



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

January 8, 2020

Mr. Christopher A. Gregg
Counsel for the City of Webster
Gregg & Gregg, P.C.
16055 Space Center Boulevard, Suite 150
Houston, Texas 77062

OR2020-00749

Dear Mr. Gregg:

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# 805593 (CH 222-2019 and 223-2019).

The City of Webster (the "city"), which you represent, received two requests from the same requestor for building records pertaining to specified addresses. You state you have 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 several third parties.¹ Accordingly, you state, and provide documentation showing, you notified the interested third parties of the requests for information and of the 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.

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

¹Charles D Gooden Consulting Engineers, Inc.; DMAR Engineering Inc.; Edward Tsao Architects; Gardner Associates-Architects, Inc.; GHA; Innovative Engineering Design; Act of Design; JMAC Architects LLC; John Sharpe Architects; Newlands Services Inc.; Nuttall Uchizono Associates; Osborn Vane Architects; QCF Design Services; Robert Burch Architects; Rodger Brooks Architects; Turner Duran Architects; William Hoff Architects; and Wilson Zetty Architects.

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

We note some of the materials 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. The city must release the submitted information; however, any information that is subject to copyright may be released only 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 <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,



Paige Lay
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

PL/mo

Mr. Christopher A. Gregg

Ref: ID# 805593

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

18 Third Parties
(w/o enclosures)