



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

March 4, 2020

Ms. Linda Pemberton  
Paralegal  
City of Killeen  
P.O. Box 1329  
Killeen, Texas 76540-1329

OR2020-06804

Dear Ms. Pemberton:

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# 814674 (PIR# W030782).

The City of Killeen (the "city") received a request for plans for a specified property.<sup>1</sup> You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under sections 552.101 and 552.110 of the Government Code. Additionally, you state release of the submitted information may implicate the proprietary interests of Vera & Associates, L.C.; W & B Development, L.T.D.; and Walker & Partners. Accordingly, you state, and provide documentation showing, you notified these third parties of the request for information and of their 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 considered the exceptions you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we must address the procedural obligations of the city under section 552.301 of the Government Code, which prescribes the procedures that a governmental body must follow in asking this office to decide whether requested information is excepted from public disclosure. Pursuant to section 552.301(e), a governmental body must submit to this office within fifteen business days of receiving an open records request a copy of the written

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<sup>1</sup> As the city has not submitted a copy of the written request for information, we take our description of the request from your brief.

request for information. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(e)(1)(B). The city informs us it received the request for information on December 6, 2019. However, as of the date of this ruling, the city has not submitted to this office a copy of the request. Therefore, the city failed to comply with section 552.301(e).

Pursuant to section 552.302 of the Government Code, a governmental body's failure to comply with the procedural requirements of section 552.301 results in the legal presumption that the requested information is public and must be released unless there is a compelling reason to withhold the information from disclosure. *See id.* § 552.302; *Simmons v. Kuzmich*, 166 S.W.3d 342 (Tex. App.—Fort Worth 2005, no pet.); *Hancock v. State Bd. of Ins.*, 797 S.W.2d 379, 381-82 (Tex. App.—Austin 1990, no writ). The city claims sections 552.101 and 552.110 of the Government Code for the submitted information. However, we note section 552.110 protects the interests of private parties that provide information to governmental bodies, not the interests of governmental bodies themselves. *See generally* Open Records Decision No. 592 (1991). Accordingly, we do not consider the city's argument under section 552.110. However, because section 552.101 of the Government Code and third-party interests can provide compelling reasons to overcome the presumption of openness, we will consider whether the submitted information must be withheld on those grounds.

Next, 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) 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 any of the third parties explaining why the submitted information should not be released. Therefore, we have no basis to conclude these 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, 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 these third parties may have in the information.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. This section encompasses information protected by other statutes. Sections 418.176 through 418.182 were added to chapter 418 of the Government Code as part of the Texas Homeland Security Act ("HSA"). The city claims the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 418.181 of the Government Code. Section 418.181 provides "[t]hose documents or portions of documents in the possession of a governmental entity are confidential if they identify the technical details of particular vulnerabilities of critical infrastructure to an act of terrorism." *Id.* § 418.181; *see also id.* § 421.001 (defining critical infrastructure to include "all public or private assets, systems, and functions vital to the security, governance, public health and safety, and functions vital to the state or the nation"). The fact that information may relate to a governmental body's

security concerns or emergency management activities does not make the information *per se* confidential under the HSA. *See* Open Records Decision No. 649 at 3 (1996) (language of confidentiality provision controls scope of its protection). Furthermore, the mere recitation by a governmental body of a statute's key terms is not sufficient to demonstrate the applicability of a claimed provision. As with any exception to disclosure, a governmental body asserting one of the confidentiality provisions of the HSA must adequately explain how the responsive records fall within the scope of the claimed provision. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(e)(1)(A) (governmental body must explain how claimed exception to disclosure applies).

The city states the submitted information "identifies technical details of layouts including, but not limited to, sanitary sewer, water and drainage infrastructures." The city explains release of this information "would divulge vulnerabilities of the critical infrastructure to an act of terrorism." The city asserts, and we agree, the city's sanitary sewer, water, and drainage systems constitute critical infrastructure for the purposes of section 418.181. *See generally id.* § 421.001. Based upon these representations and our review, we find portions of the submitted information reveal the technical details of particular vulnerabilities of critical infrastructure to an act of terrorism. Accordingly, the city must withhold the information we marked under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 418.181 of the Government Code. However, we find the city failed to establish the remaining information is confidential under section 418.181 of the Government Code. Therefore, the city may not withhold the remaining information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 418.181 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.

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,



Katie Stallcup  
Attorney  
Open Records Division

AKS/jxd

Ref: ID# 814674

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)

3 Third Parties  
(w/o enclosures)