



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

October 26, 2017

Mr. Sam Elsass
Legal Assistant
Texas Department of Public Safety
P.O. Box 4087
Austin, Texas 78773-0001

OR2017-24438

Dear Mr. Elsass:

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# 684225 (ORR# 17-6420).

The Texas Department of Public Safety (the "department") received a request for information pertaining to a specified bid and contract. The department claims the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.104 of the Government Code. The department also indicates it notified Santos General Contractors and Swift Corporation of the department's receipt of the request for information and of their 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 at 3 (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 considered the claimed exception and reviewed the submitted information.

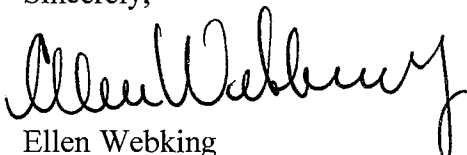
Initially, we note the department has only submitted the bid tabulation in response to the request for information. To the extent information responsive to the remainder of the request existed on the date the department received the request, we assume you have released it. *See* Open Records Decision No. 664 (2000) (if governmental body concludes no exceptions apply to requested information, it must release information as soon as possible). If you have not released any such information, you must do so at this time. *See* Gov't Code §§ 552.301(a), .302.

Section 552.104(a) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure “information that, if released, would give advantage to a competitor or bidder.” *Id.* § 552.104(a). 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.” *Boeing Co. v. Paxton*, 466 S.W.3d 831 (Tex. 2015). The department represents the information pertains to a competitive bidding situation. The department states the release of the submitted information would harm its “purchasing interests and weaken the [d]epartment’s bargaining position as it deliberates options and negotiates [the] best value now and in the future.” Further, the department states, in the event that the submitted information is released, “competing vendors would know the prices offered by an entity selling these goods or services to the [d]epartment, which could artificially inflate prices and prevent the [d]epartment from getting [the] best value[.]” Upon review, we find the department has established the release of the submitted information would give advantage to a competitor or bidder. Thus, we conclude the department may withhold the submitted information under section 552.104(a) of the Government Code.

You ask this office to issue a previous determination permitting the department to withhold bid tabulations under section 552.104 of the Government Code without the necessity of requesting a decision under section 552.301 of the Government Code. *See* Gov’t Code § 552.301(a) (allowing a governmental body to withhold information subject to previous determination); Open Records Decision No. 673 (2001) (listing elements of second type of previous determination under section 552.301(a) of the Government Code). We decline to issue such a previous determination at this time. Accordingly, 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,



Ellen Webking
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

EW/tdw

Ref: ID# 684225

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

2 Third Parties
(w/o enclosures)