



KEN PAXTON  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

August 1, 2022

Ms. Clarice Crocker  
Records Coordinator  
City of Waxahachie  
P.O. Box 757  
Waxahachie, Texas 75168

OR2022-22478

Dear Ms. Crocker:

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# 963151.

The City of Waxahachie (the "city") received two requests from different requestors for a specified contract. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.104 of the Government Code. Additionally, you state release of the submitted information may implicate the proprietary interests of Waste Connections, Inc. ("Waste Connections"). Accordingly, the city states, and provides documentation showing, it notified Waste Connections of the request for information and of the 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 have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, 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) 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 Waste Connections explaining why the submitted information should not be released. Therefore, we have no basis to conclude Waste Connections 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 Waste Connections may have in the 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.” *Id.* § 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 city has failed to demonstrate the applicability of section 552.104 to the information at issue. Thus, we conclude the city may not withhold the information at issue under section 552.104(a).

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure “information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision.”<sup>1</sup> Gov’t Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). Under the common-law right of privacy, an individual has a right to be free from the publicizing of private affairs in which the public has no legitimate concern. *Id.* at 682. The Third Court of Appeals has concluded public citizens’ dates of birth are protected by common-law privacy pursuant to section 552.101. *See Paxton v. City of Dallas*, No. 03-13-00546-CV, 2015 WL 3394061, at \*3 (Tex. App.—Austin May 22, 2015, pet. denied) (mem. op.). Therefore, the city must withhold the public citizen’s date of birth within the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

Section 552.136 of the Government Code provides, “[n]otwithstanding any other provision of [the Act], a credit card, debit card, charge card, or access device number that is collected, assembled, or maintained by or for a governmental body is confidential.” Gov’t Code § 552.136(b); *see id.* § 552.136(a) (defining “access device”). This office has determined insurance policy numbers are access device numbers for purposes of section 552.136. *See Open Records Decision No. 684* at 9 (2009). Accordingly, the city must withhold the insurance policy numbers within the remaining information under section 552.136 of the Government Code.

In summary, the city must withhold the public citizen’s date of birth within the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. The city must withhold the insurance policy numbers within the remaining information under section 552.136 of the Government Code. The city must release the remaining information.

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<sup>1</sup> The Office of the Attorney General will raise mandatory exceptions on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. *See Open Records Decision Nos. 481* (1987), *480* (1987), *470* (1987).

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,

Colin Henry  
Attorney  
Open Records Division

CEH/jm

Ref: ID# 963151

Enc. Submitted documents

c: 2 Requestors  
(w/o enclosures)

Third Party  
(w/o enclosures)