



ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS  
GREG ABBOTT

August 6, 2014

Ms. Ana Vieira  
Attorney and Public Information Coordinator  
Office of the General Counsel  
The University of Texas System  
201 West Seventh Street  
Austin, Texas 78701-2902

OR2014-13716

Dear Ms. Vieira:

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# 531909 (OGC# 156002, 156033, & 156185).

The University of Texas System (the "system") received three requests for the proposals submitted for request for proposal number REO 4-14-2014 BOR. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.104 of the Government Code. Additionally, you state release of the submitted information may implicate the proprietary interests of Burns Brothers Development; Cadence Commercial Real Estate; Cielo Realty Partners; the City of Brownsville ("Brownsville"); the City of Harlingen ("Harlingen"); the City of McAllen; the City of Mercedes ("Mercedes"); the City of Weslaco; D & M Ventures, L.L.C.; Garcia & Villarreal, P.L.L.C.; Kittleman Thomas, P.L.L.C.; Robert Zamora; San Benito Economic Development Corporation; San Juan Economic Development Corporation; and Economic Development Corporation of Weslaco. Accordingly, you state, and provide documentation showing, you notified the third parties of the request for information and of their right to submit arguments to this office as to why the submitted information should not be released. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305(d); *see also* Open Records Decision No. 542 (1990) (statutory predecessor to section 552.305 permits governmental body to rely on interested third party to raise and explain applicability of exception in the Act in certain circumstances). We have received comments from Brownsville, Harlingen, and Mercedes. We have considered the submitted arguments and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.104 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information that, if released, would give advantage to a competitor or bidder." Gov't Code § 552.104. The purpose of section 552.104 is to protect a governmental body's interests in competitive bidding situations, including where the governmental body may wish to withhold information in order to obtain more favorable offers. *See* Open Records Decision No. 592 at 8 (1991) (statutory predecessor to section 552.104 designed to protect interests of governmental body in competitive situation, and not interests of private parties submitting information to government). Section 552.104 protects information from disclosure if the governmental body demonstrates potential harm to its interests in a particular competitive situation. *See* Open Records Decision No. 463 (1987). Generally, section 552.104 does not except bids from disclosure after bidding is completed and the contract has been executed. *See* Open Records Decision No. 541 (1990).

You state the contract for this bid has not been awarded, and the release of the requested information before the selection of a vendor would disadvantage the system in negotiating the best possible terms in the final agreement(s). Based on these representations and our review, we conclude the system has demonstrated release of the submitted information could harm its interests with respect to this project. Thus, the system may withhold the submitted information under section 552.104 of the Government Code until such time as a contract has been executed. *See* Open Records Decision No. 170 at 2 (1977) (release of bids while negotiation of proposed contract is in progress would necessarily result in an advantage to certain bidders at expense of others and could be detrimental to public interest in contract under negotiation).

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,



David L. Wheelus  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

DLW/bhf

Ref: ID# 531909

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)

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