



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

August 9, 2013

Ms. Karla Schultz
Walsh, Anderson, Gallegos, Green and Treviño, P.C.
P.O. Box 2156
Austin, Texas 78768

OR2013-13876

Dear Ms. Schultz:

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# 497857.

The Pflugerville Independent School District (the "district"), which you represent, received a request for the district's last electric bill, its contract for electricity, and the name and telephone number of the person responsible for choosing the electricity provider. You state the district has provided some of the requested information to the requestor. You do not take a position as to whether the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under the Act. However, you state, and provide documentation showing, you notified the Texas General Land Office (the "GLO") of the district's receipt of the request for information and of its right to submit arguments to this office as to why the requested information should not be released. *See Gov't Code* § 552.304. We have received correspondence from the GLO objecting to the release of the submitted information under sections 552.104 and 552.110 of the Government Code. We have reviewed the submitted arguments and information.

Section 552.104 excepts from required public disclosure "information that, if released, would give advantage to a competitor or bidder." *Id.* § 552.104. This exception protects a governmental body's interests in connection with competitive bidding and in certain other competitive situations. *See Open Records Decision No. 593 (1991)* (construing statutory predecessor). This office has held that a governmental body may seek protection as a competitor in the marketplace under section 552.104 and avail itself of the "competitive advantage" aspect of this exception if it can satisfy two criteria. *See id.* First, the

governmental body must demonstrate that it has specific marketplace interests. *See id.* at 3. Second, the governmental body must demonstrate a specific threat of actual or potential harm to its interests in a particular competitive situation. *See id.* at 5. Thus, the question of whether the release of particular information will harm a governmental body's legitimate interests as a competitor in a marketplace depends on the sufficiency of the governmental body's demonstration of the prospect of specific harm to its marketplace interests in a particular competitive situation. *See id.* at 10. A general allegation of a remote possibility of harm is not sufficient. *See* Open Records Decision No. 514 at 2 (1988).

The GLO asserts it has specific marketplace interests in the information at issue because the GLO is authorized by statute to sell or otherwise convey power generated from royalties taken in kind. Util. Code § 35.102. The GLO advises under that authority, it has created the State Power Program, through which it bids on contracts for the right to sell electrical energy to public retail customers. The GLO states it competes with other private companies for the awards of these contracts. Based on these representations, we find the GLO has demonstrated it has specific marketplace interests and may be considered a "competitor" for purposes of section 552.104. *See* ORD 593.

The GLO contends the release of the submitted information would harm its marketplace interests because this information details the services and the prices the GLO charges for such services in order to provide the district with its electrical needs. The GLO further asserts, if its competitors had access to this information, they would "be able to use the GLO's methods of delivery of electrical services and its pricing formula for such services as their own." Thus, the GLO contends that allowing competitors access to the documents at issue will undermine its ability to compete in this marketplace. Based on the GLO's representations and arguments, we conclude the GLO has shown that release of the submitted information would cause specific harm to the GLO's marketplace interests. *See id.* Therefore, we conclude the district may withhold the submitted information under section 552.104 of the Government Code.¹

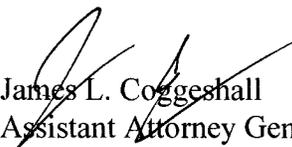
This letter ruling is limited to the particular information at issue in this request and limited to the facts as presented to us; therefore, this ruling must not be relied upon as a previous determination regarding any other information or any other circumstances.

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.texasattorneygeneral.gov/open/orl_ruling_info.shtml, or call the Office of the Attorney General's Open Government Hotline, toll free, at (877) 673-6839. Questions concerning the allowable charges for

¹As our ruling is dispositive, we do not address the GLO's other argument to withhold this information.

providing public information under the Act may be directed to the Office of the Attorney General, toll free, at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



James L. Coggeshall
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JLC/tch

Ref: ID# 497857

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

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