

Office of the Attorney General
State of Texas
Informal Letter Ruling No. OR2017-27902
December 8, 2017

Ms. Laura Cedillo
Assistant City Attorney
Office of the City Attorney
City of San Antonio
P.O. Box 839966
San Antonio, Texas 78283-3966

Dear Ms. Cedillo:

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# 687183 (COSA# W185202-092217).

The City of San Antonio (the "city") received a request for information pertaining to a specified request for proposals. Although you take no position as to whether the submitted information is excepted under the Act, you state release of some of this information may implicate the proprietary interests of Alanis Wrecker Service; TEGSCO, LLC ("TEGSCO"); and Rod Robertson Enterprises, Inc. ("Robertson Enterprises"). Accordingly, you state, and provide documentation demonstrating, you notified the 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 TEGSCO and Robertson Enterprises. We have also received and considered comments submitted by an interested third party. See [Gov't Code § 552.304](#) (providing that interested party may submit written comments regarding why information should or should not be released). We have reviewed the submitted information and considered the submitted arguments.

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 party explaining why the submitted information should not be released. Therefore, we have no basis to conclude the remaining third party has 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, that release of requested information would cause that party substantial competitive harm), 552 at 5 (1990) (party must establish *prima facie* case that information is trade secret), 542 at 3. Accordingly, the city may not withhold the submitted information on the basis of any proprietary interest the remaining third party may have in the information.

Next, we note TEGSCO seeks to withhold information not submitted to this office by the city. By statute, this office may only rule on the public availability of information submitted by the governmental body requesting the ruling. See [Gov't Code § 552.301\(e\)\(1\)\(D\)](#) (governmental body requesting decision from Attorney General must submit copy of specific information requested). Because this information was not submitted by the city, this ruling does not address this information and is limited to the information submitted as responsive by the city.

[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](#). Robertson Enterprises states it has competitors. In addition, Robertson Enterprises states release of its information at issue would disclose its service delivery systems, strategy, methods of approach, and philosophy which provide Robertson Enterprises its uniquely developed competitive advantage. After review of the information at issue and consideration of the arguments, we find Robertson Enterprises has established the release of the information at issue would give advantage to a competitor or bidder. Thus, we conclude the city may withhold Robertson Enterprises’ information at issue under [section 552.104\(a\) of the Government Code](#).¹

TEGSCO claims its information is excepted from disclosure under [section 552.110 of the Government Code](#). [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 5-6.

Upon review, find TEGSCO has failed to demonstrate that release of any of its information would result in substantial damage to its competitive position. Thus, the third party has not demonstrated that substantial competitive injury would result from the release of any of its submitted information. *See* ORD 661. Accordingly, the city may not withhold any of TEGSCO’s information under [section 552.110\(b\) of the Government Code](#).

[Section 552.130 of the Government Code](#) provides information relating to a motor vehicle operator’s license, driver’s license, motor vehicle title or registration, or personal identification document issued by an agency of this state or another state or country is excepted from public release.² *See* [Gov’t Code § 552.130\(a\)](#). We find portions of the remaining information consist of motor vehicle record information. Accordingly, the city must withhold the motor vehicle record information under [section 552.130 of the Government Code](#).

[Section 552.136 of the Government Code](#) provides, “Notwithstanding 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](#). We note the requestor has a right of access to the insurance policy numbers of United Road Towing and it may not be withheld from him under [section 552.136](#). *See* [Gov’t Code § 552.023\(a\)](#) (governmental body may not deny access to person to whom information relates or person’s agent on ground that information is considered confidential by privacy principles); Open Records Decision No. 481 at 4 (1987) (privacy theories not implicated when individuals request information concerning themselves). Therefore, with the exception of United Road Towing’s insurance policy numbers, the city must withhold all insurance policy numbers within the remaining information under [section 552.136 of the Government Code](#).

We note some of the remaining information appears to 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 Robertson Enterprises' information at issue under [section 552.104 of the Government Code](#). With the exception of United Road Towing's insurance policy numbers, the city must withhold insurance policy numbers under [section 552.136 of the Government Code](#). The city must release the remaining information 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, 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,

April Philley
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

Footnotes

- ¹ As our ruling for this information is dispositive, we need not address the remaining arguments against its disclosure.
- ² The Office of the Attorney General will raise mandatory exceptions on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. See Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).