



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

December 18, 2020

Ms. Mary Kay Fischer
City Attorney
City of Friendswood
910 South Friendswood Drive
Friendswood, Texas 77546

OR2020-31806

Dear Ms. Fischer:

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# 859621 (Ref. No. W012884-100220).

The City of Friendswood (the "city") received a request for specified records for a specified address. 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 “depicts the exact size[s] and locations of sanitary sewer force mains and gravity lines, water distribution mains, storm sewer gravity mains and inlets, fire hydrants and manholes, etc.” 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 “would compromise safety and security measure of the infrastructures at issue[.]” 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,

Ashley Crutchfield
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

AC/mo

Ref: ID# 859621

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)