



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

March 7, 2014

Mr. Robert Ray  
Assistant City Attorney  
City of Longview  
P.O. Box 1952  
Longview, Texas 75606

OR2014-03991

Dear Mr. Ray:

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# 516423.

The City of Longview (the "city") received a request for specified proposals submitted by Linebarger Goggan Blair & Sampson, L.L.P. ("Linebarger") and Municipal Services Bureau ("MSB"), and a request from a different requestor for the same proposal submitted by MSB. You state the city takes no position with respect to the requested information, but its release may implicate the interests of third parties. Accordingly, you state the city notified Linebarger and MSB of the requests for information and of their right to submit arguments stating 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); 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). You state Linebarger has consented to the release of its proposal and the city will release it to the first requestor. We have reviewed the submitted information and the arguments submitted by a representative of MSB.

MSB submits arguments against disclosure of some of its information under section 552.110 of the Government Code. Section 552.110 protects (1) trade secrets and (2) commercial or financial information, the disclosure of which would cause substantial competitive harm

to the person from whom the information was obtained. Gov't Code § 552.110. Section 552.110(a) protects the proprietary interests of private parties by excepting from disclosure information that is trade secrets obtained from a person and information that is privileged or confidential by statute or judicial decision. *Id.* § 552.110(a). The Texas Supreme Court has adopted the definition of a "trade secret" from section 757 of the Restatement of Torts. *Hyde Corp. v. Huffines*, 314 S.W.2d 763, 776 (Tex. 1958); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 552 at 2 (1990). Section 757 provides a trade secret to be as follows:

[A]ny formula, pattern, device or compilation of information which is used in one's business, and which gives [one] 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, as, for example, the amount or other terms of a secret bid for a contract or the salary of certain employees . . . . A trade secret is a process or device for continuous use in the operation of the business. Generally it relates to the production of goods, as, for example, a machine or formula for the production of an article. It may, however, 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) (citation omitted); *see also Huffines*, 314 S.W.2d at 776. 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> *See* RESTATEMENT OF TORTS § 757 cmt. b. This office must

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<sup>1</sup>There are six factors the Restatement gives as indicia of whether information qualifies as a trade secret:

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

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

accept a claim that information subject to the Act is excepted as a trade secret if a *prima facie* case for exemption is made and no argument is submitted that rebuts the claim as a matter of law. ORD 552 at 5-6. However, we cannot conclude that section 552.110(a) is applicable unless it has been shown that the information meets the definition of a trade secret and the necessary factors have been demonstrated to establish a trade secret claim. Open Records Decision No. 402 (1983).

Section 552.110(b) protects “[c]ommercial or financial information for which it is demonstrated based on specific factual evidence that disclosure would cause substantial competitive harm to the person from whom the information was obtained[.]” Gov’t Code § 552.110(b). This exception to disclosure requires a specific factual or evidentiary showing, not conclusory or generalized allegations, that substantial competitive injury would likely result from release of the information at issue. *Id.*; Open Records Decision No. 661 at 5-6 (1999) (business enterprise must show by specific factual evidence that release of information would cause it substantial competitive harm).

MSB claims some of its information constitutes trade secret information. Upon review, we find MSB has established a *prima facie* case that some of its information constitutes trade secrets. Accordingly, the city must withhold MSB’s information we have marked under section 552.110(a). We find MSB has failed to demonstrate its remaining information for which it asserts section 552.110(a) meets the definition of a trade secret, nor has it demonstrated the necessary factors to establish a trade secret claim for this information. Accordingly, the city may not withhold the remaining information at issue on the basis of section 552.110(a).

MSB contends Exhibit C in the submitted proposal is commercial or financial information, release of which would cause substantial competitive harm to MSB. Upon review of MSB’s arguments under section 552.110(b), we conclude MSB has established the release of its client information in Exhibit C would cause it substantial competitive injury. Accordingly, to the extent the client information in Exhibit C is not publicly available on MSB’s website, the city must withhold the client information at issue under section 552.110(b). However, we find that MSB has not made the specific factual or evidentiary showing required by section 552.110(b) that release of any of MSB’s remaining information at issue would cause the company substantial competitive harm. *See* Open Records Decision No. 319 at 3 (1982) (statutory predecessor to section 552.110 generally not applicable to information relating to organization and personnel, market studies, professional references, qualifications and experience, and pricing). We therefore conclude the city may not withhold any of the remaining information at issue under section 552.110(b).

In summary, the city must withhold the information we have marked under section 552.110(a) of the Government Code. To the extent the client information in Exhibit C is not publicly available on MSB’s website, the city must withhold the client information

at issue under section 552.110(b) of the Government Code. The city must release the remaining information.

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,



Lindsay E. Hale  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

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Ref: ID# 516423

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Two Requestors  
(w/o enclosures)

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