



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

September 17, 2019

Ms. Jennifer Burnett
Senior Attorney & Public Information Coordinator
The University of Texas System
210 West 7th Street
Austin, Texas 78701-2901

OR2019-25964

Dear Ms. Burnett:

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# 786190 (Ref. No. 191500).

The University of Texas at Austin (the "university") received a request for the contracts awarded for RFP No. 721-1603, Outside Cabling Services, submitted during a specified period of time. Although the university takes no position as to whether the submitted information is excepted under the Act, the university states release of the submitted information may implicate the proprietary interests of Brymer Communications Services ("Brymer") and JPC Construction ("JPC"). Accordingly, the university states, and provides documentation showing, it notified these parties of the request for information and of the 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 (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 Brymer. We have reviewed the submitted information and considered the submitted arguments.

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 § 552.305(d)(2)(B). As of the date of this letter, we have not received comments from JPC explaining why the submitted information should not be released. Therefore, we have no basis to conclude JPC 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

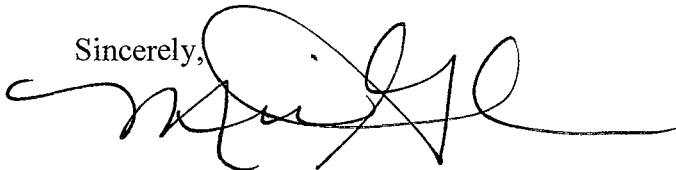
evidence, not conclusory or generalized allegations, that release of requested information would cause that party substantial competitive harm), 552 at 5 (1990) (party must establish *prima facie* case that information is trade secret), 542 at 3. Accordingly, the university may not withhold the submitted information on the basis of any proprietary interest JPC 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). In considering whether a private third party may assert this exception, the supreme court reasoned because section 552.305(a) of the Government Code includes section 552.104 as an example of an exception that involves a third party’s property interest, 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. Brymer states it has competitors. In addition, Brymer states release of the information at issue would cause competitive harm. After review of the information at issue and consideration of the arguments, we find Brymer has established the release of the information at issue would give advantage to a competitor or bidder. Thus, we conclude the university may withhold the information we marked under section 552.104(a) of the Government Code.² The university 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.

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 <https://www.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open-government/members-public/what-expect-after-ruling-issued> or call the OAG’s Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Public Information Act may be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the OAG, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Michelle Garza
Attorney
Open Records Division

MRG/jxd

²As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address the remaining argument against disclosure of the information at issue.

Ref: ID# 786190

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

2 Third Parties
(w/o enclosures)