



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

March 5, 2020

Mr. Joseph R. Crawford
Assistant City Attorney
City of Houston
P.O. Box 368
Houston, Texas 77001-0368

OR2020-06904

Dear Mr. Crawford:

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# 815118 (GC No. 26377).

The City of Houston (the "city") received a request for specified documents pertaining to two specified locations. 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 Marsh Darcy Partners ("Marsh") and Odyssey Engineering Group ("Odyssey"). Accordingly, you state, and provide documentation showing, you notified Marsh and Odyssey of the request for information and of their 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 received arguments from Marsh. We have considered the submitted arguments and 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 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 Odyssey explaining why the submitted information should not be released. Therefore, we have no basis to conclude Odyssey 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 any portion of the submitted information related to Odyssey on the basis of any proprietary interest it may have in the information.

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. Marsh generally raises section 552.104. Upon review, we find Marsh has not established the release of the submitted information would give advantage to a competitor or bidder. Thus, no portion of Marsh’s information may be withheld under section 552.104(a) of the Government Code. As you raise no exceptions to disclosure, the city must release the submitted 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,



Ashley Crutchfield
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

AC/mo

Ref: ID# 815118

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

2 Third Parties
(w/o enclosures)