



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

February 18, 2014

Mr. Glen D. Dunbar  
Assistant County Attorney  
County of Fort Bend  
301 Jackson Street, Suite 728  
Richmond, Texas 77469

OR2014-02949

Dear Mr. Dunbar:

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# 514277.

The Fort Bend County Purchasing Department (the "department") received a request for the evaluations and proposals related to RFP# 13-054-Commissary Services. Although you take no position with respect to the public availability of the requested information, you state the proprietary interests of certain third parties might be implicated. Accordingly, you notified Aramark and Florida Trinity Services, L.L.C. ("Trinity") of the request and of their right to submit arguments to this office explaining why their information should not be released. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305 (permitting interested third party to submit to attorney general reasons why requested information should not be released); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 542 (1990) (determining statutory predecessor to section 552.305 permits governmental body to rely on interested third party to raise and explain applicability of exception in certain circumstances). We have received arguments submitted by Aramark. We have considered the arguments and reviewed the submitted information.

Initially, we note you have not submitted information responsive to the request for the evaluations. To the extent such information existed on the date the department received the request, we presume the department has released it. If not, the department must do so at this time. *See* Gov't Code §§ 552.301, .302; *see also* Open Records Decision No. 664 (2000) (if

governmental body concludes that no exceptions apply to the requested information, it must release the information as soon as possible).

Next, we note an interested third party is allowed ten business days after the date of its receipt of the governmental body's notice to submit its reasons, if any, as to why information relating to that party should not be released. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305(d)(2)(B). As of the date of this letter, we have not received arguments from Trinity. Thus, Trinity has not demonstrated it has a protected proprietary interest in any of the submitted information. *See id.* § 552.110(a)-(b); Open Records Decision Nos. 661 at 5-6 (1999) (to prevent disclosure of commercial or financial information, party must show by specific factual evidence, not conclusory or generalized allegations, 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), 542 at 3. Accordingly, the department may not withhold the submitted information on the basis of any proprietary interest Trinity might have in the information.

Aramark raises sections 552.110(a) and 552.136 of the Government Code. Section 552.110(a) protects trade secrets obtained from a person and privileged or confidential by statute or judicial decision. Gov't Code § 552.110(a). The Texas Supreme Court has adopted the definition of trade secret from section 757 of the Restatement of Torts, which holds a trade secret to be:

any formula, pattern, device or compilation of information which is used in one's business, and which gives him an opportunity to obtain an advantage over competitors who do not know or use it. It may be a formula for a chemical compound, a process of manufacturing, treating or preserving materials, a pattern for a machine or other device, or a list of customers. It differs from other secret information in a business . . . in that it is not simply information as to single or ephemeral events in the conduct of the business . . . . A trade secret is a process or device for continuous use in the operation of the business. . . . [It may] relate to the sale of goods or to other operations in the business, such as a code for determining discounts, rebates or other concessions in a price list or catalogue, or a list of specialized customers, or a method of bookkeeping or other office management.

RESTATEMENT OF TORTS § 757 cmt. b (1939); *see also Hyde Corp. v. Huffines*, 314 S.W.2d 776 (Tex. 1958). In determining whether particular information constitutes a trade secret, this office considers the Restatement's definition of trade secret as well as the

Restatement's list of six trade secret factors.<sup>1</sup> This office must accept a claim that information subject to the Act is excepted as a trade secret if a *prima facie* case for the exception is made and no argument is submitted that rebuts the claim as a matter of law. See ORD 552 at 5. However, we cannot conclude section 552.110(a) is applicable unless a party shows the information meets the definition of a trade secret and it establishes the necessary factors for a trade secret claim. Open Records Decision No. 402 (1983).

Upon review, we find Aramark has made a *prima facie* case that its customer information constitutes a trade secret. Accordingly, to the extent Aramark's customer information is not published on a publicly available website, the department must withhold that information under section 552.110(a) of the Government Code.

Section 552.136(b) of the Government Code provides, "[n]otwithstanding any other provision of [the Act], a credit card, debit card, charge card, or access device number that is collected, assembled, or maintained by or for a governmental body is confidential." Gov't Code § 552.136(b); see *id.* § 552.136(a) (defining "access device"). This office has concluded insurance policy numbers constitute access device numbers for purposes of section 552.136. Accordingly, the department must withhold the insurance policy numbers we marked in Aramark's and Trinity's information under section 552.136 of the Government Code.

In summary, to the extent Aramark's customer information is not published on a publicly available website, the department must withhold that information under section 552.110(a) of the Government Code. The department must withhold the insurance policy numbers we marked under section 552.136 of the Government Code. The department must release the remaining information.

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<sup>1</sup>The Restatement of Torts lists the following six factors as indicia of whether information constitutes a trade secret:

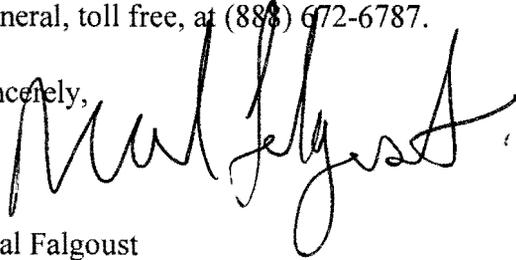
- (1) the extent to which the information is known outside of [the company];
- (2) the extent to which it is known by employees and other involved in [the company's] business;
- (3) the extent of measures taken by [the company] to guard the secrecy of the information;
- (4) the value of the information to [the company] and [its] competitors;
- (5) the amount of effort or money expended by [the company] in developing the information;
- (6) the ease or difficulty with which the information could be properly acquired or duplicated by others.

RESTATEMENT OF TORTS § 757 cmt. b; see Open Records Decision Nos. 319 at 2 (1982), 306 at 2 (1982), 255 at 2 (1980).

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

Sincerely,



Neal Falgoust  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

NF/som

Ref: ID# 514277

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)

Ms. Kristin A. Blackman  
Assistant General Counsel  
Aramark  
1101 Market Street  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107  
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Al Farrell  
CFO  
Florida TrinityServices I, LLC  
477 Commerce Boulevard  
Oldsmar, Florida 34677  
(w/o enclosures)