, or a list of customers. It differs from other secret information in a business ... in that it is not simply information as to single or ephemeral events in the conduct of the business .... A trade secret is a process or device for continuous use in the operation of the business.... [It may] relate to the sale of goods or to other operations in the business, such as a code for determining discounts, rebates or other concessions in a price list or catalogue, or a list of specialized customers, or a method of bookkeeping or other office management.

[RESTATEMENT OF TORTS § 757](#) cmt. b (1939); *see also Hyde Corp. v. Huffines*, 314 S.W.2d 776 (Tex. 1958). In determining whether particular information constitutes a trade secret, this office considers the Restatement's definition of trade secret as well as the Restatement's list of six trade secret factors.<sup>2</sup> [RESTATEMENT OF TORTS § 757](#) cmt. b. This office must accept a claim that information subject to the Act is excepted as a trade secret if a *prima facie* case for the exception is made and no argument is submitted that rebuts the claim as a matter of law. *See* ORD 552 at 5. However, we cannot conclude [section 552.110\(a\)](#) is applicable unless it has been shown the information meets the definition of a trade secret and the necessary factors have been demonstrated to establish a trade secret claim. Open Records Decision No. 402 (1983).

[Section 552.110\(b\)](#) protects "[c]ommercial or financial information for which it is demonstrated based on specific factual evidence that disclosure would cause substantial competitive harm to the person from whom the information was obtained[.]" [Gov't Code § 552.110\(b\)](#). This exception to disclosure requires a specific factual or evidentiary showing, not conclusory or generalized allegations, that substantial competitive injury would likely result from release of the information at issue. *Id.*; *see also* ORD 661 at 5 (to prevent disclosure of commercial or financial information, party must show by specific factual evidence, not conclusory or generalized allegations, that release of requested information would cause that party substantial competitive harm).

GDC asserts some of its information and Social Being asserts all of its information at issue is excepted from disclosure under [section 552.110\(b\) of the Government Code](#). Upon review, we find GDC has established the release of its pricing information and client information constitutes commercial or financial information, the release of which would cause substantial competitive injury to GDC. Therefore, the city must withhold GDC's pricing information, which we marked, and GDC's client information, to the extent the client information is not publicly available on GDC's website, under [section 552.110\(b\) of the Government Code](#).<sup>3</sup> However, upon review, we find GDC and Social Being have failed to demonstrate by specific factual evidence the release of the remaining information at issue would result in substantial harm to their competitive positions. See ORD 661 (for information to be withheld under commercial or financial information prong of [section 552.110](#), business must show by specific factual evidence that substantial competitive injury would result from release of particular information at issue); see also ORD 319 at 3 (information relating to organization and personnel, market studies, professional references, qualifications and experience, and pricing is not ordinarily excepted from disclosure under statutory predecessor to [section 552.110](#)). Accordingly, the city may not withhold any portion of the remaining information under [section 552.110\(b\) of the Government Code](#).

GDC also asserts its client information and Social Being asserts all of its information at issue constitutes trade secrets. To the extent GDC's client information is publicly available on its website, it may not be withheld under [section 552.110\(a\)](#). Furthermore, upon review, we find GDC and Social Being have failed to demonstrate a *prima facie* case any portion of the information at issue meets the definition of a trade secret and has not demonstrated the necessary factors to establish a trade secret claim for this information. See ORD 402. Therefore, the city may not withhold any of the remaining information at issue under [section 552.110\(a\)](#).

Creative Noggin raises common-law privacy for some of its remaining information. [Section 552.101 of the Government Code](#) excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." [Gov't Code § 552.101](#). [Section 552.101](#) encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information that is (1) highly intimate or embarrassing, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, and (2) not of legitimate concern to the public. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). To demonstrate the applicability of common-law privacy, both prongs of this test must be satisfied. *Id.* at 681-82. Types of information considered intimate and embarrassing by the Texas Supreme Court are delineated in *Industrial Foundation*. *Id.* at 683. Upon review, we find none of the remaining information is highly intimate or embarrassing and of no legitimate public interest. Therefore, the city may not withhold any of the remaining responsive information under [section 552.101 of the Government Code](#) on this basis.

Some of the remaining information is subject to [section 552.136 of the Government Code](#).<sup>4</sup> [Section 552.136](#) provides, "[n]otwithstanding any other provision of [the Act], a credit card, debit card, charge card, or access device number that is collected, assembled, or maintained by or for a governmental body is confidential." [Gov't Code § 552.136\(b\)](#); see *id.* § 552.136(a) (defining "access device"). This office has determined insurance policy numbers are access device numbers for purposes of [section 552.136](#). Accordingly, the city must withhold the insurance policy numbers in the remaining information under [section 552.136 of the Government Code](#). However, upon review, we find Creative Noggin has failed to demonstrate the applicability of [section 552.136](#) to the remaining information at issue. Therefore, the city may not withhold this information under [section 552.136 of the Government Code](#).

We note some of the materials at issue may be protected by copyright. A custodian of public records must comply with the copyright law and is not required to furnish copies of records that are copyrighted. Open Records Decision No. 180 at 3 (1977). A governmental body must allow inspection of copyrighted materials unless an exception applies to the information. *Id.*; see Open Records Decision No. 109(1975). If a member of

the public wishes to make copies of copyrighted materials, the person must do so unassisted by the governmental body. In making copies, the member of the public assumes the duty of compliance with the copyright law and the risk of a copyright infringement suit.

In summary, the city may withhold the information we marked under [section 552.104\(a\) of the Government Code](#). The city must withhold GDC's pricing information we marked and GDC's client information, to the extent the client information is not publicly available on GDC's website, under [section 552.110\(b\) of the Government Code](#). The city must withhold the insurance policy numbers in the remaining information under [section 552.136 of the Government Code](#). The city must release the remaining information; however, any information that is subject to copyright may be released only in accordance with copyright law.

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,

\*5 D. Michelle Case  
Attorney  
Open Records Division

#### Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Although Social Being raises [sections 552.101, 552.102, 552.103, 552.104, 552.105, 552.106, 552.107, 552.111, 552.117, 552.128, 552.131, 552.137, and 552.139](#), it has not submitted arguments in support of these exceptions; therefore, we assume Social Being has withdrawn its claim these exceptions apply to the information at issue. See [Gov't Code §§ 552.301, .302](#).
- <sup>2</sup> The Restatement of Torts lists the following six factors as indicia of whether information constitutes a trade secret:
  - (1) the extent to which the information is known outside of [the company];
  - (2) the extent to which it is known by employees and other involved in [the company's] business;
  - (3) the extent of measures taken by [the company] to guard the secrecy of the information;
  - (4) the value of the information to [the company] and [its] competitors;
  - (5) the amount of effort or money expended by [the company] in developing the information;
  - (6) the ease or difficulty with which the information could be properly acquired or duplicated by others.[RESTATEMENT OF TORTS § 757](#) cmt. b; see also Open Records Decision Nos. 319 at 2 (1982), 306 at 2 (1982), 255 at 2 (1980).
- <sup>3</sup> As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address the remaining argument against disclosure of this information.

4 The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. See Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).