

Boston Groundwater Trust

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Executive Director

Elliott Laffer

May 8, 2012

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

Subject: 477-481 Harrison Avenue

Dear Mr. Fitzgerald:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Application for Small Project Review for 477-481 Harrison Avenue. 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 low groundwater levels and to make recommendations for solving the problem, which is of particular importance in sites such as this where nearby buildings, and possibly the structure itself, are supported on wood pilings. Therefore, my comments are limited to groundwater related issues.

As noted by the proponent, the project is located within the Groundwater Conservation Overlay District established under Article 32 of the zoning code. According to the application, the proponent plans to meet the recharge requirements of the code and will not be seeking a variance. Article 32 also includes a requirement that the project be designed so that it cannot cause a reduction in area groundwater levels. Although the attached application for zoning relief states that the recharge system will not cause such a reduction, the planned lowering of the floor level to provide parking below the structure could have negative impacts. In most cases, such a low portion of the structure is thoroughly waterproofed. As required under Article 32, there should be a stamped certification from an engineer registered in Massachusetts that outlines the steps being taken to assure that no negative impact on groundwater levels will be possible. In addition, there are no details on the proposed recharge system. These should be furnished, along with the certification letter, before the project goes before the Board of Appeals (now scheduled for May 22).

I look forward to working with the proponent and the Authority to assure that the project can have only positive impacts on area groundwater levels.

Very truly yours,

Elliott Laffer
Executive Director

Cc: Kathleen Pedersen, BRA
Maura Zlody, BED