



**KEN PAXTON**  
ATTORNEY GENERAL OF TEXAS

May 4, 2016

Ms. Diane K. McCarthy  
Legal Counsel  
Harris County Appraisal District  
P.O. Box 920975  
Houston, Texas 77292-0975

OR2016-10086

Dear Ms. McCarthy:

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# 608745 (HCAD Internal Ref. No. 16-1295).

The Harris County Appraisal District (the "district") received a request for information pertaining to a specified account. You claim the submitted information is excepted from disclosure under section 552.101 of the Government Code. We have considered the exception you claim and reviewed the submitted information.

Section 552.101 of the Government Code excepts from disclosure "information considered to be confidential by law, either constitutional, statutory, or by judicial decision." Gov't Code § 552.101. This section encompasses information protected by other statutes. Section 22.27 of the Tax Code provides the following:

(a) Rendition statements, real and personal property reports, attachments to those statements and reports, and other information the owner of property provides to the appraisal office in connection with the appraisal of the property, including income and expense information related to a property filed with an appraisal office and information voluntarily disclosed to an appraisal office or the comptroller about real or personal property sales prices after a promise it will be held confidential, are confidential and not open to public inspection. The statements and reports and the information they

contain about specific real or personal property or a specific real or personal property owner and information voluntarily disclosed to an appraisal office about real or personal property sales prices after a promise it will be held confidential may not be disclosed to anyone other than an employee of the appraisal office who appraises property except as authorized by Subsection (b) of this section.

(b) Information made confidential by this section may be disclosed:

...

(2) to the person who filed the statement or report or the owner of property subject to the statement, report, or information or to a representative of either authorized in writing to receive the information[.]

Tax Code § 22.27(a), (b)(2). We understand the district is an “appraisal office” for purposes of section 22.27(a). The district states the submitted information is a rendition statement that was provided to the district pursuant to section 22.27(a). *See id.* § 22.27(a). The district states the exceptions in section 22.27(b) do not apply in this instance. Accordingly, we find the information at issue is generally confidential under section 22.27(a). However, a property owner or the owner’s designated agent has a right of access to information that is confidential under section 22.27(a). *See* Attorney General Opinion JC-0424 (2001). In this instance, the requestor may be the authorized representative of the owner of the account at issue and, therefore, may have a right of access to the information at issue that would otherwise be confidential under section 22.27. *See* Tax Code § 22.27(b)(2). Thus, if the requestor does not provide the requisite written authorization under section 22.27(b)(2), then the district must withhold the submitted information under section 552.101 of the Government Code in conjunction with section 22.27(a) of the Tax Code. However, if the requestor provides the requisite written authorization pursuant to section 22.27(b)(2), the district may not withhold the submitted information from this requestor under section 552.101 on that basis. In that case, the district must release the submitted information to this requestor.

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,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "N. A. Ybarra". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "N." and last name "Ybarra" clearly distinguishable.

Nicholas A. Ybarra  
Assistant Attorney General  
Open Records Division

NAY/bw

Ref: ID# 608745

Enc. Submitted documents

c: Requestor  
(w/o enclosures)