



October 31, 2001

Mr. John Steiner
Division Chief
City of Austin- Law Department
P. O. Box 1546
Austin, Texas 78767-1546

OR2001-4991

Re: Request for info regarding solicitation # PW01300043

Dear Mr. Steiner:

You ask whether certain information is subject to required public disclosure under the Public Information Act, chapter 552 of the Government Code. Your request was assigned ID# 156191.

You assert that the requested information is excepted from disclosure based on section 552.104 of the Government Code.¹ Section 552.104 states that information is excepted from required public disclosure if release of the information would give advantage to a competitor or bidder. The purpose of this exception is to protect the interests of a governmental body usually in competitive bidding situations. *See* Open Records Decision No. 592 (1991). This exception protects information from public disclosure if the governmental body demonstrates potential harm to its interests in a particular competitive situation. *See* Open Records Decision No. 463 (1987). Generally, section 552.104 does not except bids from public disclosure after bidding is completed and the contract has been awarded. *See* Open Records Decision 541 (1990).

In this case, you inform us that the contract has not been awarded. We therefore conclude that the information is excepted from disclosure based on section 552.104 until such time as the contract is awarded.

In light of our conclusion under section 552.104, we need not address the other exceptions raised, if any. 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.

¹We note that the requestor has clarified his request and is no longer seeking any proposals or statement of qualifications

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, within 10 calendar days of this ruling, the governmental body will do one of the following three things: 1) release the public records; 2) notify the requestor of the exact day, time, and place that copies of the records will be provided or that the records can be inspected; or 3) notify the requestor of the governmental body's intent to challenge this letter ruling in court. If the governmental body fails to do one of these three things within 10 calendar days of this ruling, 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 Department of Public 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 General Services Commission 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 Bialek
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JHB/pjb

Ref: ID# 156191

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Gerard P. Cavaluzzi
Vice President & General Counsel
Malcom Pirnie, Inc.
P. O. Box 751
White Plains, New York 10602-0751

Mr. Wayne K. Hunter, P.E.
Mr. William H. Espey, Jr., Ph.D., P.E.
Montgomery Watson Harza/
Espey Consultants, Inc.
3809 South 2nd Street, Suite B-300
Austin, Texas 78704
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. F. Paul Celauro, P.E.
Dannenbaum Engineering Corporation
3409 Executive Center Drive, Suite 129
Austin, Texas 78731-1619
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Roy I. Newton
Vice President
Brown & Root Services
9900 Westpark Drive
Houston, Texas 77063-516
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Gregory J. Wieland, P.E.
Metcalf & Eddy, Inc.
611 South Congress Avenue, Suite 504
Austin, Texas 78704
(w/o enclosures)

Ms. Liza B. Duckworth
Senior Contracts Administrator
Parsons Engineering Science, Inc.
100 West Walnut Street
Pasadena, California 91124
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Scott B. Ahlstror, P. E.
CH2M Hill, Inc.
6210 Highway 290 East, Suite 430
Austin, Texas 78723-1037
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. William P. McLean
Law Offices of Minter, Joseph & Thornhill, P.C.
Attorney for Earthtech, Inc.
811 Barton Springs Road, Suite 800
Austin, Texas 78704-1196
(w/o enclosures)