



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

April 18, 2007

Mr. Carey E. Smith
General Counsel
Texas Health and Human Services Commission
P.O. Box 13247
Austin, Texas 78711

OR2007-04344

Dear Mr. Smith:

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# 275932.

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (the "commission") received two requests for information pertaining to changes to a subcontract between two companies, Accenture and Maximus. You make no arguments and take no position as to whether the submitted information is excepted from disclosure. Instead, you state that the submitted information may be subject to third-party proprietary interests. Pursuant to section 552.305 of the Government Code, you state you have notified Accenture and Maximus of the request and of each company's right to submit arguments to this office as to why the information should not be released. *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 applicability of exception to disclosure under Act in certain circumstances).* We have reviewed the submitted information. We have also received and considered comments from the requestor. *See Gov't Code § 552.304 (providing that interested party may submit comments stating why information should or should not be released).*

An interested third party is allowed ten business days after the date of its receipt of the governmental body's notice under section 552.305(d) 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, this office has not received comments from Accenture or Maximus explaining how the release of the submitted information will affect each company's proprietary interests. Thus, we have no basis to conclude that the release of any portion of the submitted information would implicate the proprietary interests of these companies. *See Open Records Decision Nos. 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), 552 at 5 (1990) (party must establish *prima facie* case that information is trade secret). Accordingly, we conclude that the commission may not withhold any portion of the submitted information pertaining to Accenture or Maximus on the basis of any proprietary interests that these companies may have in the information. As we have received no arguments against disclosure, the submitted 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,



Aries Solis
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

AS/eb

Ref: ID# 275932

Enc. Submitted documents

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