



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

December 5, 2012

Ms. Amy L. Sims  
Assistant City Attorney  
City of Lubbock  
P.O. Box 2000  
Lubbock, Texas 79408-2000

OR2012-19613

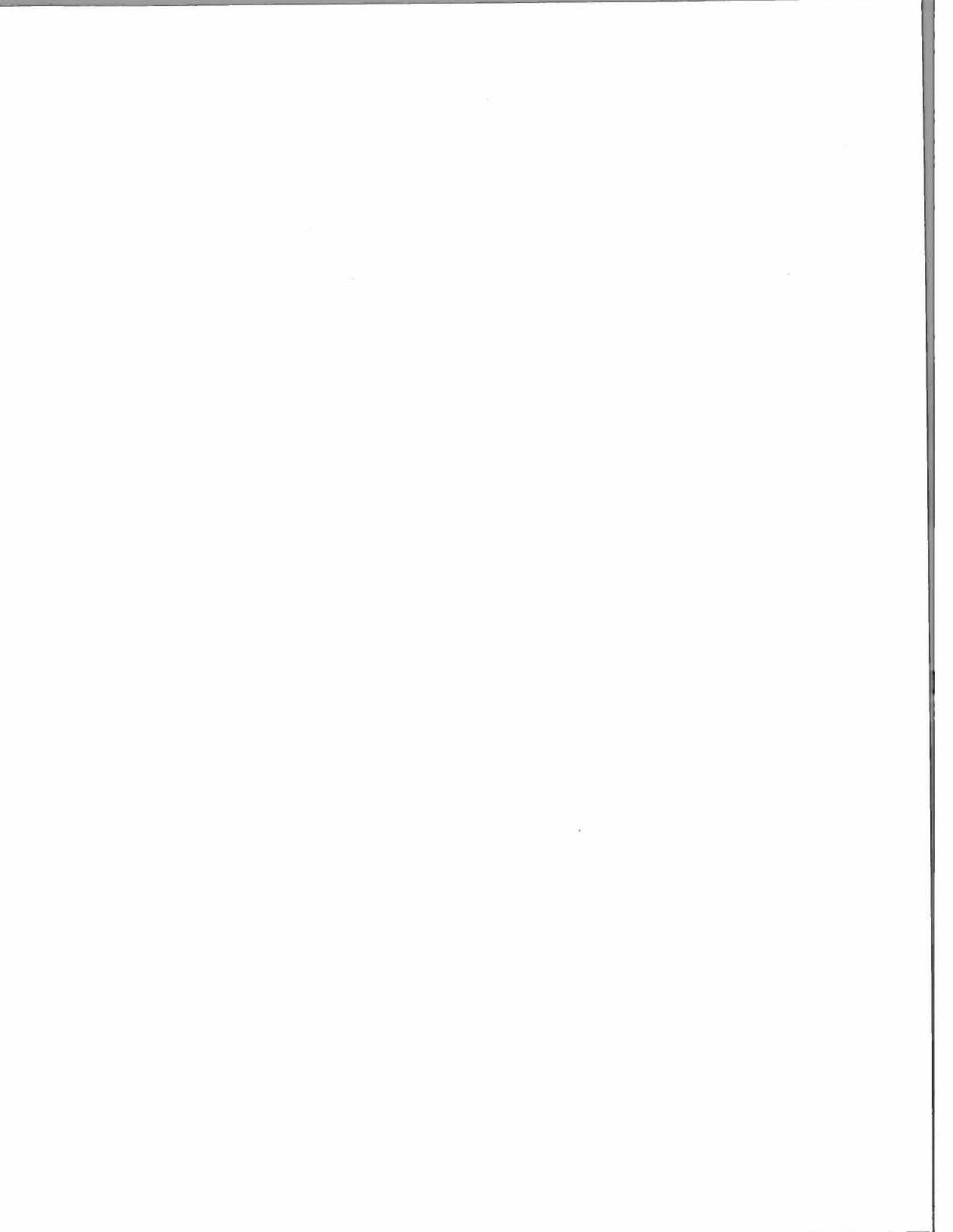
Dear Ms. Sims:

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# 472807.

The City of Lubbock (the "city") received two requests for three categories of information pertaining to RFP 12-10629-DT. You indicate some of the requested information is not available.<sup>1</sup> You claim that a portion of the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.136 of the Government Code. You also state release of the requested information may implicate the proprietary interests of third parties. Accordingly, you state, and provide documentation showing, you notified Alternative Service Concepts ("ASC"); Hammerman & Gainer International, Inc. ("Hammerman"); JI Companies ("JI"); and Texas Political Subdivision ("TPS") of the requests for information and of each party's 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

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<sup>1</sup>The Act does not require a governmental body to release information that did not exist when it received a request or to create responsive information. *See Econ. Opportunities Dev. Corp. v. Bustamante*, 562 S.W.2d 266 (Tex. Civ. App.—San Antonio 1978, writ dismissed); Open Records Decision Nos. 605 at 2 (1992), 555 at 1 (1990).



received comments from TPS.<sup>2</sup> We have considered the submitted arguments and reviewed the submitted information.

We note an interested third party is allowed ten business days after the date of its receipt of the governmental body's notice to submit its reasons, if any, as to why information relating to that party should not be released. Gov't Code § 552.305(d)(2)(B). As of the date of this decision, we have not received correspondence from ASC, Hammerman, or JI. Thus, these interested third parties have not demonstrated that they have a protected proprietary interest in any of the submitted information. *See id.* § 552.110(a)–(b); Open Records Decision Nos. 661 at 5-6 (1999) (to prevent disclosure of commercial or financial information, party must show by specific factual evidence, not conclusory or generalized allegations, that release of requested information would cause that party substantial competitive harm), 552 at 5 (1990) (party must establish *prima facie* case that information is trade secret), 542 at 3. Accordingly, the city may not withhold the submitted information on the basis of any proprietary interests ASC, Hammerman, or JI may have in the information.

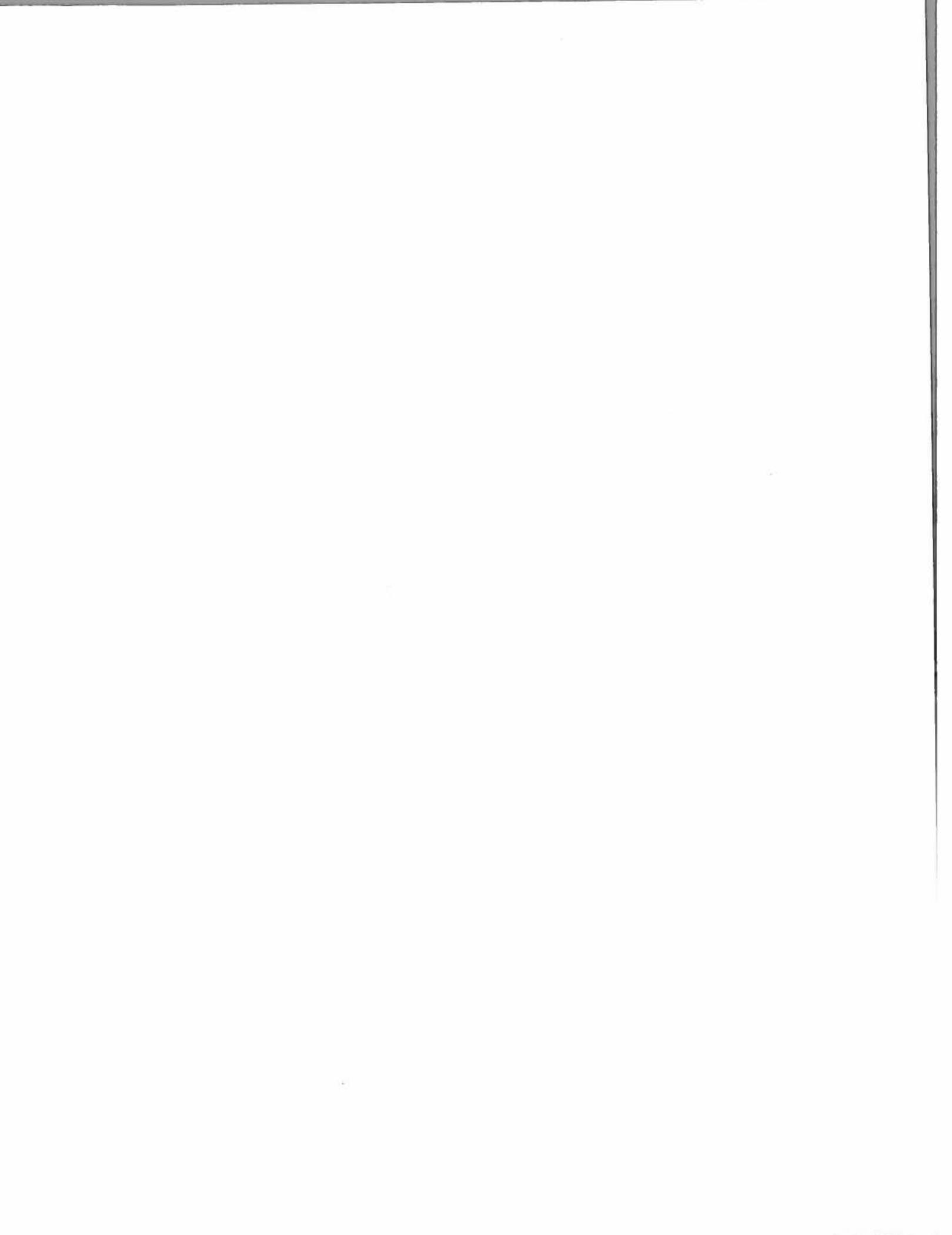
Next, we note TPS seeks to withhold information the city has not submitted to this office for our review. This ruling does not address information beyond what the city has submitted to us for review. *See* Gov't Code § 552.301(e)(1)(D) (governmental body requesting decision from attorney general must submit copy of specific information requested). Accordingly, this ruling is limited to the information the city submitted as responsive to the request for information. *See id.*

TPS asserts its proposal is excepted from disclosure pursuant to section 552.104 of the Government Code, which excepts from disclosure "information that, if released, would give advantage to a competitor or bidder." Gov't Code § 552.104(a). However, section 552.104 is a discretionary exception that protects only the interests of a governmental body, as distinguished from exceptions that are intended to protect the interests of third parties. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 592 (1991) (statutory predecessor to section 552.104 designed to protect interests of a governmental body in a competitive situation, and not interests of private parties submitting information to the government), 522 (1989) (discretionary exceptions in general). As the city does not seek to withhold any information pursuant to this exception, we find section 552.104 is not applicable to TPS's proposal. *See* ORD 592 (governmental body may waive section 552.104).

TPS argues against disclosure of its information under section 552.110 of the Government Code. Section 552.110 protects (1) trade secrets, and (2) commercial or financial information the disclosure of which would cause substantial competitive harm to the person from whom the information was obtained. *See* Gov't Code § 552.110(a)–(b). Section 552.110(a) protects trade secrets obtained from a person and privileged or

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<sup>2</sup>We note TPS raises section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with sections 552.104 and 552.110 of the Government Code; however, section 552.101 does not encompass other exceptions in the Act.



confidential by statute or judicial decision. *Id.* § 552.110(a). The Texas Supreme Court has adopted the definition of a trade secret from section 757 of the Restatement of Torts, which holds a trade secret to be:

any formula, pattern, device or compilation of information which is used in one's business, and which gives him an opportunity to obtain an advantage over competitors who do not know or use it. It may be a formula for a chemical compound, a process of manufacturing, treating or preserving materials, a pattern for a machine or other device, or a list of customers. It differs from other secret information in a business . . . in that it is not simply information as to single or ephemeral events in the conduct of the business . . . . A trade secret is a process or device for continuous use in the operation of the business. . . . [It may] relate to the sale of goods or to other operations in the business, such as a code for determining discounts, rebates or other concessions in a price list or catalogue, or a list of specialized customers, or a method of bookkeeping or other office management.

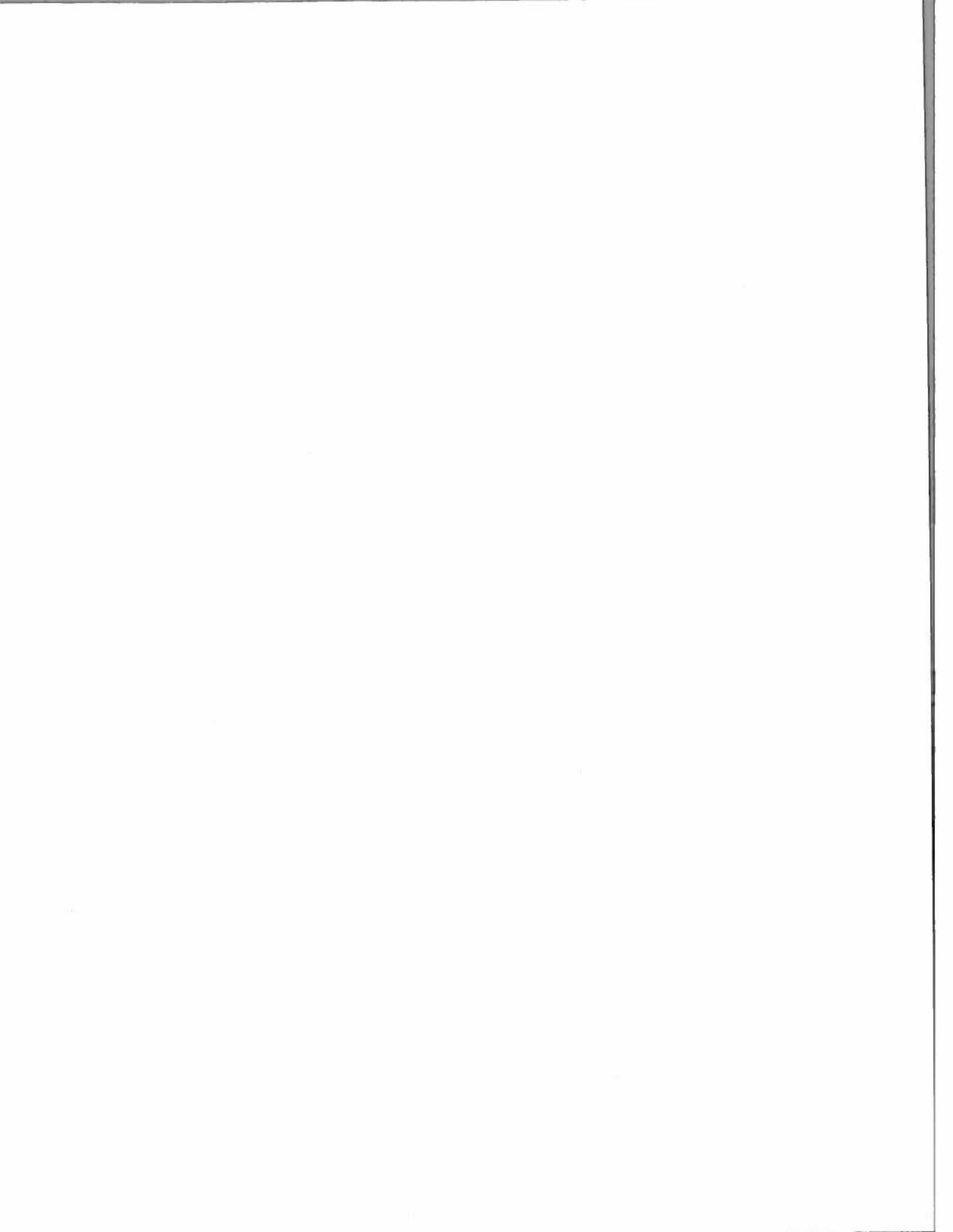
RESTATEMENT OF TORTS § 757 cmt. b (1939); *see also Hyde Corp. v. Huffines*, 314 S.W.2d 776 (Tex. 1958). In determining whether particular information constitutes a trade secret, this office considers the Restatement's definition of trade secret as well as the Restatement's list of six trade secret factors.<sup>3</sup> This office must accept a claim that information subject to the Act is excepted as a trade secret if a *prima facie* case for the exception is made and no argument is submitted that rebuts the claim as a matter of law. *See* ORD 552 at 5. However, we cannot conclude that section 552.110(a) is applicable unless it has been shown the information meets the definition of a trade secret and the necessary factors have been demonstrated to establish a trade secret claim. Open Records Decision No. 402 (1983). We note pricing information pertaining to a particular proposal or contract is generally not a trade secret because it is "simply information as to single or ephemeral events in the conduct of the business," rather than "a process or device for continuous use in the operation of the business." *See* RESTATEMENT OF TORTS § 757 cmt. b; *Huffines*, 314 S.W.2d at 776; Open ORDs 319 at 3, 306 at 3.

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<sup>3</sup>The Restatement of Torts lists the following six factors as indicia of whether information constitutes a trade secret:

- (1) the extent to which the information is known outside of [the company];
- (2) the extent to which it is known by employees and other involved in [the company's] business;
- (3) the extent of measures taken by [the company] to guard the secrecy of the information;
- (4) the value of the information to [the company] and [its] competitors;
- (5) the amount of effort or money expended by [the company] in developing the information;
- (6) the ease or difficulty with which the information could be properly acquired or duplicated by others.

RESTATEMENT OF TORTS § 757 cmt. b; *see* Open Records Decision Nos. 319 at 2 (1982), 306 at 2 (1982), 255 at 2 (1980).

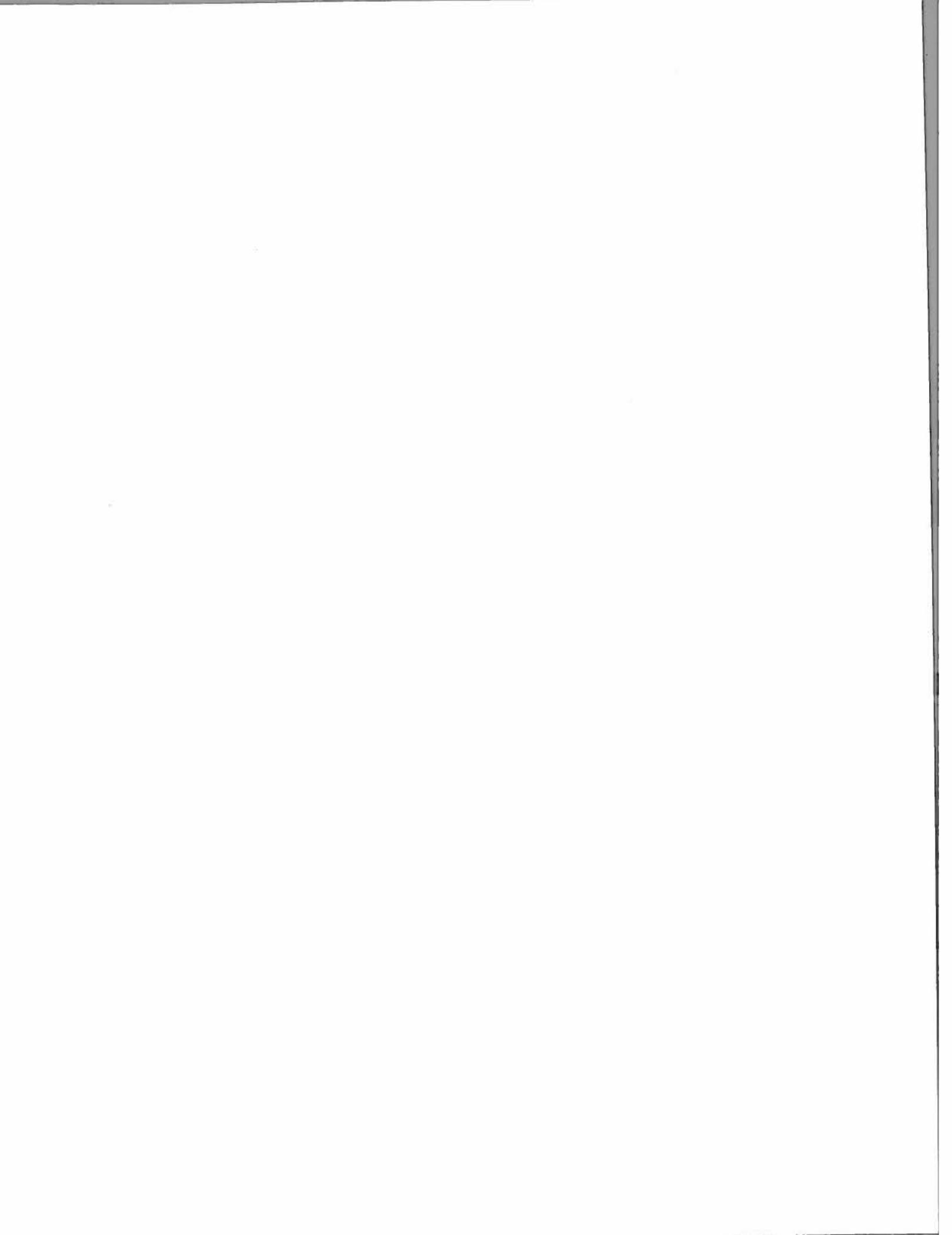


Section 552.110(b) protects “[c]ommercial or financial information for which it is demonstrated based on specific factual evidence that disclosure would cause substantial competitive harm to the person from whom the information was obtained[.]” Gov’t Code § 552.110(b). This exception to disclosure requires a specific factual or evidentiary showing, not conclusory or generalized allegations, that substantial competitive injury would likely result from release of the information at issue. *See id.*; *see also* ORD 661 at 5.

We understand TPS to contend its information constitutes a trade secret under section 552.110(a) of the Government Code. After reviewing the company’s arguments and the information at issue, we conclude TPS has failed to establish a *prima facie* case that any of its information is a trade secret protected by section 552.110(a). *See* ORD 402 (section 552.110(a) does not apply unless information meets definition of trade secret and necessary factors have been demonstrated to establish trade secret claim). Thus, the city may not withhold any portion of the submitted information under section 552.110(a) of the Government Code.

We also understand TPS to contend its information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.110(b) of the Government Code. Upon review, however, we find TPS has not made the specific factual or evidentiary showing required by section 552.110(b) establishing that the release of any of the submitted information would cause the company substantial competitive harm. *See* ORD 661 (for information to be withheld under commercial or financial information prong of section 552.110, business must show by specific factual evidence that substantial competitive injury would result from release of particular information at issue). We further note TPS was the winning bidder with respect to the contract at issue, and the pricing information of a winning bidder is generally not excepted under section 552.110(b). This office considers the prices charged in government contract awards to be a matter of strong public interest. *See* Open Records Decision No. 514 (1988) (public has interest in knowing prices charged by government contractors). *See generally* Dep’t of Justice Guide to the Freedom of Information Act 344–45 (2009) (federal cases applying analogous Freedom of Information Act reasoning that disclosure of prices charged government is a cost of doing business with government). Accordingly, the city may not withhold any portion of the submitted information under section 552.110(b).

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. Section 552.101 encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information if it (1) contains highly intimate or embarrassing facts, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, and (2) is not of legitimate concern to the public. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). To demonstrate the applicability of common-law privacy, both prongs of this test must be established. *Id.* at 681-82. This office has found some kinds of medical information or information indicating disabilities or specific illnesses are protected by common-law privacy. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 470 (1987) (illness from severe emotional and job-related stress), 455 (1987) (prescription drugs, illnesses, operations, and physical handicaps). We note some of the submitted information reveals individuals’



medical information. We are unable to determine whether this information pertains to actual living individuals or fictitious individuals created as samples for purposes of responding to the city's request for proposal. Therefore, to the extent this information, which we have marked, pertains to living individuals, the city must withhold it under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy. To the extent the marked information does not pertain to actual living individuals, the city may not withhold it under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy.

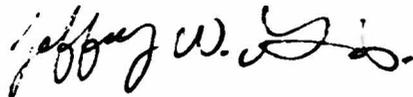
Section 552.136(b) of the Government Code provides "[n]otwithstanding any other provision of [the Act], a credit card, debit card, charge card, or access device number that is collected, assembled, or maintained by or for a governmental body is confidential." Gov't Code § 552.136(b); *see id.* § 552.136(a) (defining "access device"). This office has determined insurance policy numbers are "access device" numbers for purposes of section 552.136. Upon review, we find the city must withhold the insurance policy numbers we have marked under section 552.136.

In summary, to the extent this information, which we have marked, pertains to living individuals, the city must withhold it under section 552.101 in conjunction with common-law privacy. The city must withhold the insurance policy numbers we have marked under section 552.136 of the Government Code. The city must release the remaining information.

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.

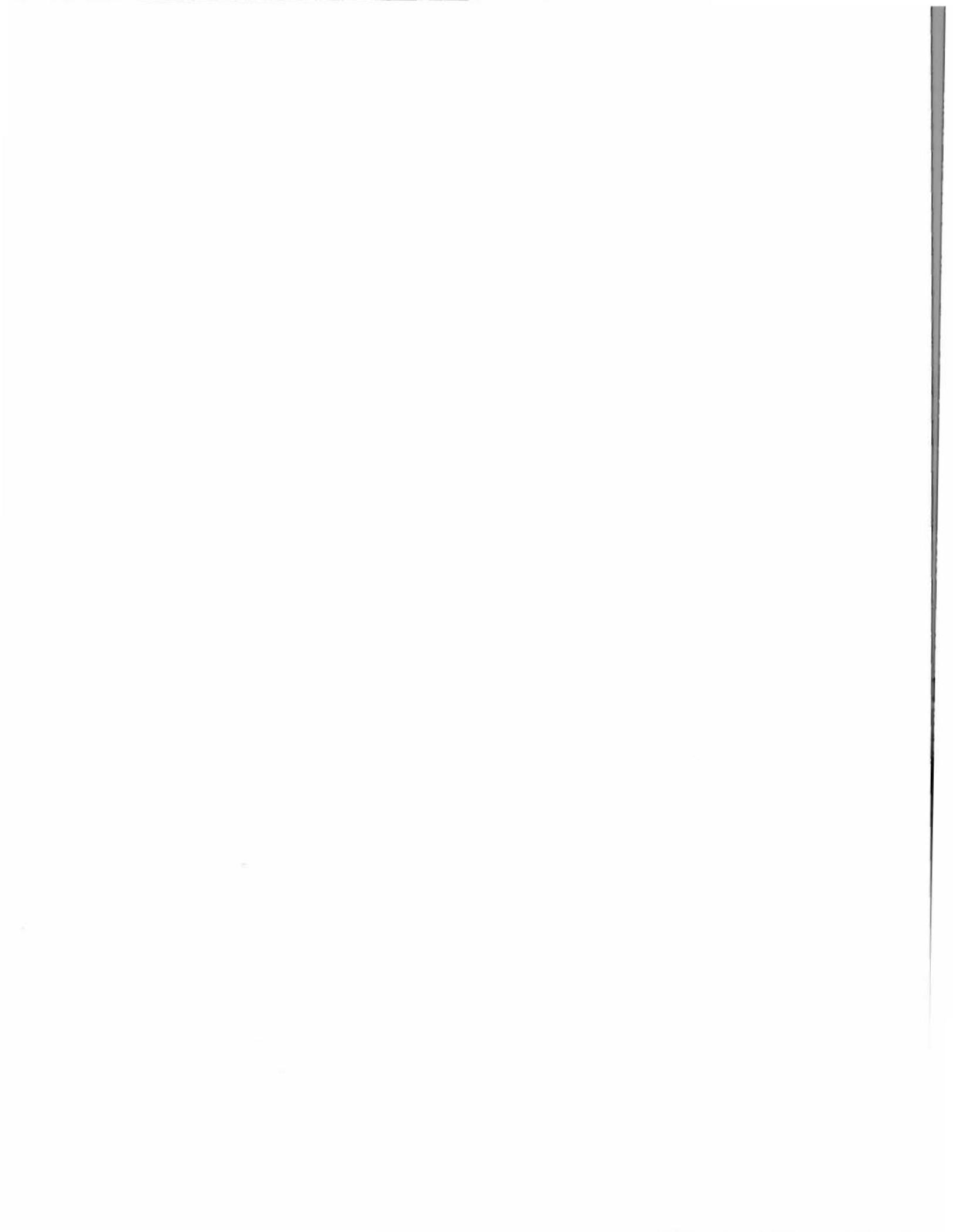
This ruling triggers important deadlines regarding the rights and responsibilities of the governmental body and of the requestor. For more information concerning those rights and responsibilities, please visit our website at [http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index\\_orl.php](http://www.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php), or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for providing public information under the Act must be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the Office of the Attorney General, toll free at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey W. Giles  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

JWG/dls



**Ref: ID# 472807**

**Enc. Submitted documents**

**c: 2 Requestors  
(w/o enclosures)**

**Mr. Randal M. Beach  
Executive Director/CEO  
Texas Political Subdivisions  
P.O. Box 803356  
Dallas, Texas 75380-3356  
(w/o enclosures)**

**Ms. Vanessa James  
Hammerman & Gainer International, Inc.  
3307 82nd Street, Suite G  
Lubbock, Texas 79423  
(w/o enclosures)**

