

Office of the Attorney General
State of Texas
Informal Letter Ruling No. OR2017-11423
May 25, 2017

Ms. Cathy Cunningham
Counsel for the City of Keller
Boyle & Lowry, L.L.P.
4201 Wingren Drive, Suite 108
Irving, Texas 75062-2763

Dear Ms. Cunningham:

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# 659269.

The City of Keller (the "city"), which you represent, received a request for the city's current electricity contract and information pertaining to electricity bills. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under [sections 552.104, 552.110, 552.133, and 552.136 of the Government Code](#). You also state release of the submitted information may implicate the proprietary interests of Gexa Energy, L.P. ("Gexa"). Accordingly, you state, and provide documentation showing, you notified Gexa of the request for information and of its right to submit arguments to this office as to why the submitted information 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 Gexa. We have considered the submitted arguments and reviewed the submitted information, some of which constitutes a representative sample.¹

[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\(a\)](#). In considering whether a private third party may assert this exception, the supreme court reasoned because [section 552.305\(a\) of the Government Code](#) includes [section 552.104](#) as an example of an exception that involves a third party's properly interest, 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. Gexa states it has competitors. In addition, Gexa states release of the information at issue would reveal Gexa's "pricing strategy and structure and give [its competitors] an unfair competitive advantage." 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 832. After review of the information at issue and consideration of the arguments, we find Gexa has established the release of the information at issue would give advantage to a competitor or bidder. Thus, we conclude the city may withhold this information, a representative

sample of which we have marked, under [section 552.104\(a\) of the Government Code](#).²

[Section 552.136 of the Government Code](#) 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\(b\)](#). [Section 552.136\(a\)](#) defines “access device” as “a card, plate, code, account number, personal identification number, electronic serial number, mobile identification number, or other telecommunications service, equipment, or instrument identifier or means of account access that alone or in conjunction with another access device may be used to ... obtain money, goods, services, or another thing of value [or] initiate a transfer of funds other than a transfer originated solely by paper instrument.” *Id.* [§ 552.136\(a\)](#). Upon review, we find you have not demonstrated the information you marked consists of access device numbers for purposes of [section 552.136](#). Accordingly, the city may not withhold the information you marked under [section 552.136 of the Government Code](#).

In summary, the city may withhold some of the information, a representative sample of which we have marked, under [section 552.104\(a\) of the Government Code](#). 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 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,

Meagan J. Conway
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

Footnotes

¹ We assume the “representative sample” of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

² As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address the remaining arguments against disclosure of this information except to note [section 552.110](#) protects the interests of private parties that provide information to governmental bodies, not the interests of governmental bodies themselves. *See generally* Open Records Decision No. 592(1991).