



KEN PAXTON
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

April 27, 2016

Ms. Veronica Lomas
Records Manager
City of Southlake
1400 Main Street, Suite 270
Southlake, Texas 76092

OR2016-09539

Dear Ms. Lomas:

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# 607683.

The City of Southlake (the "city") received a request for a specified report from Cheatham & Associates ("Cheatham") and a specified report from Freese and Nichols, Inc. ("Freese"). You state you have released some information to the requestor. Although you take no position regarding whether the submitted information is excepted from disclosure, you indicate you notified Cheatham and Freese 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 considered 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 Cheatham or Freese explaining why the submitted information should not be released. Therefore, we have no basis to conclude Cheatham or Freese 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, that release of requested information would cause party substantial competitive harm), 552 at 5 (1990) (party must establish *prima facie* case that information is trade secret), 542 at 3. Accordingly, the city may not withhold the submitted information on the basis of any proprietary interest Cheatham or Freese may have in the information.

We note some of the submitted information appears to 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, the city must release the submitted information; however, any information subject to copyright may only be released 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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Meredith L. Coffman', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Meredith L. Coffman
Assistant Attorney General
Open Records Division

MLC/bw

Ref: ID# 607683

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor
(w/o enclosures)

2 Third Parties
(w/o enclosures)