



KEN PAXTON  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

June 11, 2019

Mr. Nicholas Toulet  
Assistant City Attorney  
City of Midland  
P.O. Box 1152  
Midland, Texas 79702-1152

OR2019-15517

Dear Mr. Toulet:

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# 769922 (City ID #M026165-032519).

The City of Midland (the "city") received a request for information pertaining to three specified requests for proposals. The city claims some of the requested information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.104 of the Government Code. The city also states, and provides documentation showing, it notified Signature Automation, LLC ("Signature") and Halff Associates, Inc. ("Halff") of the city's receipt of the request for information and of the right to submit arguments to this office as to why the requested 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 received comments from Signature stating it has no objection to release of its information. We have considered the exception you claim 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 not received comments from Halff explaining why the submitted information should not be

released. Therefore, we have no basis to conclude Halff 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, 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 city may not withhold the submitted information on the basis of any proprietary interest Halff 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). 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, 841 (Tex. 2015). The city informs us Exhibit B consists of “bidding and contract documents” that were used to obtain contracts with the city. The city asserts Exhibit B is excepted from release under section 552.104 because “disclosure of this information would provide the requestor, or a third party[,] with an advantage if either should decide to submit a bid to provide the [c]ity with similar goods and services in the future.” Upon review, we find the city has established the release of the information at issue would give advantage to a competitor or bidder. Thus, we conclude the city may withhold Exhibit B under section 552.104(a) of the Government Code.

Section 552.136 of the Government Code states “[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.”<sup>1</sup> Gov’t Code § 552.136(b); *see id.* § 552.136(a) (defining “access device”). This office has determined an insurance policy number is an access device for purposes of this exception. Thus, the city must withhold the insurance policy numbers in the remaining information under section 552.136 of the Government Code.

In summary, the city may withhold Exhibit B under section 552.104 of the Government Code. The city must withhold the insurance policy numbers in the remaining information under section 552.136 of the Government Code. The city must release the remaining 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.

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<sup>1</sup>The Office of the Attorney General 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).

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](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,



Erin Groff  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

EMG/be

Ref: ID# 769922

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)

2 Third Parties  
(w/o enclosures)