

November 28, 2007

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

Subject: Boston Conservatory Theater

Dear Mr. FitzGerald:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Application for Small Project Review for the Boston Conservatory Theater. 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 lowered groundwater levels and to make recommendations for solving the problem. As such, my comments are limited to groundwater related issues.

As noted in the application, the project is located within the Groundwater Conservation Overlay District. I was pleased to note the proponent's commitment to meet the standards of Article 32. In addition to recharge requirements, the project is also required to demonstrate that it will not have an adverse impact on groundwater levels on its own or adjacent lots. The application states that the project includes a basement. While it is not clear to what elevation the basement floor will extend, it is critical that the design be such that it cannot leak groundwater.

The building will be located on Hemenway Street, in an area of chronically low groundwater readings. Because of this, it is especially important that great care be taken in all aspects of the design, construction, and operation of the facility. Groundwater readings should be taken at defined intervals before, during, and after construction to assure that the project is having no negative impact. These readings should be reported to both the Authority and the Trust. The Trust's well 22I-1689, located in front of 39 Hemenway Street, just a few doors away from the site, may be an excellent candidate for observing these levels. The low groundwater levels in the area are illustrated by the history of this well, installed in 2004, which has shown groundwater levels never reaching as high as 4 feet measured against Boston City Base, a level at which the wood pilings that support many nearby buildings are put at risk.

I look forward to working with the proponent and the Authority to develop a monitoring program that will demonstrate that the project is not having a negative effect on groundwater levels, as well as helping to assure that the project, when completed, can have only a positive impact on solving this difficult problem.

Very truly yours,

Elliott Laffer
Executive Director

Cc: Kathleen Pedersen, BRA
Maura Zlody, BED