



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

July 6, 2015

Ms. Teresa J. Brown
Senior Open Records Assistant
City of Plano
P.O. Box 860358
Plano, Texas 75086-0358

OR2015-13470

Dear Ms. Brown:

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# 570110 (File No. 15-010).

The City of Plano (the "city") received a request for the current contract for emergency towing and the bids submitted for it. Although the city takes no position as to whether the submitted information is excepted under the Act, it states release of the submitted information may implicate the proprietary interests of Jordan Towing, Inc. ("Jordan"); Pro Tow Wrecker Service ("Pro Tow"); and Signature Towing ("Signature"). Accordingly, the city states, and provides documentation showing, it 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 Jordan and Signature. We have considered the submitted arguments and reviewed the submitted information.

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 information relating to that party should be withheld from public disclosure. *See* Gov't Code § 552.305(d)(2)(B). As of the date of this letter, we have not received comments from Pro Tow explaining why the submitted information should not be released. Therefore, we have

no basis to conclude Pro Tow has a protected proprietary interest in the submitted information. *See id.* § 552.110; 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, release of requested information would cause that party substantial competitive harm), 552 at 5 (1990) (party must establish *prima facie* case information is trade secret), 542 at 3. Accordingly, the city may not withhold the submitted information on the basis of any proprietary interest Pro Tow may have in the information.

We understand Jordan to raise section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy. Section 552.101 excepts “information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision.” Gov’t Code § 552.101. Section 552.101 encompasses the doctrine of common-law privacy, which protects information that is (1) highly intimate or embarrassing, the publication of which would be highly objectionable to a reasonable person, and (2) not of legitimate concern to the public. *Indus. Found. v. Tex. Indus. Accident Bd.*, 540 S.W.2d 668, 685 (Tex. 1976). To demonstrate the applicability of common-law privacy, both prongs of this test must be satisfied. *Id.* at 681-82. Types of information considered intimate and embarrassing by the Texas Supreme Court are delineated in *Industrial Foundation*. *Id.* at 683. This office has also found personal financial information not relating to a financial transaction between an individual and a governmental body is generally highly intimate or embarrassing. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 600 (1992) (personal financial information includes choice of particular insurance carrier), 523 (1989) (common-law privacy protects credit reports, financial statements, and other personal financial information), 373 (1983) (sources of income not related to financial transaction between individual and governmental body protected under common-law privacy). However, we note common-law privacy protects the interests of individuals, not those of corporate and other business entities. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 620 (1993) (corporation has no right to privacy), 192 (1978) (right to privacy is designed primarily to protect human feelings and sensibilities, rather than property, business, or other pecuniary interests); *see also Rosen v. Matthews Constr. Co.*, 777 S.W.2d 434 (Tex. App.—Houston [14th Dist.] 1989) (corporation has no right to privacy (citing *United States v. Morton Salt Co.*, 338 U.S. 632, 652 (1950))), *rev’d on other grounds*, 796 S.W.2d 692 (Tex. 1990). Further, we note dates of birth of living members of the public are generally not highly intimate or embarrassing. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 455 at 7 (1987) (dates of birth not protected under privacy). Upon review, we find Jordan has failed to demonstrate any of the submitted information is highly intimate or embarrassing and of no legitimate public interest. Thus, the city may not withhold any of the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with common-law privacy.

We understand Jordan and Signature to argue some of their information is excepted from disclosure 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. See Gov't Code § 552.110(a)-(b). Section 552.110(a) protects trade secrets obtained from a person and privileged or confidential by statute or judicial decision. *Id.* § 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.¹ RESTATEMENT OF TORTS § 757 cmt. b. This office must accept a claim 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 it has been shown 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).

¹The 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).

Section 552.110(b) protects “[c]ommercial or financial information for which it is demonstrated based on specific factual evidence 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, substantial competitive injury would likely result from release of the information at issue. *Id.*; *see also* ORD 661 at 5.

We understand Jordan and Signature to argue some of their information constitutes trade secrets. Upon review, we find Jordan and Signature have failed to establish a *prima facie* case any of their information meets the definition of a trade secret, nor have they demonstrated the necessary factors to establish a trade secret claim for the information at issue. *See* ORD 402. Therefore, none of the information at issue may be withheld under section 552.110(a).

We understand Jordan and Signature to further argue some of their information consists of commercial information, the release of which would cause their companies substantial competitive harm under section 552.110(b) of the Government Code. Upon review, we find Jordan and Signature have not made the specific factual or evidentiary showing required by section 552.110(b) that release of any of their information would cause their companies substantial competitive harm. *See* Open Records Decision Nos. 661 (for information to be withheld under commercial or financial information prong of section 552.110, business must show by specific factual evidence substantial competitive injury would result from release of particular information at issue), 319 at 3 (information relating to organization and personnel, professional references, market studies, qualifications, and pricing are not ordinarily excepted from disclosure under statutory predecessor to section 552.110), 175 at 4 (1977) (résumés cannot be said to fall within any exception to the Act). Therefore, none of the information at issue may be withheld under section 552.110(b).

The city states it will redact motor vehicle record information pursuant to section 552.130(c) of the Government Code.² Section 552.130 provides information relating to a motor vehicle operator’s or driver’s license, motor vehicle title or registration, or personal identification document issued by an agency of this state or another state or country is excepted from public release. Gov’t Code § 552.130(a). Upon review, we find, with the exception of the information we have marked for release, the city must withhold the motor vehicle record information it has marked, as well as the information we have marked, under section 552.130 of the Government Code. The information we have marked for release is not subject to section 552.130, and the city may not withhold it on that basis.

²We note section 552.130(c) of the Government Code allows a governmental body to redact the information described in section 552.130(a) without the necessity of seeking a decision from the attorney general. *See* Gov’t Code § 552.130(c). If a governmental body redacts such information, it must notify the requestor in accordance with section 552.130(e). *See id.* § 552.130(d), (e).

We understand Jordan to raise section 552.136 of the Government Code, which 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.” *Id.* § 552.136(b); *see id.* § 552.136(a) (defining “access device”). This office has determined insurance policy numbers are access device numbers for purposes of section 552.136. Upon review, we find the city must withhold the insurance policy numbers in the submitted information under section 552.136 of the Government Code. However, the remaining information is not subject to section 552.136, and may not be withheld on that basis.

We understand Jordan to raise section 552.147(a) of the Government Code, which excepts the social security number of a living individual from public disclosure. *Id.* § 552.147. Upon review, we find none of the remaining information consists of a social security number of a living individual; thus, the city may not withhold any of the remaining information under section 552.147 of the Government Code.

In summary, with the exception of the information we have marked for release, the city must withhold the motor vehicle record information it has marked, as well as the information we have marked, under section 552.130 of the Government Code. The city must withhold the insurance policy numbers in the submitted information under section 552.136 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, 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# 570110

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Curtis Jordan
President
Jordan Towing, Inc.
P.O. Box 701954
Dallas, Texas 75370
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Rick Chron
General Manager
Signature Towing
P.O. Box 59327
Dallas, Texas 75229
(w/o enclosures)

David Fowler
Pro Tow Wrecker Service
c/o Ms. Brandi M. Youngkin
Assistant City Attorney
City of Plano
P.O. Box 860358
Plano, Texas 75086-0358
(w/o enclosures)