

Boston Groundwater Trust

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January 24, 2012

Mr. Gerald Autler, Senior Project Manager
Boston Redevelopment Authority
One City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02201-1007

Subject: New England Conservatory

Dear Mr. Autler:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Institutional Master Plan Notification Form/Project Notification Form for the New England Conservatory. The Boston Groundwater trust was established by the Boston City Council to monitor groundwater levels in sections of Boston where the integrity of building foundations is threatened by low groundwater levels and to make recommendations for solving the problem. Therefore, my comments are restricted to groundwater related issues.

I am pleased with the proponent's recognition, stated in the IMPNF/PNF and restated in both the scoping session and in a meeting with Trust staff, that the project is in the Groundwater Conservation Overlay District and that they will comply with all GCOD requirements. As stated in the document, there are several historically important structures in the immediate vicinity of the projects contemplated in the document that are wood piling supported and therefore vulnerable to a drop in groundwater level. Notably, the proponent's own Jordan Hall is one of those wood piling supported structures.

As discussed during the scoping session, the GCOD requirements include, in addition to the recharge committed in the IMPNF/PNF, a mandate that the project show, in a submission stamped by a Massachusetts registered professional engineer, that the project is designed so that it cannot cause a reduction in groundwater levels on site or on adjoining sites. Because this project, under the Institutional Master Plan process, will not be reviewed by the Board of Appeals, this certification should be submitted prior to zoning approval. In this context, I am pleased with the proponent's statement in the scoping session that there will be no underdrains in either of the building projects contemplated in the document.

I am also pleased with the verbal commitment from the proponent to install an additional groundwater monitoring well along St. Botolph Street at a location to be mutually agreed upon with the Trust to help assure that groundwater levels are being maintained. Because of the highly sensitive historic buildings in the immediate vicinity, the project should have a groundwater monitoring protocol in place prior to construction and should report readings shortly after they are taken to the Authority and to the Trust. In the event that groundwater levels drop below agreed levels during construction, there should be provisions in place to halt construction and dewatering until the cause is found and remedied.

I look forward to continuing to work with the proponent and the Authority to assure that this project can have only positive impacts on groundwater levels in the Fenway.

Very truly yours,

Elliott Laffer
Executive Director

Cc: Kathleen Pedersen, BRA
Maura Zlody, BED