



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

March 28, 2019

Ms. Durime Elmazi Fahim
Assistant City Attorney
City of San Antonio
315 South Santa Rosa, 6th Floor
San Antonio, Texas 78207

OR2019-08513

Dear Ms. Fahim:

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# 757733 (COSA File No. W246894-010919).

The City of San Antonio (the "city") received a request for responses submitted to the city pertaining to a specified request for information. Although the city takes no position regarding whether the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under the Act, the city states its release may implicate the proprietary interests of the following: Aerodyne Research, Inc.; Entanglement Technologies, Inc.; Southwest Research Institute ("SwRI"); Trinity Consultants; and the University of Houston. Accordingly, the city states, and provides documentation showing, it notified these third parties of the request for information and of their right to submit arguments to this office. *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 SwRI. 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) 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 only received comments from SwRI explaining why the information at issue should not be

released. Thus, we have no basis to conclude the remaining 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 that information is trade secret), 542 at 3. Therefore, the city may not withhold the submitted information on the basis of any proprietary interest the remaining third parties may have in the information.

SwRI asserts some of its information is excepted from public disclosure under section 552.104 of the Government Code. 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). 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. SwRI states it has competitors. In addition, SwRI explains release of the information it indicated would give its competitors an advantage. After review of the information at issue and consideration of the arguments, we find SwRI has established the release of the information at issue, which we marked, would give an advantage to a competitor or bidder. Accordingly, we conclude the city may withhold the information we marked under section 552.104(a) of the Government Code.¹

We note some of the remaining 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, the city may withhold the information we marked under section 552.104(a) of the Government Code. The city 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.

¹As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address SwRI’s remaining arguments against disclosure of this information.

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,



James M. Graham
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JMG/jxd

Ref: ID# 757733

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

5 Third parties
(w/o enclosures)