

December 2, 2008

Mr. Michael Eby
Chairman, Permanent Building Committee
Town Hall
525 Washington Street
Wellesley, MA 02482

Re: Wellesley High School

Wellesley, Massachusetts

SMMA No. 04047.00

Dear Mr. Eby:

As requested, please find information on the ground floor slab settling that occurred on the Lynn Classical High School project and a brief summary of why a comparison with the Wellesley High School project is unfounded.

Symmes, Maini & McKee Associates (SMMA) is a full service architectural firm that designs projects across a wide spectrum of building types, clients and agencies. One component of the overall SMMA portfolio is public school educational projects. Since our founding in 1955, SMMA has designed many thousands of buildings. This includes over 30 public school educational projects designed subsequent to the Lynn Classical High School project design, none of which has experienced any foundation or settling issues.

Lynn Classical High School

In 1994, the City of Lynn retained SMMA to design the new Classical High School. The City had selected the site - a former dump for construction refuse - and had established a budget prior to SMMA being retained. The cost of capping and closing the landfill site was not fully accommodated in the initial budget and, as a result, the City had to continually reduce the project scope to remain within the project budget. At the end of the design development phase, the project still exceeded the budget.

SMMA's original structural design specified a pile-supported steel super-structure and pile-supported ground floor slab. The geotechnical consultant, a separate firm retained thru SMMA, recommended changing the pile-supported ground floor slab to a slab-on-grade, keeping the refuse under the building and utilizing a site improvement process called *deep dynamic compaction* to drive the refuse below the water table to control decomposition. The steel super structure, including floors two and three, remained pile-supported. After review with the City of the method and cost savings, this site improvement process was incorporated into the project.

Several years after the completion of construction of Lynn Classical, we were notified by the City that settlement of the ground floor slab was observed. The building is not sinking, the ground floor slab was settling. This settling was a direct function of the decaying refuse material left in place despite the *deep dynamic compaction* process.

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From that time forward, SMMA worked very closely with the City and the geotechnical consultant company. We did not shy away from the problem, but worked proactively with the City. We were committed to this Client, as we are with all our Clients.

SMMA and the geotechnical consultant were two of eleven companies that the City brought suit upon, a settlement with the City was reached in 2006 and the City is now underway with repairs.

Comparing the Wellesley High School Site to the Lynn Classical Site is Unfounded

All building projects have site constraints and challenges. An integral part of the design phase is a comprehensive assessment of the site, the site constraints and the challenges it imposes on the design and construction process. The Lynn Classical project is not comparable to the Wellesley project. It is erroneous to conclude that the Lynn project is similar or even comparable to the Wellesley project. There are many significant differences:

- The Lynn Classical site was a former dump for construction refuse; the Wellesley site is not.
- The Lynn Classical site contained refuse material susceptible to decomposition; this soil condition does not exist on the Wellesley project site.
- The Lynn Classical project kept the decomposing refuse under the building; the Wellesley project will remove all organic materials subject to decomposing (peat) from under the building.
- The Lynn Classical project utilized a unique soil improvement method, known as *deep dynamic compaction* to drive the refuse below the water table to control decomposition; the Wellesley project has no such unique soil improvement method.
- The geotechnical consultant for the Lynn project is not the same company as for the Wellesley project.

The Lynn project relied on input from the geotechnical consultant; for the Wellesley project, the SMMA Chief Structural Engineer has been involved with the geotechnical consultant in the selection of all foundation systems. In addition, the Wellesley Permanent Building Committee has retained an independent third party geotechnical consultant, as a Peer Review providing additional perspective on the foundation requirements for the Wellesley High School project to the design team.

As we discussed, the project has only completed the Schematic Design phase and has one year of significant engineering and design to be undertaken for all aspects of the building, including the foundation. The area of the site with peat and loose sands is concentrated in the western most portion of the new school building, the gymnasium wing, and represents 20% of the building footprint area. The foundation system, in particular at the gymnasium wing, will remain in our focus over the course of detailed design and should any new information indicate a different approach to this wing, the budget has sufficient contingency to implement this approach.

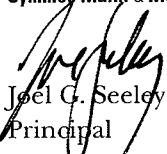
We are confident that our process, the rigorous requirements of the Massachusetts Building Code and the comprehensive oversight from the PBC, will ensure the new Wellesley High School building is safe and well constructed.

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I will call you shortly to review this information.

Very truly yours,

Symmes Maini & McKee Associates



Joel G. Seeley, AIA
Principal

cc: JGS, ACP, (MF)