



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS
GREG ABBOTT

March 19, 2014

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

OR2014-04617

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# 517098.

Fort Bend County (the "county") received a request for the proposals submitted in response to RFP #13-063 and RFP #13-074, including pricing and any bid tabulations. Although you take no position with respect to the public availability of the requested information, you state release of this information may implicate the proprietary interests of third parties. Accordingly, you state and provide documentation showing, you have notified these third parties of the request for information and of their right to submit arguments to this office as to why the requested information should not be released.¹ 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) (statutory predecessor to section 552.305 permitted governmental body to rely on interested third party to raise and explain applicability of exception to disclosure under the circumstances). We have received comments from Recovery. We have considered the submitted arguments and reviewed the submitted information.

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 only received comments from Recovery. Thus, the remaining parties have not demonstrated they have a protected proprietary interest in any of the submitted

¹The third parties notified pursuant to section 552.305 are: Recovery Health Care Corporation ("Recovery"); American Screening Corporation; One Source Toxicology Laboratory, Inc; Pharmatec, Inc.; Automon, LLC; and Tarrant County Association for the Blind d/b/a Lighthouse for the Blind of Fort Worth.

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 county may not withhold the submitted information on the basis of any proprietary interests the remaining third parties may have in the information.

Section 552.110 of the Government Code protects the proprietary interests of private parties by excepting from disclosure two types of information: trade secrets and commercial or financial information, the release of which would cause a third party substantial competitive harm. Section 552.110(a) of the Government Code excepts from disclosure “[a] trade secret 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. *See Hyde Corp. v. Huffines*, 314 S.W.2d 763 (Tex. 1957); *see also* ORD 552. Section 757 provides that a trade secret is

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 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.² RESTATEMENT OF TORTS § 757 cmt. b. This office must accept a claim that

²The 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 also* Open Records Decision Nos. 319 at 2 (1982), 306 at 2 (1982), 255 at 2 (1980).

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 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. See Open Records Decision No. 402 (1983).

Recovery asserts its customer information constitutes a trade secret under section 552.110(a) of the Government Code. Upon review, we find Recovery has established a *prima facie* case its customer information constitutes trade secret information. Accordingly, to the extent the customer information at issue is not publicly available on Recovery's website, the county must withhold the customer information at issue under section 552.110(a). However, to the extent Recovery's customer information has been published on its website, any such information is not confidential under section 552.110(a) of the Government Code and may not be withheld on that basis.

Section 552.136(b) of the Government Code states that "[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."³ Gov't Code § 552.136(b). This office has determined that insurance policy numbers are access device numbers for purposes of section 552.136. *Id.* § 552.136(a) (defining "access device"). Therefore, the county must withhold the insurance policy numbers in the remaining information under section 552.136 of the Government Code.

We note some of the remaining information may be protected by copyright. A custodian of public records must comply with the copyright law and is not required to furnish copies of records that are copyrighted. Open Records Decision No. 180 at 3 (1977). A governmental body must allow inspection of copyrighted materials unless an exception applies to the information. *Id.*; see Open Records Decision No. 109 (1975). If a member of the public wishes to make copies of copyrighted materials, the person must do so unassisted by the governmental body. In making copies, the member of the public assumes the duty of compliance with the copyright law and the risk of a copyright infringement suit.

In summary, to the extent the customer information is not published on Recovery's website, the county must withhold the customer information at issue under section 552.110(a) of the Government Code. The county must withhold the insurance policy numbers under section 552.136 of the Government Code. The county must release the remaining information; however, any information subject to copyright may only be released in accordance with copyright law.

³The Office of the Attorney General will raise a mandatory exception on behalf of a governmental body, but ordinarily will not raise other exceptions. See Open Records Decision Nos. 481 (1987), 480 (1987), 470 (1987).

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.oag.state.tx.us/open/index_orl.php, 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 must be directed to the Cost Rules Administrator of the Office of the Attorney General, toll free at (888) 672-6787.

Sincerely,



Thana Hussaini
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

TH/som

Ref: ID# 517098

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Larry Vanderwoude
President/Chief Operating Officer
Recovery Healthcare Corporation
9090 South Stemmons Freeway, Suite A
Dallas, Texas 75247
(w/o enclosures)

Ms. Rachel Holtsclaw
Ms. Even M. Formm
American Screening Corporation
6658 Youree Drive, Suite 180 PMB 404
Shreveport, Louisiana 7115
(w/o enclosures)

Ms. Margaret Gilbert
One Source Toxicology Laboratory, Inc.
1209 Genoa Red Bluff Road
Pasadena, Texas 77504
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Adam Alexander
Mr. Ricky McCabe
Pharmatech, Inc.
10151 Barnes Canyon Road
San Diego, California 92121
(w/o enclosures)

Ms. Scot Asher
Automon, LLC
10450 North 74th Street, Suite. 210
Scottsdale, Arizona 85258
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Frank Oliver
Tarrant County Association for the Blind
d/b/a Lighthouse for the Blind of Fort Worth
912 West Boradway Avenue
Fort Worth, Texas 76104
(w/o enclosures)