



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

June 23, 2020

Ms. Roberta B. Cross
Township Attorney
The Woodlands Township
2801 Technology Forest Boulevard
The Woodlands, Texas 77381

OR2020-16363

Dear Ms. Cross:

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# 832626 (PIR2020-141).

The Woodlands Township (the "township") received a request for information pertaining to a specified contract. You state the township released some information to the requestor. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.104 of the Government Code. You also state release of the submitted information may implicate the proprietary interests of The Goodman Corporation; HDR Engineering, Inc. ("HDR"); LSC Transportation Consultants, Inc.; and SBLB, LLC. Accordingly, the township states, and provides documentation showing, it notified the 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 received comments from HDR. We have reviewed the submitted arguments and the submitted information.

Section 552.104(a) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure information that a governmental body demonstrates, if released, would "harm its interests by providing an advantage to a competitor or bidder in a particular ongoing competitive situation or in a particular competitive situation where the governmental body establishes the situation at issue is set to reoccur or there is a specific and demonstrable intent to enter into the competitive situation again in the future." 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). After review of the information at issue and consideration of the arguments, we find the township has established the release of the information at issue would harm its interests by providing an advantage to a competitor or bidder in a particular ongoing competitive situation. Thus, we conclude the township may withhold the submitted information under section 552.104(a) of the Government Code.¹

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/be

Ref: ID# 832626

c: Requestor

4 Third Parties

¹ As our ruling is dispositive, we need not address the remaining arguments against disclosure of this information.