

December 10, 2004

Ms. Maria Faria, Assistant Director for Housing
Boston Redevelopment Authority
One City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201-1007

Subject: Hamilton Towne Gate

Dear Ms. Faria:

These comments are in response to the Project Notification Form for this project published on Sept. 20.

The Boston Groundwater Trust was established by City ordinance to monitor groundwater levels in those parts of Boston where wood pile foundations installed in filled land are threatened with deterioration by reduced groundwater levels and to propose potential solutions to those problems. As such, our comments are limited to groundwater related issues.

According to the PNF, the project site includes urban fill with static groundwater expected to be encountered five to ten feet below the existing surface. The site is at least partially constructed on filled land, and the original shoreline is on or very close to the site. Because of this, we request that the applicant be required to survey buildings in the area, with a particular emphasis on the Pine Street Inn and nearby structures on East Berkeley Street and Harrison Avenue, to determine which are supported on wood pilings.

We further request that groundwater monitoring wells be installed in the public sidewalks around the project on Washington Street, east Berkeley Street, and Harrison Avenue. The records of groundwater levels during construction should be turned over to the Trust for dissemination to the public. After construction, control of the wells should be turned over to the Trust so that we can add them to our network of wells that allow us to more completely understand where reduced groundwater levels exist in the affected area.

It is vitally important that new projects not cause further deterioration in groundwater levels. Because this project will include an underground two level parking garage, it will create a potential leak point that would reduce

the groundwater level. No pumping of groundwater from the garage to the sewer system should be allowed as this causes drawdown of surrounding levels. The applicant should be required to file an annual certificate, signed by a registered professional engineer with expertise in geotechnical issues, that no groundwater pumping has taken place during the preceding year.

It is also very important that we not reduce opportunities for natural recharge of the aquifer. The applicant should describe how much of the site is presently pervious. If any of that portion is to be covered by a building or other impervious surface, the applicant should calculate how much groundwater recharge would be lost on an annual basis and show how he will make up for that loss.

We appreciate very much the opportunity to comment on this project and look forward to working with the BRA and the applicant to assure that the project will not have a negative impact on groundwater levels in the area.

Very truly yours,

Elliott Laffer
Executive Director