



KEN PAXTON  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

October 28, 2020

Ms. Angelie Thomas  
Assistant City Attorney  
City of Sugar Land  
P.O. Box 110  
Sugar Land, Texas 77487-0110

OR2020-27078

Dear Ms. Thomas:

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# 850647 (Ref. No. W010052).

The City of Sugar Land (the "city") received a request for mechanical, electrical, and plumbing plans pertaining to a specified address. You state the city will release some information to the requestor. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted 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 made confidential by other statutes, such as section 418.181 of the Government Code, which was added to chapter 418 of the Government Code as part of the Texas Homeland Security Act (the "HSA"). 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. The fact that information may relate to a governmental body's security concerns 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 confidentiality provision, a governmental body asserting one of the confidentiality provisions of the HSA must adequately explain how the responsive information falls 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).

You explain the submitted information reveals “details of water lines, sanitary sewer lines, storm sewer lines, inlets[,] and manholes that are part of the [c]ity’s water, sanitary[,] and drainage systems.” You state, and we agree, the city’s water and sanitary sewer systems are critical infrastructure for purposes of section 418.181. *See id.* § 421.001 (defining “critical infrastructure” to include all public or private assets, systems, and functions vital to security, governance, public health and safety, economy, or morale of state or nation). You assert release of the information at issue would reveal potential vulnerabilities in the city’s water and sanitary sewer systems. You further assert release of the information at issue would allow criminal actors to tamper with the city’s water and sanitary sewer systems, which “could cause public health issues, such as the spread of disease, [and] financial impacts to the [c]ity[.]” Based on your representations and our review, we find you have demonstrated the release of the submitted information would identify the technical details of particular vulnerabilities of the city to an act of terrorism. Accordingly, the city must withhold the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 418.181 of the Government Code.

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,

Blake Brennan  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

BBX/rm

Ref: ID# 850647

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)