



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

July 22, 2015

Ms. Tiffany N. Evans
Assistant City Attorney
City of Houston
Legal Department
P.O. Box 368
Houston, Texas 77001-0368

OR2015-14905

Dear Ms. Evans:

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# 572509.

The City of Houston (the "city") received a request for information pertaining to a specified request for proposals. You state the city will release some information to the requestor. 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 Barnett Associates, Inc.; Equifax Workforce Solutions; and uConfirm. Accordingly, the city states, and provides documentation showing, it notified these 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 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 any

of the third parties explaining why the submitted information should not be released. Therefore, we have no basis to conclude any of the third parties 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 the third parties may have in the information.

We note some of the submitted 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. As no exceptions against disclosure have been raised, the city must release the submitted information; however, any information subject to copyright may be released only in accordance with copyright law.

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,



Cristian Rosas-Grillet
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

CRG/cbz

Ref: ID# 572509

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Paul D. Barnett
President
Barnett Associates, Inc.
61 Hilton Avenue
Garden City, New York 11530
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. Cris Gallagher
Client Relationship Manager
Equifax Workforce Solutions
11432 Lackland Road
St. Louis, Missouri 63146
(w/o enclosures)

Mr. David Phelps
Managing Partner
uConfirm
125 Mirramont Lake Drive
Woodstock, Georgia 30189
(w/o enclosures)