

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING COMMITTEE

Provided by the Wells Conservation Commission 1/11/22

1. Substantially increase funding of the Land Bank from taxation. Voters consistently and repeatedly support expending funds from the Land Bank to acquire open space to sustain public recreation, resource conservation, watershed protection, and wildlife habitat. The last warrant item for purchasing a large parcel was approved by 86.2% of voters. The alternative will be to issue bonds for major purchases.
2. For all residential development legislate an impact fee dedicated to purchase of open space for recreation, resource protection and use, watershed protection, and wildlife habitat. The alternative will be to issue bonds for major purchases.
3. Direct the Planning Board to pay special attention to wetland protection, especially vernal pools, forested wetlands, and shrub-scrub wetlands.
4. Alter the Land Use Ordinance in order to cease counting wetlands in assessing land for minimum lot requirements. This practice is unique to Wells and causes development to take place in unsuitable areas, such as islands, that in turn provide legal development of access roads through other wetlands.
5. Rezone setbacks for all streams and rivers in order to deal with storms of much greater rain volume and to deal with more frequent storm events. These are clear consequences of global warming and must be dealt with in advance. The recent breaching of Hobb's Pond Dam and the undergirding of the road culvert on Bragdon Road are a few examples of how planning will need to be altered to meet the storm threat.
6. In directing development areas to pay special attention to the sheds of Branch Brook, the Merriland River, and the Webhannet River. Direct the Selectboard to negotiate greater protection of the watercourses by purchasing development rights (easements) from willing landowners in order to extend protection beyond regulatory ordinances. Surveys conducted by the Wells Reserve of landowners on the Merriland River clearly indicate widespread support for protecting the watercourses in ways that are fair to individual landowners, who generally feel highly protective of the resource.
6. Direct the Town Engineer to make regular investigation of the threats of climate change and to plan for avoidance and mitigation of land and property, especially along river/stream courses, marsh side, and frontal beach landscapes. The best plan would be to hire a professionally trained specialist or to share professional expertise with neighboring town on planning to mitigate effects of climate change, both at the shore and inland.
7. Plan for bike/walking trails to connect the western side of town with the route one corridor, and to parallel the route one corridor. The former will, as transportation costs increase, provide alternative, healthy means for residents in western Wells to shop and work while providing coastal residents with means for reaching the conservation areas in the west. The latter will allow coastal residents to walk and bike as an alternative to facing route one traffic, and will relieve traffic there.
8. Recommend a land bridge over the Maine turnpike to provide a wildlife corridor and to provide bike/hike connections between the west side of town and the coastal corridor. Such a facility could connect the Eastern Trail with the coastal community and provide an economic multiplier for local businesses that serve visitors.
9. Recommend that there be no initiative to extend sewer and water services west of the turnpike. Such an extension is quite literally incompatible with the expressed goal of

“maintaining the rural nature of the town”: such an extension would result in ¼ acre lots and a residential pattern that would make Wells resemble a city such as Somerville Mass or Revere Mass.

10. Direct the Selectboard to create a legal means to regulate the rate of growth. This does not mean to stop all new growth; rather, it means to control the rate of growth so that matches growth of surrounding communities. Considering traffic congestion, water sources and a host of other demanding issues, along with the excessive rate of development in the Town, any Comprehensive Plan that does not call for reasonable regulation of the rate of growth will not be approved by the voters.