



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

November 14, 2007

Ms. Valerie Coleman-Ferguson
Office of the General Counsel
University of Houston System
311 East Cullen Building
Houston, Texas 77204-2028

OR2007-14999

Dear Ms. Coleman-Ferguson:

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# 294860.

The University of Houston (the "university") received a request for information pertaining to an endowment for a student scholarship connected or related to the university's student government association from January 1, 2005 to the time of the request, as well as the contract between the university's athletics department and any apparel manufacturers.¹ You state you have previously released all information related to the contract between the athletics department and any apparel manufacturers. You claim that the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.1235 of the Government Code. You also state that the submitted information may implicate the proprietary interests of an interested third party, and you further state you have notified this third party of the request for information

¹We note that the university asked for and received clarification regarding this request. *See* Gov't Code § 552.222(b) (governmental body may communicate with requestor for purpose of clarifying or narrowing request for information); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 663 (1999) (discussing tolling of deadlines during period in which governmental body is awaiting clarification).

and its opportunity to submit comments to this office. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305 (permitting interested third party to submit to attorney general reasons why requested information should not be released); 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 in certain circumstances). We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.²

We note that 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 decision, the third party has not submitted to this office any reasons explaining why its information should not be released. Therefore, this third party has not provided us with any basis to conclude that it has a protected proprietary interest in any of the submitted information. *See, e.g.,* 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. 552 at 5 (1990) (party must establish *prima facie* case that information is trade secret), 542 at 3 (1990).

Section 552.1235(a) of the Government Code excepts "the name or other information that would tend to disclose the identity of a person, other than a governmental body, who makes a gift, grant, or donation of money or property to an institution of higher education[.]" However, this section does not except from disclosure the amount or value of an individual gift, grant, or donation. *See* Gov't Code § 552.1235(b). "Institution of higher education" is defined by section 61.003 of the Education Code. *Id.* § 552.1235(c). Section 61.003 of the Education Code defines an "institution of higher education" as any public technical institute, public junior college, public senior college or university, medical or dental unit, public state college, or other agency of higher education as defined in this section. We agree that the university qualifies as an "institution of higher education" under section 61.003 of the Education Code. Further, because section 552.1235 of the Government Code does not provide a definition of "person," we look to the definition provided in the Code Construction Act. *See* Gov't Code § 311.005. "Person" includes corporation, organization, government or governmental subdivision or agency, business trust, estate, trust, partnership, association, and any other legal entity. *Id.* § 311.005(2). We note that the name of the donor of the funds for the scholarship at issue is readily available on the university's website. Accordingly, we find that the donor has granted the university permission to reveal the donor's corporate

²We assume that the "representative sample" of records submitted to this office is truly representative of the requested records as a whole. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 499 (1988), 497 (1988). This open records letter does not reach, and therefore does not authorize the withholding of, any other requested records to the extent that those records contain substantially different types of information than that submitted to this office.

identity. Therefore, none of the information at issue may be withheld under section 552.1235 of the Government Code. As you raise no other exceptions to disclosure, the submitted 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 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).

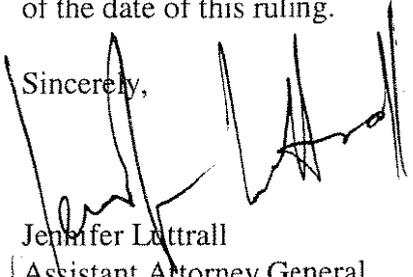
If this ruling requires or permits the governmental body to withhold all or some of the requested information, the requestor can appeal that decision by suing the governmental body. *Id.* § 552.321(a); *Texas Dep't of Pub. Safety v. Gilbreath*, 842 S.W.2d 408, 411 (Tex. App.—Austin 1992, no writ).

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,



Jennifer Lettrall
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JL/eeg

Ref: ID# 294860

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Timothy J. O'Brien
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(w/o enclosures)