



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

October 9, 2006

Mr. Michael S. Copeland
Utility Attorney
City of Denton
215 East McKinney Street
Denton, Texas 76201

OR2006-11743

Dear Mr. Copeland:

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# 261417.

The City of Denton (the "city") received a request for a full copy of the city's charter, the salaries and names of all city employees, including municipal utilities employees, and the financial statements of "city-owned profit-generating enterprises." You state that the city has released the majority of the requested information. However, you argue that the salaries of the city's electric department employees are excepted from disclosure under section 552.133 of the Government Code.¹ We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

The city claims that the requested information is excepted from disclosure pursuant to section 552.133 of the Government Code. Section 552.133 excepts from disclosure a public power utility's information related to a competitive matter. Section 552.133(b) provides:

Information or records are excepted from the requirements of Section 552.021 if the information or records are reasonably related to a competitive matter, as defined in this section. Excepted information or records include

¹ Although you initially raised sections 552.101 and 552.107 of the Government Code, in your letter of August 7, 2006, you state that you no longer assert these exceptions.

the text of any resolution of the public power utility governing body determining which issues, activities, or matters constitute competitive matters. Information or records of a municipally owned utility that are reasonably related to a competitive matter are not subject to disclosure under this chapter, whether or not, under the Utilities Code, the municipally owned utility has adopted customer choice or serves in a multiply certificated service area. This section does not limit the right of a public power utility governing body to withhold from disclosure information deemed to be within the scope of any other exception provided for in this chapter, subject to the provisions of this chapter.

Gov't Code § 552.133(b). Section 552.133(a)(3) defines a "competitive matter" as a matter the public power utility governing body in good faith determines by vote to be related to the public power utility's competitive activity, and the release of which would give an advantage to competitors or prospective competitors. *See id.* § 552.133(a)(3). However, section 552.133(a)(3) also provides thirteen categories of information that may not be deemed competitive matters. The attorney general may conclude that section 552.133 is inapplicable to the requested information only if, based on the information provided, the attorney general determines the public power utility governing body has not acted in good faith in determining that the issue, matter, or activity is a competitive matter or that the information requested is not reasonably related to a competitive matter. Gov't Code § 552.133(c).

The city council, as the governing body of Denton Municipal Electric, passed a resolution by vote pursuant to section 552.133 in which it defined certain information to be within the scope of the term "competitive matter." You state that the requested information is reasonably related to a competitive matter, and is exempt from disclosure. Furthermore, we note that the information at issue in this case is not among the thirteen categories of information expressly exempted from the definition of competitive matter. *See* Gov't Code § 552.133(a)(3). Based on the information provided in connection with this request, we cannot conclude that the city council failed to act in good faith. *See id.* § 552.133(c). Consequently, we determine that the requested information is a competitive matter in accordance with the city's resolution and is therefore excepted from disclosure pursuant to section 552.133 of the Government Code.

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).

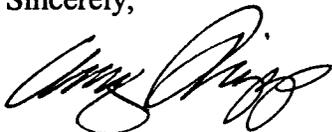
If this ruling requires the governmental body to release all or part of the requested information, the governmental body is responsible for taking the next step. Based on the statute, the attorney general expects that, upon receiving this ruling, the governmental body will either release the public records 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,



Amy L.S. Shipp
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

ALS/sdk

Ref: ID# 261417

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Mr. Lou Y. Lowther
1913 Malone Street
Denton, Texas 76201-1747
(w/o enclosures)