



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

August 7, 2006

Mr. James M. Frazier, III
Assistant General Counsel
Texas Department of Criminal Justice
P.O. Box 4004
Huntsville, Texas 77342-4004

OR2006-08842

Dear Mr. Frazier:

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# 256332.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (the "department") received a request for information related to a bid for contract number 696-FD-6-8-C0223. Although you raise no exceptions to disclosure on behalf of the department, you contend that the requested information may contain proprietary information subject to exception under section 552.110 of the Government Code. Accordingly, you state, and provide documentation showing, that you sent notice to the interested third party, Troy Construction, of the department's receipt of the request for information and of the third party's right to submit arguments to this office as to why the information at issue should not be released to the requestor. *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 requested information relating to that party should be withheld from disclosure. *See Gov't Code* § 552.305(d)(2)(B). As of the date of this letter, Troy Construction has not submitted any comments to this office explaining how release of the information at issue would affect its proprietary interests. Therefore, the interested third party has provided us with no basis

to conclude that it has a protected proprietary interest in any of the submitted information. See Gov't Code § 552.110(b) (to prevent disclosure of commercial or financial information, party must show by specific factual or evidentiary material, not conclusory or generalized allegations, that it actually faces competition and that substantial competitive injury would likely result from disclosure); Open Records Decision Nos. 639 at 4 (1996), 552 at 5 (1990) (party must establish *prima facie* case that information is trade secret), 542 at 3 (1990). Accordingly, we conclude that the department may not withhold any portion of the submitted information on the basis of any proprietary interest that the interested third party may have in the information.

We note that the submitted documents contain information that is excepted from public disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code.¹ Section 552.101 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 the common-law right of privacy, which protects information that is 1) highly intimate or embarrassing, such that its release would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, and 2) not of legitimate concern to the public. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668 (Tex. 1976). The types of information considered intimate and embarrassing by the Texas Supreme Court in *Industrial Foundation* included information relating to sexual assault, pregnancy, mental or physical abuse in the workplace, illegitimate children, psychiatric treatment of mental disorders, attempted suicide, and injuries to sexual organs. *Id.* at 683.

This office has generally found that personal financial information not relating to a financial transaction between an individual and a governmental body is protected by common-law privacy. See Open Records Decision Nos. 600 (1992), 545 (1990). After reviewing the submitted documents, we find that the ownership percentage information we have marked is confidential pursuant to the owner's common-law right to privacy. The department must withhold this information pursuant to section 552.101 and common-law privacy. The remaining information is not private, and may not be withheld under section 552.101 on that basis. Therefore, the remaining information must be released to the requestor.

This letter ruling is limited to the particular records 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 records or any other circumstances.

This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For example, governmental bodies are prohibited from asking the attorney general to reconsider this ruling. Gov't Code § 552.301(f). If the governmental body wants to challenge this ruling, the governmental body must appeal by

¹The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception like section 552.101 on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

filing suit in Travis County within 30 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.324(b). In order to get the full benefit of such an appeal, the governmental body must file suit within 10 calendar days. *Id.* § 552.353(b)(3), (c). If the governmental body does not appeal this ruling and the governmental body does not comply with it, then both the requestor and the attorney general have the right to file suit against the governmental body to enforce this ruling. *Id.* § 552.321(a).

If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records promptly pursuant to section 552.221(a) of the Government Code or file a lawsuit challenging this ruling pursuant to section 552.324 of the Government Code. If the governmental body fails to do one of these things, then the requestor should report that failure to the attorney general's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. The requestor may also file a complaint with the district or county attorney. *Id.* § 552.3215(e).

If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

Please remember that under the Act the release of information triggers certain procedures for costs and charges to the requestor. If records are released in compliance with this ruling, be sure that all charges for the information are at or below the legal amounts. Questions or complaints about over-charging must be directed to Hadassah Schloss at the Office of the Attorney General at (512) 475-2497.

If the governmental body, the requestor, or any other person has questions or comments about this ruling, they may contact our office. Although there is no statutory deadline for contacting us, the attorney general prefers to receive any comments within 10 calendar days of the date of this ruling.

Sincerely,



Cindy Nettles
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CN/eb

Ref: ID# 256332

Enc. Submitted documents

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(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Glen Crawford
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(w/o enclosures)