



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

February 27, 2018

Ms. Kristi Godden
O'Hanlon, Demerath & Castillo
Counsel for Hidalgo Independent School District
808 West Avenue
Austin, Texas 78701

OR2018-04579

Dear Ms. Godden:

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# 697367 (ID# HISD-039).

The Hidalgo Independent School District (the "district"), which you represent, received a request for information pertaining to specified contract, bid, bonding, and payment information. You indicate you will withhold certain information under section 552.136 of the Government Code.¹ You state the district released some information. Although you take no position as to whether the submitted information is excepted under the Act, you state release of this information may implicate the proprietary interests of Gonzalez - De La Garza & Associates ("Gonzalez"). Accordingly, you state, and provide documentation showing, you notified Gonzalez of the request for information and of its 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 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


¹Section 552.136 of the Government Code permits a governmental body to withhold the information described in section 552.136(b) without the necessity of seeking a decision from this office. *See* Gov't Code § 552.136(c). If a governmental body redacts such information, it must notify the requestor in accordance with section 552.136(e). *See id.* § 552.136(d), (e).

§ 552.305(d)(2)(B). As of the date of this letter, we have not received comments from Gonzalez explaining why the submitted information should not be released. Therefore, we have no basis to conclude Gonzalez has protected proprietary interests 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 district may not withhold the submitted information on the basis of any proprietary interest Gonzalez may have in the information. The district must release the submitted information.

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,



Ramsey A. Abarca
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

RAA/gw

Ref: ID# 697367

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

c: Third Party
(w/o enclosures)