

BOSTON GROUNDWATER TRUST (BGwT)  
BOARD MEETING  
July 31, 2008  
The Lenox Hotel – Patriot Room

The meeting of the Board of Trustees of the Boston Groundwater Trust was called order at 4:02 pm in the Patriot meeting room. The meeting notice was posted at City Hall in accordance with provision of the Commonwealth's Open Meeting Law.

Trustees in attendance, comprising a quorum, were:

Mr. Tim Mitchell, Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay  
Mr. Gary Saunders, Boston Back Bay Association  
Mr. Galen Gilbert, Fenway Community Development Corporation (CDC)  
Mr. Peter Sherin, Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce  
Mr. Michael Nairne, Ellis Neighborhood Association  
Ms. Mary Hall, Greater Boston Real Estate Board  
Ms. Nancy Grilk, Mayor's office  
Mr. William Moy, Chinatown Neighborhood Council

Also present were:

Elliott Laffer, BGwT Executive Director; Christian Simonelli, BGwT Technical Coordinator; Tabitha Bennett, Mayor's Office; James Lambrechts, Wentworth Institute of Technology; Anne M. Pistorio, North End Water Front Residents Association (NEWRA) Groundwater Working Group; David S. Mundel, 36 Gray Street; Bob Sherwood, 48 Montgomery Street; Kathy Emerich, 48 Montgomery Street

**1. Adoption of the minutes of the May 29, 2008 Meeting**

Minutes were distributed to board members for review..

Trustee Mitchell moved to adopt the minutes. Trustee Grilk seconded the motion.

**Voted:** To accept the minutes of the May 29, 2008 meeting.

**2. Finance Report**

Trustee Sherin reviewed the BGwT *Financial Report and Reconciliation Detail*. He noted that the report and detail are consistent with previous months. Also, that the funds from the Columbus Center Project are not to be expected since that the status of project going forward is uncertain. Discussion followed.

Trustee Sherin noted that there is a payment due to Synfibers for website maintenance that has not yet been invoiced. Mr. Laffer estimated it at \$5000. Discussion followed. Trustee's Mitchell and Gilbert stated that Geoff Pahl, (the site webmaster) has had a history of submitting invoices late. Discussion followed.

Trustee Gilbert made note of the cash reserves that the BGwT has. Discussion followed.

**3. FY08 Actual vs. Budget**

Mr. Laffer reviewed the FY08 Actual vs. Operating Budget. Discussion followed. Trustee Gilbert questioned the continuing education fund not being spent. Mr. Laffer and Mr. Simonelli noted that Mr. Simonelli did not find a class to take. Discussion followed.

Trustee Saunders suggested Mr. Laffer look into the future cost of well maintenance and installation. Discussion followed.

Trustee Sherin questioned if the BGWT incorporates wells from projects into the network. Mr. Laffer noted that the BGWT does incorporate wells from projects and explained the process. Discussion followed.

**4. North End Representative on Trust**

Trustee Grilk noted that the City has decided the North End Neighborhood Council will work toward selecting and recommending a representative to serve on the Trust. Discussion followed.

Mr. Laffer noted that a change to the Declaration of the Trust must be made in order to incorporate a new Trustee. Discussion followed.

Trustee Gilbert moved to amend the Declaration of Trust to add a Trustee nominated by the President of the North End Neighborhood Council. Trustee Mitchell seconded. Discussion followed.

**Voted:** To amend the Declaration of Trust to add a trustee nominated by the President of the North End Neighborhood Council.

**5. Strategic Planning Retreat**

Mr. Laffer noted that he emailed the objectives from the last Strategic Plan Meeting. He stated that it is up to the board to decide if another retreat is needed. Discussion followed.

Trustee Gilbert stated that another retreat is not needed since most of the objectives from the last meeting have not been met. Trustee Saunders felt that enough of the objectives have been met and that another retreat is warranted. Discussion followed.

Trustee Sherin recommended the BGWT look into hiring a professional to help brainstorm and narrow down topics to be covered at the retreat. Discussion followed.

Mr. Laffer stated that he spoke with Ann Donner, who ran and organized the last retreat. Ms. Donner stated that she will interview everyone as she did last time and get a feel from everyone as to what has been accomplished. Discussion followed.

Trustee Hall stated that it would be helpful for new Trustees to have a retreat, for them to see how the BGWT has evolved over the years. Discussion followed.

Trustee Saunders suggested Mr. Laffer survey his newsletter recipients on how the BGWT has performed. Discussion followed.

Trustee Sherin moved to plan a Strategic Planning Retreat for sometime in the Fall of 08. Trustee Nairne seconded.

**Voted:** To plan a Strategic Planning Retreat for sometime in the Fall of 08.

**6. Beacon Hill Representative on Trust**

Trustee Gilbert inquired about the absence of Beacon Hill representative that has been appointed by the Beacon Hill Civic association. Discussion followed.

Mr. Laffer noted that the representative has been appointed and has been trying to get the representative to the meetings. Discussion followed.

**7. Neighborhood Focus on South End**

Mr. Laffer reviewed the dynamics of the South End. He noted the following:

- BWSC's ongoing efforts of inspecting their infrastructure in the area. In particular the area of Tremont St. Discussion followed.
- Reviewed the low areas in the neighborhood and noted that BGwT now has 4 OW's in the railroad alignment that are monitored with dataloggers taking readings every hour. Discussion followed.
- Reviewed information obtained on pumps and woodpile cutoffs in the area. Discussion followed.

Mr. Mundel suggested the BGwT look into editing the color scheme in Mr. Laffer's newsletter maps. Discussion followed. Mr. Laffer and Mr. Simonelli will look into this.

Mr. Mundel and Ms. Emerich expressed concern over private sewers in the city and what action BWSC would take in repairing them. Discussion followed.

**8. North End Dye Tests**

Mr. Laffer noted that dye from the test performed by the BWSC has showed up in two leaky manholes and may possibly be in a third leaky manhole. Discussion followed.

In discussions with the Turnpike, Mr. Laffer noted that the timeframe for repairs to the two manholes will be made within the next two weeks. If the third manhole is found to have leaks that one will also be fixed in a similar timeframe. Discussion followed.

**9. Groundwater Problem on Lower Beacon Hill**

Mr. Laffer reviewed the problem of rotted piles in Charles River Square. Discussion followed.

Mr. Lambrechts noted that he had seen uneven settlement during his work as a consultant throughout the 22 homes in Charles River Square. He stated that the differential settlement had been apparent for the past 20-25 years. Discussion followed.

Trustee Gilbert inquired about the lack of OW's in the area. Mr. Laffer noted that the BGwT does not install wells in private ways such as Charles River Square. Discussion followed. Mr. Laffer then agreed to install wells wherever needed, including in private ways.

**10. Potential City Council Legislation**

Mr. Laffer reviewed proposed legislation by the city council that would create an affirmative obligation for the homeowner to investigate potential woodpile problems and disclose them to the buyer. Discussion followed.

**11. Executive Director's Report**

BGwT Executive Director Mr. Elliott Laffer distributed his report. Discussion followed. Refer to the attached *Executive Director's Report: July 31, 2008*, for a complete list of all activities.

Trustee Gilbert inquired pumps within the city and if the BGwT had obtained any data on them. Mr. Laffer noted that he has received some but they really don't tell much. Mr. Laffer noted that he continues to request data from various agencies. Discussion followed.

Trustee Gilbert stated that the BGwT must continue to obtain data and treat the issue seriously. Discussion followed.

**12. Technical Coordinator's Report**

BGwT Technical Coordinator Mr. Christian Simonelli presented his activities since last meeting. Discussion followed. Refer to the attached *Technical Coordinator's Well Monitoring Update BGwT Meeting: July 31, 2008* for a complete list of all activities.

**13. Other Business**

Trustee Gilbert moved to retain an expert to evaluate the groundwater wells data and give us an opinion whether the rising of the water levels has a positive effect, and what the affect the weather is on the data. Discussion followed.

After a discussion among the Trustees, Trustee Gilbert withdrew his motion. Mr. Laffer stated that he will investigate a potential study on the effects or recharge throughout the city of Boston. Discussion followed.

Upon completion of other business the BGwT board entered into an Executive Session to discuss personnel evaluations concerning the Executive Director. Having concluded these discussions the trustees returned to open session.

**The meeting adjourned at 6:18 p.m.**

**NEXT MEETING: September 25, 2008 @ 4:00 pm at the Lenox Hotel.**

**Notes submitted by Christian Simonelli, BGwT Technical Coordinator, on 8/1/08.**

Respectfully submitted,



Galen Gilbert, Secretary

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT**  
**July 31, 2008**

1. **City-State Groundwater Working Group** – The group met again last week. Attendance and cooperation remain exemplary. Details are reported under each entity below.
2. **DCR** – The recharge system to be installed as part of the interim repair project at the Storrow Drive Tunnel is expected to be connected to the recharge galleries on Back Street within 6-8 weeks.
3. **MBTA** – The T has shortlisted the bidders for the design work on the long term solution to groundwater problems in the South End in the vicinity of Back Bay Station and remains on schedule to award the design contract after their September Board meeting. The T, the Action Team, and the local State Representatives continue to work on assuring funds for proper long term maintenance of the systems to be installed.
4. **BWSC** – BWSC found and repaired 9 leaks in a manhole near Dartmouth and Beacon Streets that appears to be responsible for the recent low readings. Readings came up at the closest well in our most recent readings; we hope to see improvement at the other nearby wells next time. As a result of their television inspection of low lying sewers, they plan to repair about 10,000 feet of sewers, mostly in Back Bay, South End, and Beacon Hill.
5. **MTA** – The Turnpike Authority has discovered two leaking manholes in the area where BWSC injected dye to discover a potential cause of low groundwater levels in a section of the North End near Cross Street; the manholes are expected to be repaired within two weeks. The MTA has issued a Notice of Project Change to modify some of their drainage systems from the Central Artery/Tunnel project; they will be studying potential recharge at three of the locations to be modified.
6. **MWRA** – MWRA has awarded the largest of the three contracts involved in redoing their sewer system in East Boston. The third and final contract will be awarded before the end of the year. They also continue to look for and, when found, repair leaks in their sewer line under Porter Street; this line will be discontinued and filled in when the new project is completed.
7. **Beacon Hill Groundwater Problem** – I received a report of a cluster of buildings around Charles River Square that require underpinning. We are trying to find out more about the situation and what can be done.
8. **BRA** – I had a meeting with much of the BRA project management staff to go over in more detail the GCOD requirements and when in the process various actions are required. I expect this to be particularly helpful on those projects in the GCOD undergoing Article 80 Small Project Review.
9. **Funding** – I have signed our FY2009 contract with the Environment Department. We should receive our annual funding, including the inflation adjustment from FY08, shortly. As always, I appreciate the efforts of the Mayor and City Council to meet our funding needs.
10. **GCOD** – We continue to have excellent compliance with the GCOD requirements. At almost every session of the Board of Appeals, several new recharge systems are mandated. There have been over 30 systems approved for the South End, over 20 for Back Bay, about 15 in the Fenway, and several in other areas of the City.
11. **Website** – Traffic at the website is about on par with June this month. It's somewhat lower than in the Spring.
12. **Recharge** – Nancy Griik remains in discussion with the Boston Public Schools about a recharge project in a school parking lot. BPS is interested, and we are hopeful of progress soon.
13. **Meetings** – I attended a presentation on the expansion project for Copley Place.
14. **Comment Letters** – I filed comment letters on the 350 Boylston Street and Merano at Bulfinch Triangle projects. They will be posted shortly on our website.

**TECHNICAL COORDINATOR'S  
WELL MONITORING UPDATE  
BGwT Meeting: July 31, 2008**

WELL MONITORING

The BGwT's latest set of readings are indicated below.

There are currently 712 wells in the West network. Wells were read between June 21 – July 20, 2008. Of the 712 wells read:

- 160 wells @ elevation >7'
- 303 wells @ elevation 5'- 7'
- 188 wells @ elevation 3'-5'
- 32 wells @ elevation <3'
- 1 wells @ Dry
- 28 wells @ no reading

We have read 85 wells in the East network (East Boston Area). Wells were read in East Boston on June 16-21, 2008. Of the 85 wells read:

- 44 wells @ elevation >7'
- 14 wells @ elevation 5'- 7'
- 8 wells @ elevation 3'-5'
- 9 wells @ elevation <3'
- 10 wells @ Dry
- 0 wells @ no reading

NOTE: We are continuously reading the well network and started a new set of readings on Friday July 26, 2008.

LEVELOGGERS

- We continue to upload dataloggers at the following locations on a weekly basis:
  - 2 on and around Saint Charles St. and 2 on Cazenove Street
  - 5 on Beacon St., in the Berkeley to Clarendon St. block
  - 1 at the corner of Charles St. South and Melrose St.
  - 1 adjacent to 211 Berkeley St.

- 3 in the North End around Fulton and Commercial Streets
- 4 wells installed along the Back Bay Station Railroad alignment

## WEBSITE

- Updated the following:
  - Reading zones
  - WPA wells, also adding a new map for WPA wells in East Boston
  - All WPA waterlevel data and locations for both West and East Boston