



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

March 22, 2007

Ms. Sarah Irwin Swanson
Assistant Director of General Law
Public Utility Commission of Texas
P. O. Box 13326
Austin, Texas 78711

OR2007-03109

Dear Ms. Swanson:

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# 273955.

The Public Utility Commission of Texas (the "commission") received a request for information pertaining to the number of complaints against, as well as the number of residential service connections for four specified electrical service providers. You state that you have provided the requestor with information responsive to the first part of the request. Although you take no position with respect to the remaining information, you indicate that it may contain proprietary information. You state and provide documentation showing that you have notified Commerce Power ("Commerce"), National Power Company, Inc. ("National"), Texas Power, and Star Electricity LLC ("Star") of the request and of their opportunity to submit comments to this office as to why the requested information should not be released to the requestor. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305(d); *see also* 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 the applicability of exception to disclose under Act in certain circumstances). We have reviewed the submitted information.

You inform this office that some of the data in Exhibit D is not responsive to the instant request for information. The commission need not release nonresponsive information in response to this request and this ruling will not address that information. *See Econ.*

Opportunities Dev. Corp. v. Bustamante, 562 S.W.2d 266 (Tex. Civ. App.—San Antonio 1978, writ dismissed).

An interested third party is allowed ten business days after the date of its receipt of a governmental body's notice under section 552.305(d) of the Government Code to submit its reasons, if any, as to why requested information relating to that party should be withheld from disclosure. See Gov't Code § 552.305(d)(2)(B). As of the date of this letter, Commerce, National, Texas Power, and Star have not submitted comments to this office explaining why any portion of the submitted information relating to them should not be released to the requestor. Thus, we have no basis to conclude that the release of any portion of the submitted information relating to Commerce, National, Texas Power, or Star would implicate their proprietary interests. See Gov't Code § 552.110; Open Records Decision Nos. 552 at 5 (1990) (party must establish *prima facie* case that information is trade secret), 661 at 5-6 (1999) (stating that business enterprise that claims exception for commercial or financial information under section 552.110(b) must show by specific factual evidence that release of requested information would cause that party substantial competitive harm). Accordingly, we conclude that the commission may not withhold any portion of the submitted information pertaining to Commerce, National, Texas, or Star on the basis of any proprietary interests that these companies may have in the information. As we have received no arguments against disclosure, the responsive information must be released.

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,



Jordan Johnson
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

JJ/krl

Ref: ID# 273955

Enc. Submitted documents

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