



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

December 2, 2020

Mr. Joseph G. Hays  
Assistant City Attorney  
City of Houston  
P.O. Box 368  
Houston, Texas 77001

OR2020-30078

Dear Mr. Hays:

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# 856668 (GC# 26935).

The City of Houston (the "city") received a request for results for bids on project# I03588 for the city's Public Works. 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 Accurate Supply, Accurate Meter & Backflow, Coburn Supply, and Core & Main.<sup>1</sup> 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 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.

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

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<sup>1</sup> We note the city failed to comply with the procedural requirements of section 552.301 of the Government Code in requesting a decision from this office. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(e). Nonetheless, third party interests can provide a compelling reason to overcome the presumption of openness caused by failure to comply with section 552.301. *See id.* §§ 552.007, .302; Open Records Decision No. 150 at 2 (1977). Thus, we will consider whether the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under the Act, notwithstanding the city's violation of section 552.301 in requesting this decision.

Code § 552.305(d)(2)(B). As of the date of this letter, we have not received comments from any third party explaining why the submitted information should not be released. Therefore, we have no basis to conclude any third party has a protected proprietary interest in the submitted information. *See, e.g., id.* § 552.110 (requiring the provision of specific factual evidence demonstrating the applicability of the exception). Accordingly, the city may not withhold the submitted information on the basis of any proprietary interest any third party may have in the information. 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,

Kelly McWethy  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

KM/gw

Ref: ID# 856668

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)

c: Third Parties  
(w/o enclosures)