

Nov. 26, 2021

Dear Comp Plan Update Committee

I am submitting comments on chapters for which there are “drafts,” as of this date. Some chapters, particularly those focusing on water resources, floodplain hazards, etc. reflect rising sea levels (I have added storm surges) but other chapters are not sufficiently cognizant of climate change, and the impacts on the Town that lie ahead. In my judgment, which is consistent with the latest IPCC findings, our new comprehensive plan must be transformative, pointing the way to actions, ordinances, and leadership that allow the Town and its residents to play their vital part in combating the ever rising temperatures caused by fossil fuels and their insidious greenhouse gas emissions. It is not clear exactly where to place some of these climate related goals and strategies. It may be necessary to create a new chapter. Nevertheless, that the world has a climate crisis is a reality, whether or not certain members of the Committee realize it, and these goals and strategies must be part of the plan if it is going to have any usefulness to the Town.

I have not yet seen a draft of an introduction to the plan update, but strongly suggest that one be included, and that it clearly the ideas expressed in the above paragraph: that we have a climate crisis (or emergency), that even though Maine has yet to experience the dramatic impacts experienced by other parts of the country and other parts of the world, our turn will come. In any case, it is the uncontrolled rising of the earth’s surface temperature that is at the heart of the crisis, and that phenomenon can ONLY be addressed by policies and strategies, at all levels of government, that reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and promote the long term sustainability of our natural resources.

Respectfully,

Joe Hardy

Chapter 6 Update—Housing

Data Source & References

Should include the reports from “Maine Won’t Wait,” Maine’s 4 year climate action plan

Key Findings

Many items are missing:

RE: ENERGY

1. Should include an inventory of the various heating systems used in residential and business structures: oil, gas, wood, heat pumps, other
2. Should include an inventory of the source of electricity in the above structures, and this inventory should be updated at least every other year.

Grid: standard offer, other source, subscription for renewable energy option via Revision, Nexamp, etc.,

Home generated via solar panels, roof mounted or ground array, net metered

Solar farm generated, net metered to owner

3. Inventory of electric vehicles: BEVs, PHEVs, HEVs, etc.
4. Estimates of recycling by each household and business
5. Estimate of the Town's municipal carbon footprint, as well as that of the entire town.

The Town needs a means by which it can track its progress toward sustainability and net zero carbon emissions.

RE: ETHNIC DIVERSITY

6. What is the ethnic diversity of Wells?
What countries, nationalities, ethnic groups, religions, etc are present in Wells?
7. In the years ahead, the climate crisis will cause a huge influx of refugees from all parts of the world. We must plan for that eventuality, creating the framework for housing, education, etc. (At this point in time most immigrants are going to Lewiston and Portland. In the near future, smaller towns and cities will have to bear their share of this responsibility.)

Housing Policies and Goals

Wells Goals

Missing from this section are goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and for increasing the Town's ethnic diversity .

Suggested goals:

1. Significantly reduce the carbon footprint of Wells housing; specifically, reach the 80% mark toward zero carbon emissions from residential housing and business structures by 2035
 - Heating: through heat pumps or wood pellets from sustainably harvested trees, or other means of using renewable energy
 - Electricity: through subscriptions to renewably generated electricity offered by the power companies, home solar installations, or part ownership in community solar farms
(Grid electricity will be increasingly based on renewable energy generation as a consequence of State climate legislation)
 - Energy efficiencies in remodeling and in new construction
2. Increase the diversity of Wells by initiating a system for attracting, housing, and educating immigrants, providing them with opportunities for employment and a means for inclusion in the life of the Town. (We are the friendliest town in the State, right?)

Strategies

Missing are strategies that would achieve the above mentioned climate and ethnic diversity goals

Suggested strategies

1. See document submitted by the Wells Energy Advisory Committee. In addition to its general statements, specific ordinances are needed which require all new construction to incorporate specific systems for energy efficiency, heat pumps or other systems which utilize renewable energy, and a means for owners to utilize renewably generated electricity. Cooperation with Efficiency Maine is essential.
2. The Town should also work to upgrade the Maine Uniform Building Code to further reduce the carbon footprint of all new and retrofitted structures.
3. Regarding ethnic diversity, the BOS should appoint a committee to reach out to Portland and Lewiston to understand how immigrants could be successfully brought to and supported in Wells, and then make recommendations as to how to proceed.
4. Cooperate with the School District, considering joint efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by transforming their respective fleets of vehicles from fossil fuel based to battery powered, and their structures from fossil fuel based heating to renewable energy based heating.

Appendix

- #6 Projections for future growth in Wells need to be re-examined. The Town's existing ordinances and building permit system encourage growth, creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. (Developers are well aware of this situation, and are exploiting it.) We need ordinances that allow modest growth without promoting it.

Chp. 6 Update Land Use Policies and Strategies

Appendix A Inventory and Analysis

Section 8 Update—Land Use

Key findings

- #2 Reinststate a growth ordinance, an ordinance that includes the goals of long term sustainability and net zero carbon emissions
- #4 Replace “consider developing an open space plan” with
“Develop an open space plan”
- #4a Larger open space requirements for subdivisions are in order
1. Raise the figure from 35% to 50 %
 2. Density calculations should be based on the amount of buildable land, and not include wetlands, ledge, etc

Land Use Policies and Strategies

Wells Goals

#2 The Town should “allow” and plan for growth, but not encourage it, thus

“Allow growth that is respectful of the Town’s village, rural and beach waterfront areas, promotes long term sustainability, and enhances the Town’s commitment to achieving 80% net zero carbon emissions by 2035.”

Policies

1d Eliminate the word “encourage.”

2 Rewrite to becomethat new development is consistent with the character of the Town, confines development to specific areas, promotes

amenities that reinforce the Town’s character, protects the scenic character of the Town’s beaches, marshes, rivers and rural roads, protects historic areas of the Town, enhances long term sustainability of natural resources, and addresses the crisis of climate change through energy efficiencies and renewable energy for heating and electricity.

Create a carbon impact fee that would be assessed on every new structure, the magnitude of the fee proportional to either the estimated carbon footprint of the structure, or the amount of land that is “developed” for that structure. Funds collected from this fee would be used to purchase and preserve other lands for open space and carbon sequestration.

8 Eliminate “promote”

11 Include the goal of carbon sequestration

12 Enhance, protect, manage.....

14 Strike this item. We need to reduce vehicular traffic through enhanced public transportation and renewable energy systems, responding to the urgency of climate change, not further contribute to an antiquated highway system.

New

Every decision by Town committees and boards must have answered the question, “how does it affect our goals of becoming more sustainable and reducing greenhouse gas emissions?”

New

Initiate a town wide discussion about the best use of abandoned gravel pits, including the idea that they might be (as Linda Grenfell suggested) hubs for appropriate businesses, allowing residents the opportunity to reduce the amount of driving to and from work, or set aside for recreational purposes, or replanted for carbon sequestration

Tools to Define Rural and Critical rural Areas

Reinstitute a growth management ordinance

Critical Rural Areas

Critical rural areas 1, 2, and 3 should have a requirement of 75% open space

Transitional area 1 Moody

It does **not** need to be prepared for a potential interchange with the Maine Turnpike. See above

Traditional area 3 Burnt Mill

Do not reduce the minimum lot size to 40,000 square feet.

Chapter 11 Public facilities & Service Policies and Strategies

Appendix A Inventory & Analysis, Section 9 Public facilities and Utilities

Key findings

Rewrite In 2020 the Wells Sanitary District (WSD) completed a climate adaptation plan to inform and guide the plans for infrastructure and operations changes. The Town should do likewise, as well as create a plan for reducing its carbon footprint such that it can achieve 100% net zero emissions from municipal buildings and vehicles by 2035, and achieve 80% of the goal of net zero emissions in the town as a whole by that date.

Wells Goals

- #1 Add at the end:and a low carbon footprint.
- #3 Add at the end:including strategies that will lead to net zero emissions of all municipal structures and vehicles by 2035
- #6 Add to read: Ensure adequate planning and financial resources to mitigate civil emergencies, including those that are brought on by climate change

New

The Town Manager to initiate planning for a facility, owned by the Town or contracted out by the Town, that will compost all the organic waste, food and

otherwise, from residences and business establishments (particularly restaurants) in the Town. A plan for such a facility to be completed by the end of 2022. The goal is to have the facility operational by 2024 or 2025.

Policies

#1 Rewrite:

Promote a pattern of growth and development that discourages sprawl, is consistent with the policies on land use, enhances the use of renewable energy and energy efficiencies in structures, and allows for cost delivery of services consistent with the needs of Wells

#7 Add at the end:.....provided that such dredging does not contribute to enhanced climate impacts.

Strategies

Municipal offices

#2 Add at the end:and develop a schedule such that all facilities have net zero carbon emissions by 2035

Public lands

#2 Rewrite: Revise and employ the Town's land ranking classification system for existing and future Town owned lands for the purpose of conservation, recreation, facility needs, and carbon sequestration.

Public Safety

Fire Department

As each vehicle nears the end of its useful life, replace with a battery operated model. If the technology is not yet available for that model, purchase a **used** gasoline/diesel powered vehicle so that its eventual replacement by an all electric, battery powered vehicle is not delayed any longer than necessary. The goal is to have all vehicles fully battery powered by 2035.

Police Department

Replace each vehicle, including cruisers, with battery operated models, progressing from hybrids to all electric as quickly as technology allows.

Public Works

Replace each vehicle with battery operated models. If the technology is not yet available for a particular model, purchase a used gasoline/diesel powered vehicle so that its eventual replacement by an all electric, battery powered vehicle is not delayed longer than necessary. The goal is to have all vehicles fully battery powered by 2035.

Recreation Department

Same as above

Solid Waste

Same as above for vehicles used at the transfer station.

Library

Continue to add energy efficiency upgrades and, prior to 2035, replace the current gas heating system with one that utilizes heat pumps or another system that utilizes renewably generated energy.

Analysis

New # 8 All municipal facilities and vehicles should be on a schedule to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2035

Chapter 3 Natural Resource Polices and Strategies Appendix A Inventory and Analysis Section 3 Update---Critical Natural Resources

Key Findings

#6 Rewrite

Incorporate sea level rise and other climate change considerations. No mention of climate change impacts (sea level rise and more intense frequent storm events have risen to the crisis level) on flood hazards.

Wells Goals

3 Rewrite

Identify areas susceptible to the negative effects of climate change such as sea level rise, storm surge flooding, etc., as well as areas of flood mitigation and floodwater storage, and work with regional and state agencies to develop plans proactively to respond to these projected climate impacts.

8 Mineral extraction doesn't belong in the same category as agriculture. It should be allowed, not promoted (see General Policies, # 2) as a properly managed traditional use, but its continuation does not qualify as a "goal."

Rewrite

Protect, manage, and support resource based enterprises such as sustainable forestry and agriculture, particularly practices which minimize reliance on fossil fuels and chemical soil amendments. (The latter are reliant on an industry that is a huge emitter of greenhouse gases, and also contribute to ground water pollution.)

Policies

Beaches

#5 Rewrite

Create transportation links such as ferries (but not bridges) between the Harbor, Wells Beach, and Drakes Island.

(A bridge in the Harbor when forecasts are for increasing storm surges, flooding, etc.???) You've got to be kidding.)

Groundwater

#2 after nitrate standards, add "as well as standards that may be needed for other chemicals, including PFAS and PFOS compounds, the so-called "forever chemicals."

Soils

Rewrite

Base the density of development in areas outside public water and sewer service in part on the assimilative capacity of soils to accommodate outside waste water systems and in part on other factors that have a bearing on the town's rural character and may be subjective in nature. No lot shall be less than 40,000 square feet in these areas.

(With the 20,000 square foot minimum, some soils have characteristics that would potentially allow up to 5 residential units per acre, but that is not a density that we would desire, even if particular soils could assimilate the waste. This from a former soil chemist.)

Implementation Strategies

General

- #3 Add at end of sentence: “mindful of the increasing probability and severity of climate impacts.”

Wildlife and Fisheries

- #2 Rewrite
Review the appropriateness of currently designated buffers.....

Forest and Farmland Resources

- #2 Add a clause at end of sentence:
“especially as may result from future climate change events.”

Section 7, update Historic & Archaeological Resources

Date Sources and References

Add

8. Settlement & Abandonment on Tatnic Hill, An Eclectic History of Wells, Maine 1600-1900 Joseph W. Hardy
9. History of a Maine Little River Joseph W. Hardy
10. My Name is Wells, Hope Shelley, Editor

Chapter 5 Historic and Cultural Resources, Policies & Strategies

Policies

- # 4 Add at end: “including appropriate signage and other markers at mill sites, shipyard sites, etc.

Implementation Strategies

- #6 Yes, in answer to question

Local Historic Preservation

In the paragraph that begins with, “In 2011”

There are a number of sites that should be added to the list

For example:

1. Mill site on the Merriland River at the Skinner Mills Road bridge
2. Mill site on the Merriland River at the Coles Hill Road bridge
3. Mill site on the Merriland River at the Route 9A bridge
4. Mill site on the Merriland River at Hobbs Pond
5. Mill site on the Merriland River at the intersection of Rt. 109/Sawyer Road

Check with the Historical Society for sites on other streams/ivers in Wells, as well as sites for shipbuilding, and other manufacturing activities

Chapter 15 Flood Hazard Mitigation and Adaptation Policies & Strategies

Key findings

Add #1 The world has a climate crisis. The planet's average global surface temperature is rising uncontrollably. The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has issued dire warnings about future climate impacts, that we exceed 1.5 degrees Celsius above the preindustrial temperature at our peril. Accordingly, everyone, everywhere, must take major steps to reduce their carbon **footprint**.

Techniques

Add Public education to help the residents of Wells understand how they contribute to climate change, and what steps they can take to mitigate that contribution. The Board of Selectmen and the Town Manager and her staff must play a major role in this critical educational effort.

Wells Goals

1, 2,3,4 should read sea level rise and storm surges

#7 Rewriteabout the climate crisis, including specific risks associated with development in the flood plain

Policies

Add "storm surges" wherever sea level rise is mentioned

2 Add, at end: and set aside funds to deal with anticipated flood related destruction of infrastructure

Strategies

Add storm surges wherever "sea level rise" is used

