

Office of the Attorney General  
State of Texas  
Informal Letter Ruling No. OR2017-10418  
May 15, 2017

\*1 Mr. Jeffrey W. Giles  
Assistant City Attorney  
City of Houston  
P.O. Box 368  
Houston, Texas 77001-0368

Dear Mr. Giles:

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# 657850 (GC No. 24136).

The City of Houston (the "city") received a request for all information from WatchGuard Video ("WatchGuard") relating to battery issues with police body worn cameras.<sup>1</sup> Although you take no position as to whether the submitted information is excepted under the Act, you state release of this information may implicate the proprietary interests of WatchGuard. Accordingly, you state, and provide documentation showing, you notified the interested third party of the request for information and of its 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 WatchGuard. We have considered the submitted arguments and reviewed the submitted 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. WatchGuard states it has competitors. In addition, WatchGuard states the information at issue, if released, would give a competitor an advantage because competitors could use the information to develop "similar operational procedures to capture similar efficiencies and capture market share." WatchGuard also states the release of the information would reduce Watchguard's competitive advantage. After review of the information at issue and consideration of the arguments, we find Watchguard 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](#).<sup>2</sup>

We note some of the remaining information 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.

\*2 In summary, the city may withhold the information we marked under [section 552.104\(a\) of the Government](#)

[Code](#). The city must release the remaining information; however, any information subject to copyright may only be released 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,

Jahnna Ward  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

#### Footnotes

- <sup>1</sup> We note the city sought and received clarification of the information requested. See [Gov't Code § 552.222](#) (providing if request for information is unclear, governmental body may ask requestor to clarify request); see also *City of Dallas v. Abbott*, 304 S.W.3d 380, 387 (Tex. 2010) (holding when governmental entity, acting in good faith, requests clarification of unclear or overbroad request for public information, ten-business-day period to request attorney general opinion is measured from date request is clarified or narrowed).
- <sup>2</sup> As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address the remaining argument against disclosure of this information.