



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

This ruling has been modified by court action.
The ruling and judgment can be viewed in PDF
format below.



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December 7, 2015

Ms. Halfreda Anderson-Nelson
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Dallas Area Rapid Transit
P.O. Box 660163
Dallas, Texas 75266-0163

**The ruling you have requested has
been amended as a result of litigation
and has been attached to this**

OR2015-25565

Dear Ms. Anderson-Nelson:

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# 589506 (DART ORR No. W000172-091415).

Dallas Area Rapid Transit ("DART") received a request for information pertaining to a specified request for proposals.¹ You claim portions of the submitted information are excepted from disclosure under section 552.111 of the Government Code.² You state DART has released some of the requested information to the requestor. Although DART takes no

¹We note DART 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 that when a governmental entity, acting in good faith, requests clarification or narrowing of an unclear or over-broad request for public information, the ten-day period to request an attorney general ruling is measured from the date the request is clarified or narrowed).

²Although DART raises sections 552.101 through 552.110 and 552.112 through 552.131 of the Government Code, DART makes no arguments to support these exceptions. Therefore, we assume DART has withdrawn its claim these sections apply to the information at issue. *See* Gov't Code §§ 552.301, .302. Additionally, we note DART did not comply with section 552.301 of the Government Code in requesting a ruling with respect to some of the requested information, for which DART does not claim an exception to disclosure. *See id.* § 552.301(e). However, because third party interests can provide a compelling reason to overcome the presumption of openness, we will consider the submitted third party arguments for the information at issue. *See id.* §§ 552.007, .302, .352.

position as to whether the remaining information is excepted under the Act, it states release of the information at issue may implicate the proprietary interests of SPX Corporation d/b/a Genfare (“Genfare”); MiTAC Information Technology Corp. (“MITC”); Thales USA, Inc. (“Thales”); Trapeze Software Group, Inc. (“Trapeze”); Vix Technology (“Vix”); and Xerox Transport Solutions, Inc. (“Xerox”). Accordingly, DART states, and provides documentation showing, it notified these third parties of the request for information and of their rights 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 Genfare, Thales, and Xerox. We have considered the submitted arguments and reviewed the submitted information.

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) 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 MITC, Trapeze, or Vix explaining why the submitted information should not be released. Therefore, we have no basis to conclude those 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, DART may not withhold the submitted information on the basis of any proprietary interests MITC, Trapeze, or Vix may have in the information.

Section 552.111 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure “[a]n interagency or intraagency memorandum or letter that would not be available by law to a party in litigation with the agency[.]” Gov’t Code § 552.111. This exception encompasses the deliberative process privilege. *See* Open Records Decision No. 615 at 2 (1993). The purpose of this privilege is to protect advice, opinion, and recommendation in the decisional process and encourage open and frank discussion in the deliberative process. *See Austin v. City of San Antonio*, 630 S.W.2d 391, 394 (Tex. App.—San Antonio 1982, no writ); Open Records Decision No. 538 at 1-2 (1990). In Open Records Decision No. 615, this office re-examined the statutory predecessor to section 552.111 in light of the decision in *Texas Department of Public Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ). We determined section 552.111 excepts from disclosure only those internal communications that consist of advice, recommendations, and opinions reflecting the policymaking processes of the governmental body. *See* ORD 615 at 5. A governmental body’s policymaking functions do not encompass routine internal administrative or personnel matters, and disclosure of information about such matters will not inhibit free discussion of policy issues among agency personnel. *Id.*; *see also City of Garland v. The Dallas Morning News*, 22 S.W.3d 351

(Tex. 2000) (Gov't Code § 552.111 not applicable to personnel-related communications that did not involve policymaking). A governmental body's policymaking functions do include administrative and personnel matters of broad scope that affect the governmental body's policy mission. *See* Open Records Decision No. 631 at 3 (1995). Moreover, section 552.111 does not protect facts and written observations of facts and events that are severable from advice, opinions, and recommendations. *See* ORD 615 at 5. But, if factual information is so inextricably intertwined with material involving advice, opinion, or recommendation as to make severance of the factual data impractical, the factual information also may be withheld under section 552.111. *See* Open Records Decision No. 313 at 3 (1982).

You state some of the submitted information consists of DART's "source evaluation committee materials" pertaining to the evaluation of responses received for the specified request for proposals. You explain evaluation of the responses is an internal function of DART's procurement department. You state the evaluation materials provide guidelines and recommendations for evaluating bidders, scoring recommendations, and opinions by evaluators regarding bids. You contend release of this information would reveal DART's process for procuring and evaluating bids. Based on your representations and our review, we conclude DART may withhold the information at issue, which we have marked, under section 552.111 of the Government Code.

We understand Genfare and Thales to raise section 552.104(a) of the Government Code for portions of their information. Section 552.104(a) 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 property interest, the court concluded 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. Genfare and Thales state they have competitors. In addition, Genfare and Thales state the release of the information at issue would give advantage to a competitor. After review of the information at issue and consideration of the arguments, we find Genfare and Thales have established the release of the information at issue would give advantage to a competitor or bidder. Thus, we conclude DART may withhold the information at issue, which we have marked, under section 552.104(a) of the Government Code.³

Thales and Xerox claim portions of their information are excepted from disclosure under section 552.110 of the Government Code. Section 552.110 protects (1) trade secrets, and (2) commercial or financial information, the disclosure of which would cause substantial

³As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address the remaining arguments against disclosure of this information.

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 that are 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 763, 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.⁴ RESTATEMENT OF TORTS § 757 cmt. b. This office must accept a claim 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).

⁴The 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).

Section 552.110(b) protects “[c]ommercial or financial information for which it is demonstrated based on specific factual evidence 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, substantial competitive injury would likely result from release of the information at issue. *Id.*; *see also* ORD 661 at 5-6.

Thales and Xerox contend portions of their information are confidential under section 552.110(a) of the Government Code. Upon review, we find Xerox has established a *prima facie* case its customer information constitutes trade secret information for purposes of section 552.110(a). Accordingly, to the extent Xerox’s customer information is not publicly available on its website, DART must withhold the customer information we have marked under section 552.110(a) of the Government Code. However, we find Thales and Xerox have failed to establish a *prima facie* case that any of their remaining information at issue meets the definition of a trade secret, nor have Thales and Xerox demonstrated the necessary factors to establish a trade secret claim for this information. Therefore, DART may not withhold any of the remaining information under section 552.110(a) of the Government Code.

Thales and Xerox also claim portions of their information are protected under section 552.110(b) of the Government Code. Upon review, we find Thales and Xerox have not demonstrated that substantial competitive injury would likely result from the release of any of the remaining information, including any customer information that is publicly available on Xerox’s website. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 661, 509 at 5 (1988) (because costs, bid specifications, and circumstances would change for future contracts, assertion that release of bid proposal might give competitor unfair advantage on future contracts is too speculative), 319 at 3 (information relating to organization and personnel, professional references, market studies, qualifications, and pricing are not ordinarily excepted from disclosure under statutory predecessor to section 552.110), 175 at 4 (1977) (résumés cannot be said to fall within any exception under the Act). Therefore, DART may not withhold any of the remaining information under section 552.110(b) of the Government Code.

We understand Thales to assert some of its remaining information is excepted under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. 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. We note common-law privacy protects the interests of individuals, not those of corporate and other business entities. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 620 (1993) (corporation has no right to privacy), 192 (1978) (right to privacy is designed primarily to protect human feelings and sensibilities, rather than property, business, or other pecuniary interests); *see also Rosen v. Matthews Constr. Co.*, 777 S.W.2d 434 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1989) (corporation has no right to privacy (citing *United States v. Morton Salt Co.*, 338 U.S. 632, 652 (1950))), *rev'd* on other grounds, 796 S.W.2d 692 (Tex. 1990). We also note an individual's name, education, prior employment, and personal information are not ordinarily private information subject to common-law privacy. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 554 (1990), 448 (1986). Upon review, we find no portion of the remaining information is highly intimate or embarrassing and of no legitimate public concern, and DART may not withhold any portion of the remaining information under section 552.101 of the Government Code on the basis of common-law privacy.

We also understand Thales to raise section 552.136 of the Government Code, which 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”). Upon review, we find DART must withhold the checking account numbers in the remaining information under section 552.136 of the Government Code.

We note some of information 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, DART may withhold the information we have marked under section 552.111 of the Government Code. To the extent Xerox's customer information is not publicly available on its website, DART must withhold the customer information we have marked under section 552.110(a) of the Government Code. DART must withhold the checking account numbers in the remaining information under section 552.136 of the Government Code. DART must release the remaining information; however, DART may release any copyrighted information 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, 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,



Lee Seidlits
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CLS/som

Ref: ID# 589506

Enc. Submitted documents

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OCT 24 2019
At 9:25 AM
Velva L. Price, District Clerk

Cause No. D-1-GN-16-001972

VIX TECHNOLOGY (USA), INC.,	§	IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF
<i>Plaintiff,</i>	§	
	§	
v.	§	
	§	126th JUDICIAL DISTRICT
THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF	§	
TEXAS AND THE DALLAS AREA	§	
RAPID TRANSIT,	§	
<i>Defendants,</i>	§	TRAVIS COUNTY, TEXAS

AGREED ORDER OF DISMISSAL

This is a cause of action under the Public Information Act (PIA), Texas Government Code chapter 552. Plaintiff Vix Technology (USA), Inc. and Defendants Ken Paxton, the Attorney General of Texas, and the Dallas Area Rapid Transit, agree to dismiss this suit pursuant to PIA section 552.327 on the ground that the requestors have abandoned their requests for information. Tex. Gov't Code § 552.327. A court may dismiss a PIA suit under section 552.327 when all parties agree to dismissal and the Attorney General determines and represents to the Court that the requestor has voluntarily withdrawn the request for information in writing or has abandoned the request. *Id.* The Attorney General represents to the Court that the requestors, Terese Gillum, Dereck Richman, and Scott Walsh, have abandoned their requests for information. Accordingly, Dallas Area Rapid Transit is not required to release the requested information subject to disclosure in Letter

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Rulings OR2016-00325, OR2016-07659A, and OR2016-25565. The Court is of the opinion that entry of an agreed dismissal order is appropriate.

It is THEREFORE, ORDERED, ADJUDGED and DECREED that this cause is DISMISSED in all respects;

All costs of the court and attorney fees are taxed against the parties incurring the same;

All relief not expressly granted is denied; and

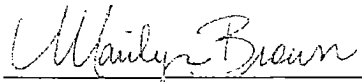
This order disposes of all claims between the parties and is final.

Signed this 24th day of October, 2019.



JUDGE PRESIDING

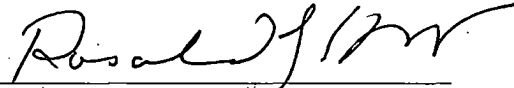
AGREED:



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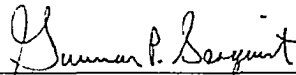
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