



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

June 12, 2007

Ms. Ann Forbes
Paralegal
Fort Worth Independent School District
100 North University Drive
Fort Worth, Texas 76107

OR2007-07395

Dear Ms. Forbes:

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# 280847.

The Fort Worth Independent School District (the "district") received a request for the Mecca Tech, Inc. ("Mecca Tech") bid for RFP 05-255. You make no arguments and take no position as to whether the submitted information is excepted from disclosure. You, instead, indicate that the submitted information may be subject to third party proprietary interests. Pursuant to section 552.305 of the Government Code, you have notified Mecca Tech of the request and of its right to submit arguments to this office as to why the information should not be released. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305(d); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 542 (1990) (determining that statutory predecessor to section 552.305 permits governmental body to rely on interested third party to raise and explain applicability of exception to disclosure under the Act in certain circumstances). Mecca Tech objects to the release of a portion of its proposal, but does not raise any exceptions against disclosure under the Act. Instead, Mecca Tech contends that a portion of its proposal is protected by copyright. We have reviewed the submitted argument and information.

Mecca Tech argues that pages 30 through 38 of its proposal are protected by copyright. We note that federal copyright law does not make information confidential for purposes of

section 552.101 of the Government Code.¹ *See* Open Records Decision No. 660 at 5 (1999). However, a custodian of public records must comply with the copyright law and is not required to furnish copies of records that are protected by copyright. Attorney General Opinion JM-672 (1987). A governmental body must allow inspection of copyrighted materials unless an exception applies to the information. *Id.* If a member of the public wishes to make copies of materials protected by copyright, the person must do so unassisted by the governmental body. In making copies, the member of the public assumes the duty of compliance with the copyright law and the risk of a copyright infringement suit. *See* Open Records Decision No. 550 (1990). Accordingly, as no exceptions are raised against disclosure, the district must release the submitted information, but any copyrighted information may only be released in accordance with copyright law.

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 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

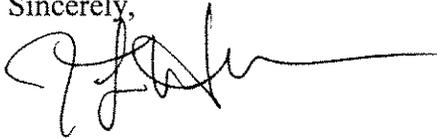
¹Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from public disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision" and encompasses information that is made confidential by statute.

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,



Jaclyn N. Thompson
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JNT/ma

Ref: ID# 280847

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Bruce Stofft
Business Manager
Texas State Billing Services, Inc.
PMB 475
1807 West Slaughter Lane, #200
Austin, Texas 78748
(w/o enclosures)