

Boston Groundwater Trust

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April 8, 2011

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

Subject: Winsor School

Dear Mr. FitzGerald:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Project Notification Form for the Winsor School. The Boston Groundwater Trust was established by the Boston City Council to monitor groundwater levels in sections of the City where the integrity of building foundations is threatened by low groundwater levels and to recommend solutions for the problem. Therefore, my comments are restricted to groundwater related issues.

I appreciate the proponent's acknowledgement that the project is located in the Groundwater Conservation Overlay District and commitment to meeting the standards required under Article 32 of the Zoning Code. I appreciate, as well, that the proponent met with me to discuss groundwater related issues before filing the PNF.

As noted in the PNF, the slab for the Pilgrim Road Project, including its associated parking, is to be located at approximately Elevation 14 measured against Boston City Base, about four feet above any observed recent groundwater levels. The high basement level and commitment to recharge any water drawn into an underdrain system are said in the PNF to assure that this construction will not cause a reduction in area groundwater levels. As required under the zoning, there should be a certification stamped by a registered professional engineer confirming that the design will have no negative impact on groundwater levels. This certification, along with confirmation from BWSC that the size and design of the planned recharge system meet the GCOD requirements, should be in place before the PDA zoning is in place to assure that these requirements receive the same scrutiny they would if the project had to go before the Board of Appeals.

Of more concern in this regard is the Longwood Avenue Project, also located in the GCOD. This structure is planned to include a deep multilevel parking garage with an excavation about 55 to 60 feet below the surface. The PNF outlines plans, including use of a slurry wall that would be designed to prevent a reduction in area groundwater levels. Consistent with my comments about the Pilgrim Road Project above, the engineer stamped certification and BWSC approval of recharge should happen before final zoning approval is in place. However, according to the PNF, it is the proponent's intention that this building will be developed by another party which will be responsible for its ultimate design. Because the proponent has requested that the Expanded PNF be used to complete the Article 80 review, there is not an

obvious opportunity to review the final plans for the building to assure compliance. It may be that approvals for this building should be held in abeyance until final plans can be reviewed.

I appreciate the proponent's commitment to coordinate with the Trust to protect area groundwater levels, including the installation of groundwater observation wells. These should be monitored before and during construction, with results reported promptly to the Trust and the Authority. I appreciate, as well, that any observation wells installed in a public way will, as required by Public Improvement Commission policy, be turned over to the Trust following completion of the applicable proposed project.

I look forward to working with the proponent and the Trust to assure that the project can have only positive impacts on area groundwater levels.

Very truly yours,

Elliott Laffer
Executive Director

Cc: Kathleen Pedersen, BRA
Maura Zlody, BED