

**Elliott Laffer statement for the
Patrick-Murray Transition Team, Dec. 4, 2006**

My name is Elliott Laffer, and I'm the Executive Director of the Boston Groundwater Trust. I'm here today to ask you to continue and support what I think has been a model of cooperation among City and state agencies and authorities to collaborate in solving a difficult problem that could have a devastating effect on many of Boston's historic neighborhoods.

As you may know, many of the buildings in Boston's made land neighborhoods are supported on wood pilings that will last indefinitely as long as they remain covered by groundwater. As groundwater levels drop, the pilings can begin to rot, eventually leading to very expensive foundation repairs or, in the worst case, the loss of the building. The problem has been with us for many years, but its potentially difficult and costly resolution has often led to its being ignored. One sign of progress was the funding through the most recent Environmental Bond Bill of the construction by the Trust of a network that now encompasses 800 groundwater level observation wells located across all parts of the City where the problem may occur.

Jim Hunt, Mayor Menino's Chief of Energy and Environmental Services, worked with then Chief of the Office of Commonwealth Development Doug Foy to bring together the public bodies that have responsibility for underground infrastructure in the affected areas. This led to the signing, in September 2005, of a Memorandum of Understanding committing the Commonwealth, the City, the MBTA, the Turnpike Authority, the MWRA, the Boston Water and Sewer Commission, and the Trust to share information and work together to find and fix areas of low groundwater identified by our groundwater observation well network. The document also established a City-State Groundwater Working Group that meets quarterly to update information and coordinate the effort.

The Working Group has been ably co-chaired by Mr. Hunt and Doug Foy's successor, Andrew Gottlieb. As one who has been involved, mostly as a community activist, in public meetings for over 30 years, I am pleased to be able to report that these are among the most useful that I have attended. The members have all committed resources to repairing conditions that may, in some cases, been causing groundwater problems for years. I hope that you will continue the Commonwealth's active participation, supported by both the Executive and Legislative branches, in the Working Group and in the efforts to reduce this threat to some of the Commonwealth's most important physical resources.

For more information and to see all of the current and historic readings from the well network, please visit our website, www.bostongroundwater.org.

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