

July 14, 2005

Mr. Jay Rourke, Project Manager  
Boston Redevelopment Authority  
One City Hall Square  
Boston, MA 02201-1007

Subject: Simmons College School of Management Building

Dear Mr. Rourke:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Institutional Master plan Notification Form and Project Notification Form for the new Simmons College School of Management Building and proposed multilevel underground garage. The Boston Groundwater Trust (BGwT) was established by the Boston City Council to monitor groundwater levels in sections of the City where falling groundwater levels threaten the integrity of wood piling supported building foundations and to recommend solutions to the problem. As such, our comments are restricted to groundwater related issues.

The proposed underground garage is located on filled land and near at least two very significant wood piling supported structures: the Gardner Museum; and Simmons College's own Main Academic Building. Because of this, construction of a deep underground parking garage, with its five levels, has the potential to cause serious groundwater depletion problems. This potential was recognized by the proponents during their presentation to the BRA scoping session.

It is critical that the foundation system be designed without underdrains, so that groundwater is not removed by design from the building site. In addition, waterproofing design for the entire underground structure will be critical to its continuing success in not causing groundwater problems. To assure long term satisfactory operation, the proponent should be required, after completion of construction, to file an annual certification, stamped by a professional engineer registered in Massachusetts, that no groundwater has been pumped or drained from the structure in the previous year.

To allow the public to understand the impact of the project on groundwater levels in the area, the proponent should be required to install an adequate number of groundwater level observation wells at appropriate locations on public property around the site. The number and location of

the wells should be determined in consultation with the BGwT, and they should be installed in accordance with BGwT specifications. To establish baseline groundwater levels, the wells should be read monthly for a period of six months prior to construction. During construction above the groundwater table, wells should be read weekly. Levels should be read daily when construction proceeds below the groundwater table. All well readings should be transmitted to the BGwT. Should well readings indicate that the project is causing a drop in groundwater levels, immediate action should be taken to find and repair the cause. After completion of the project, the wells should be turned over to the City for continued monitoring by the Trust.

I understand that Simmons College has installed a system for retaining and recharging rainwater into the ground as part of the construction of their new Library, located adjacent to the Main Academic Building. The new project may afford an opportunity for the College to install a similar system. I urge them to take advantage of this opportunity.

I look forward to the opportunity to work with the College and the Authority to assure that this project not only doesn't add to the groundwater problem, but that it becomes a part of the solution.

Very truly yours,

Elliott Laffer  
Executive Director

Cc: John Walser, BRA  
Maura Zlody, BED