



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

November 2, 2017

Mr. Stephen Villarreal
Counsel for the Edgewood Independent School District.
J. Cruz & Associates, LLC
216 West Village Boulevard, Suite 202
Laredo, Texas 78041

OR2017-25145

Dear Mr. Villarreal:

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# 683208.

The Edgewood Independent School District (the "district"), which you represent, received a request for information pertaining to a specified request for proposals. Although the district takes no position as to whether the submitted information is excepted under the Act, the district informs us release of this information may implicate the proprietary interests of Walsh, Gallegos, Trevino, Russo & Kyle, P.C. ("Walsh Gallegos"); Schulman, Lopez, Hoffer & Adelstein, L.L.P.; and Escamilla & Poneck, L.L.P. Accordingly, the district states, and provides documentation showing, it 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 Walsh Gallegos. We have considered the submitted arguments and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note you have only submitted the requested proposals to this office. We assume, to the extent the other information pertaining to the specified request for proposals existed on the date the district received the request, the district has released it. If the district has not released any such information, it must do so at this time. *See* Gov't Code §§ 552.301, .302; *see also* Open Records Decision No. 664 (2000) (if governmental body concludes no exceptions apply to requested information, it must release information as soon as possible).

Next, 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 any of the remaining third parties explaining why the submitted information should not be released. Therefore, we have no basis to conclude any 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, 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, the district may not withhold the submitted information on the basis of any proprietary interest any of the remaining third parties may have in the information.

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. Walsh Gallegos states it has competitors. In addition, Walsh Gallegos states release of some of its information would give its competitors a competitive advantage. After review of the information at issue and consideration of the arguments, we find Walsh Gallegos has established the release of the information it has indicated would give advantage to a competitor or bidder. Thus, we conclude the district may withhold the information we have marked under section 552.104(a) of the Government Code.¹

Section 552.136(b) 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."² Gov't Code § 552.136(b); *see id.* § 552.136(a) (defining "access device"). This office has concluded insurance policy numbers constitute access device numbers for purposes of section 552.136. Accordingly, the district must withhold the insurance policy numbers under section 552.136 of the Government Code.

We note some of the submitted 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

¹As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address the remaining argument against disclosure of this information.

²This office will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

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 district must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.104 of the Government Code. The district must withhold the insurance policy numbers under section 552.136 of the Government Code. The district must release the remaining information; however, any information subject to copyright may only be released 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,



Sidney M. Pounds
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

SMP/gw

Ref: ID# 683208

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

c: 3 Third Parties
(w/o enclosures)