



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

December 21, 2016

Mr. Matthew Crouch
Legal Counsel
Harris County Appraisal District
P.O. Box 920975
Houston, Texas 77292-0975

OR2016-28268

Dear Mr. Crouch:

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# 638786 (Internal Reference No. 16-3789).

The Harris County Appraisal District (the "district") received a request for all information related to a specified address within a specified period of time.¹ You state you have released some information to the requestor. You claim some of the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.149 of the Government Code. We have considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted 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

¹The district states it sought and received clarification of the request. See Gov't Code § 552.222(b) (providing that if request for information is unclear, governmental body may ask requestor to clarify the 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 overbroad 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).

Code § 552.101. This section encompasses information protected by other statutes. Section 22.27 of the Tax Code provides the following:

(a) Rendition statements, real and personal property reports, attachments to those statements and reports, and other information the owner of property provides to the appraisal office in connection with the appraisal of the property, including income and expense information related to a property filed with an appraisal office and information voluntarily disclosed to an appraisal office or the comptroller about real or personal property sales prices after a promise it will be held confidential, are confidential and not open to public inspection. The statements and reports and the information they contain about specific real or personal property or a specific real or personal property owner and information voluntarily disclosed to an appraisal office about real or personal property sales prices after a promise it will be held confidential may not be disclosed to anyone other than an employee of the appraisal office who appraises property except as authorized by Subsection (b) of this section.

Tax Code § 22.27(a). We understand the district is an “appraisal office” for purposes of section 22.27(a). You state the information you marked consists of sales information provided to the district by property owners after a promise the information will be held confidential. You state none of the exceptions in section 22.27(b) apply in this instance. *See id.* § 22.27(b)(2). Based on your representations and our review, we find the information you marked must be withheld under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 22.27 of the Tax Code.

The district argues section 552.149 of the Government Code for portions of the remaining information. Section 552.149 provides, in relevant part, as follows:

(a) Information relating to real property sales prices, descriptions, characteristics, and other related information received from a private entity by the comptroller or the chief appraiser of an appraisal district under Chapter 6, Tax Code, is excepted from the requirements of [the Act].

(b) Notwithstanding Subsection (a), the property owner or the owner’s agent may, on request, obtain from the chief appraiser of the applicable appraisal district a copy of each item of information described by Section 41.461(a)(2), Tax Code, and a copy of each item of information that the chief appraiser took into consideration but does not plan to introduce at the hearing on the protest. In addition, the property owner or agent may, on request, obtain from the chief appraiser comparable sales data from a reasonable number of sales that is relevant to any matter to be determined by the appraisal review board at the hearing on the property owner’s protest[.]

Gov't Code § 552.149(a)-(b). Subsections 552.149(a) and (b) are limited to those counties having a population of 50,000 or more. *Id.* § 552.149(e). We understand Harris County has a population of 50,000 or more. You state the information at issue includes information related to real property sales prices, descriptions, characteristics, and other related information received from a private entity. You state the requestor does not have a right of access to this information pursuant to section 552.149(b). *See id.* § 552.149(b). Accordingly, based on your representations and our review, we find the district must withhold the information you have marked under section 552.149(a) of the Government Code.

In summary, the district must withhold the information it marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 22.27 of the Tax Code. The district must withhold the information it marked under section 552.149(a) of the Government Code. The remaining information must be released.

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,



Kavid Singh
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

KVS/som

Ref: ID# 638786

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)