



TOWN OF WELLS, MAINE

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE COMMITTEE

Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 20, 2022, 6:00 P.M.
Town Hall
208 Sanford Road

6:00 PM CALL TO ORDER & DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

A quorum being present, the meeting was called to order at 6:01 p.m. on Thursday, January 20, 2022, from the Littlefield Room at Town Hall.

Those present were Committee Members Chris Chase, Carol DesJardins, Tim Gowen, Linda Grenfell, Martin Morse, Chris Pugsley, James Smith and Jason Vennard. Also in attendance were Larissa Crockett, Town Manager; Jodine Adams, Code Enforcement Officer; Mike Livingston, Town Engineer; John McLeod, Selectman Liaison; and Sean Roche, Selectman Liaison.

Steve Whitman and Liz Kelly were present representing Resilience Planning and Design.

Jason Vennard, Vice Chair, presided over the meeting.

MINUTES

November 18, 2021 – Review and consider for approval.

MOTION

Motion made by Martin Morse to approve the November 18, 2021 minutes as presented, seconded by Chris Pugsley.

Motion approved unanimously.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Joe Hardy spoke on a Climate Change Crisis, urging the Committee to take it seriously during the process of the CPUC Study Update. He offered assistance in education on the subject, and discussed coastal impact, ocean temperatures increasing, the result on the shrimp and lobster industries and sea level rise.

1 **CPUC BUSINESS**

- 2
- 3 • Annual Election of the CPUC Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary.
- 4

5 **MOTION**

6 Motion made by Martin Morse, seconded by Tim Gowen, to nominate Carol DesJardins as
7 Secretary.

8

9 Motion approved unanimously.

10

11 **MOTION**

12 Motion made by Martin Morse, seconded by Tim Gowen, to nominate Chris Chase as Chair.
13 Jim Smith noted it was not asked if there were any other nominations. There were no other
14 nominations.

15

16 Motion approved unanimously.

17

18 **MOTION**

19 Motion made by Martin Morse, seconded by Tim Gowen, to nominate Jason Vennard as Vice
20 Chair. There were no other nominations.

21

22 Motion approved unanimously.

23

- 24 • Overview of the Planning Process, the Remaining Tasks and Timeline
- 25

26 Steve Whitman reviewed the schedule showing the remaining tasks. We are presently into the
27 third phase where everything comes together. There will be the collection of feedback from
28 other Boards and Committees, and other elements of Part 1 and Part 2. State, regional and local
29 goals will be discussed.

30

31 Martin Morse asked if the State can veto this. If there are things they won't approve it would be
32 good to know what they are beforehand. Steve said the State will let us know if there are things
33 they will not approve. Resilience is following the State of Maine's checklist.

34

35 All the track change versions as clean copies are on the project website.

36

- 37 • Outreach Report
- 38

39 Liz Kelly gave an outreach report presentation with all the information collected from the forums
40 and online tool. The report focuses on summarizing the comments organized by question and by
41 topic. Input from the outreach report will be used to review and update the goals and strategies
42 sections. The desire for controlling population growth and development, traffic control, open
43 space protection and a downtown center were some of the main concerns of the community.

44

45 Jim Smith commented that he will undertake reviewing the responses and weighing them by
46 topic.

47

1 Tim Gowen asked what the town can do to control growth. Larissa Crockett stated the town has
2 options, but it cannot pass an ordinance that prohibits growth. It can do things such as put caps
3 on dwelling units, dividing the town into zones and assigning permit numbers per zone, and
4 other options. The study might want to define growth areas. Regarding accessory dwelling
5 units, legislation needs to be worked through, and we need to see how the town absorbs that
6 legislation.

7
8 Tim Gowen mentioned proposals that the towns cannot cap growth. He asked what the status on
9 that is. Larissa Crockett does not believe that has passed as far as she knows. She added the
10 town does not want that legislation in place.

11
12 In response to Carol DesJardins regarding comments from forums being positive or negative, Liz
13 Kelly stated the responses from the forums are raw comments recorded verbatim. They did not
14 attempt to filter them.

15
16 • Update on Focus Groups

17
18 Resilience has worked with staff in putting together participants recommended for the focus
19 groups. They have reached out to the participants and have the sessions scheduled in January
20 and February. They will be strategic in documenting the focus groups input in a report to the
21 Committee.

22
23 Linda Grenfell asked how many people would be participating in the focus groups and how do
24 they represent the population of Wells. She asked if we are getting a mixture of ages,
25 experience, length of residency, non-white people, etc., as she would like a variety involved in
26 this. Liz Kelly responded that the groups consisted from four to eight or nine participants. She
27 indicated they have a list on file of those who have been invited.

28
29 Larissa Crockett explained that the staff tried to choose people in the community from different
30 demographics and backgrounds. It is hard to assess diversity, but did focus on the obvious such
31 as age and gender.

32
33 Jim Smith expressed concern about who was reached out to. He was expecting a list of names to
34 review and the Committee would pick the participants for the focus groups. He has concern
35 about primarily the staff being charged with choosing the participants, and he is concerned about
36 openness. With respect to the focus groups on where they are meeting, he volunteered to be
37 present and thinks when the focus groups meet, the meetings could be zoomed for Committee
38 members to listen in for the input if they wanted to, as opposed to getting a report on the
39 comments.

40
41 Steve Whitman responded that the focus groups are just an additional tool to talk about strategies
42 and policies, and what do they think it would be like to make these changes in Wells. The staff
43 gave importance to topic area experts, such as those who have been on Boards, Committees, in
44 the real estate market, etc. to give their input. The focus groups are all via zoom with the
45 participants. Jim Smith noted he would like to be on the zoom without giving any input during
46 the meeting.

1 Chris Chase stated members of the CPUC should not be present so there is no influence on the
2 input received from the participants. Larissa Crockett added the focus groups should not be open
3 to the public. The meetings can be recorded and those recordings can be for those interested.
4

5 Chris Chase added we should let the staff do their job. He would rather keep it as groups to
6 receive information from them, and not to them. He appreciates the staff putting the participants
7 together, and the people running the focus groups should be running the show.
8

9 Larissa Crockett explained that Board and Committee meetings are public open to the public, but
10 the focus groups are volunteers with no requirement to be open to the public. She suggested
11 asking the focus groups if they would object to the meetings being recorded for the Committee
12 members to listen to those recordings. Even seeing a Committee member on zoom would keep
13 the focus groups from being non-filtered.
14

15 Steve Whitman added they can ask the participants if they object to a recording, but there may be
16 things they would like to share with their names not being attached.
17

18 Linda Grenfell confirmed from Steve Whitman that no Committee members and no town staff
19 will be present at the focus groups, and the Committee will get a report after. Jim Smith asked if
20 they have a problem if Committee members watch through zoom without giving comments.
21 Jason Vennard responded that is going to sway the discussions. Steve Whitman added that it
22 was not disclosed when asked to participate that there will be a recording or that Committee
23 members will watch via zoom. He would need to get permission of focus group members.
24

25 Martin Morse noted he was looking at the raw comments from forums that were without names
26 of the people that made them, and it should be the same with the focus groups. He is more
27 interested in the comments and not who made them. No names should be attached to the
28 comments.
29

30 MOTION

31 Motion made by Chris Chase, seconded by Martin Morse, to not allow any Committee members
32 to be part of the focus groups.
33

34 Motion approved with majority. Jim Smith opposed.
35

- 36 • Feedback on Draft: Part 1, and Part 2 Chapter 1
37

38 Steve Whitman discussed the vision statement. It should state the ideals and values that guide
39 the Plan. It is intended to paint a picture of the community in ten to twenty years, and decide if
40 that is what you want to work toward. It is intended to describe outcomes, showing the final
41 picture. A Comprehensive Plan vision should be in the present tense, as if changes are now in
42 place, and should ask if this is the intent for the community; is this where the community would
43 like to be. He included in the discussion the vision statement requirements from the State as to
44 what they want in a vision statement. It's a vision to guide work for the next ten years.
45

46 Linda Grenfell likes that it's written in the present tense, indicating we are accomplishing what
47 we want the town to be.
48

1 Steve Whitman continued that in the draft they didn't stress being a small town and being rural.
2 In the first paragraph on Page 8, Martin Morse questioned if the community would know what
3 the wording "set of mutually agreed-upon" means, and he has a problem with saying "the
4 Friendliest Town in Maine". We shouldn't have to tell people that. It is a conclusion they
5 should come up with themselves. His compromise is "one of the friendliest towns in the state of
6 Maine". After a brief discussion, it was agreed amongst the Committee to take that wording out
7 completely.

8
9 On Page 5, the Comprehensive Plan Adoption paragraph, Chris Pugsley needed clarification. He
10 feels the language is casual regarding the Comprehensive Plan Adoption Process and asked
11 regarding the Town Meeting how does that happen.

12
13 It was explained by Martin Morse that in Wells the definition of a Town Meeting is the voting at
14 the polls. That the town charter states the town meeting is a secret ballot on everything. He
15 suggested perhaps there should be a paragraph talking about the form of government in the town.
16 Jim Smith added that the term "town meeting" is when we vote at the polls, and maybe this
17 should be elaborated differently. Steve Whitman suggested added wording of "Adopted by the
18 citizens of Wells by ballot".

19
20 Regarding the vision statement, Chris Pugsley would also like to have more categories addressed
21 on what has been accomplished in addition to what is now in the plan. Steve Whitman answered
22 that there would be more topics added as they review the drafts, and go through the next few
23 sections identifying regulatory issues. They may decide there needs to be more topic headings,
24 with more detail, such as affordability.

25
26 Linda Grenfell asked if there will be discussion later about the vision, and was told we would be
27 editing all the way to May before the plan is sent to the State. She added that she has concern
28 about the climate crisis and the environment. Everything relates to the environment, on
29 protecting open space, water resources, wet lands and more. She would like the language to be
30 stronger; the present language is a little soft. She wants to live in a place that is proud of taking
31 environmental issues seriously.

32
33 Steve Whitman added they will be working on updates for policies, goals and strategies with
34 more details on those topics.

35
36 On Page 8, Jim Smith suggests the wording be changed from "Wells has accomplished" to "this
37 plan envisions".

38
39 The Committee was told there is an updated list of maps that will be provided. Martin Morse
40 asked if the zoning on Map Three includes the overlay districts with affordable housing, the
41 transportation center and manufactured homes. Steve Whitman responded that will be provided.
42 Mike Livingston added the overlay districts are shore land, mobile homes, and the transportation
43 center.

44
45 Chris Chase suggested a definition page so some words like "town meeting" could be defined.
46 Steve Whitman prefers clarifying the language rather than the possibility of leaving something
47 out of a list. Chris Chase preferred the original town meeting because the downside of this
48 present format is people don't get to discuss things as they go through the plan. But he

1 recognizes the new form of government brings more interest and participation from the
2 community.

3
4 Martin Morse suggests a paragraph describing the town charter, on how everything is laid out
5 and voted on or approved. Jodine Adams can provide this information.

6
7 On Page 5, second paragraph, Jim Smith questioned having an Implementation Committee
8 charged with the adoption. He asked why the CPUC shouldn't be charged with the adoption
9 since the CPUC is a standing Committee ready to serve with no other charge between plan
10 updates.

11
12 Larissa Crockett responded that this is a Select Board decision. Chapter 12 is restrictive and
13 does not speak to implementation. The Select Board can choose to appoint an Adoption
14 Committee. The writing of an ordinance is very focused work vs. the CPUC being visionary,
15 not the work of taking goals and bringing them into a language that would be enforceable.
16 Some on the Committee may not be interested in the tedium of writing an ordinance. Jim Smith
17 will address this with the Select Board.

18
19 • Feedback Received From Other Boards and Committees

20
21 Regarding the Conservation Commission comments on impact fees, Tim Gowen feels the
22 Committee has to come in with eyes open. Impact fees don't create affordable housing, and he
23 questions if impact fees can't be implemented, why have the discussion at all.

24
25 Martin Morse added affordable housing is a chief problem to address. We have to find the fine
26 line balance that works with this community, and try to solve problems to give a path to the
27 future.

28
29 Jim Smith asked if impact fees had to be earmarked for something, could they be earmarked for
30 affordable housing for young families, seniors or disadvantaged. We need to have limitations on
31 growth so infrastructure can keep up-to-date.

32
33 Chris Chase stated the Committee has no authority on impact fees. It is a decision of the
34 Selectmen. He added with regard to the Conservation Committee's comments, he felt some were
35 interesting and there were some good ideas, but he considered the last sentence on Number 10
36 about the Plan not getting approved if it does not call for reasonable regulation of the rate of
37 growth, as being a threat, and he was sad that the comment came from a group that he respected.

38
39 Martin Morse added that at a previous meeting open to the public there was also sort of a threat
40 again. He looks for feedback, but will not be threatened to put something in the ordinance he
41 doesn't feel is right for the town. He encourages having a dialogue to agree or disagree.

42
43 Jim Smith didn't like the statement of being threatened, but to get Chapter 12 on the ballot
44 required 500-600 signatures and he gathered a lot of those signatures and talked to many people,
45 and there are a lot of people very concerned about growth. If the Committee doesn't make some
46 recommendations with what people think, we do so with some peril.

47
48 Jason Vennard wrestles with how the recommendations should look like in a Comprehensive

1 Plan. Are impact fees something you typically see in a Comprehensive Plan, or is there a
2 broader conversation on growth.

3
4 Mike Livingston noted that the current Comprehensive Plan recommended the formation of an
5 impact fee, and it was accomplished, but never established. Growth management is done in a
6 Comprehensive Plan, which provides for such as setting lot size, setbacks, land use in the zones,
7 etc., and is governed by ordinances. Growth cap is putting a reduction on permits per year, and
8 is regulated by state statute, with a maximum number that the town can restrict. There would
9 have to be almost a condition of emergency such as overcrowded schools or any other need that
10 has to be addressed. Currently the town, except for the traffic issue, doesn't have those needs.
11 The town has addressed a lot of its infrastructure issues with the schools, fire station, substation,
12 public works, transportation center, etc. To establish a growth cap the town has to have a legal
13 reason to do it. The current 2005 Comprehensive Plan calls for the establishment of a
14 Committee to analyze the growth cap situation, and the town can leave open the establishment of
15 a growth Committee to analyze that.

16
17 Steve Whitman added it is the intention to set a direction. If there are tools to be considered with
18 growth management, they can be listed in the Plan.

19
20 Tim Gowen asked that we check with other towns to see what they are doing.

21
22 Larissa Crockett explained that the town can't have a cap less than 105% of the average number
23 of building permits issued in the last ten years. A growth cap would not be a decrease in the
24 number of houses. There are no bills to her knowledge related to a report that has been
25 submitted to state legislature identifying recommendations. If the report is adopted it may
26 include impact fees. The Committee could add recommendations of how growth can be
27 managed. There are ways to deter growth that do not involve a cap.

28
29 Linda Grenfell feels we are addressing things in a clear way with good information, and she can
30 see how item Number 10 seems like a threat, but seems to her it is more like a statement. In all
31 the comments we are collecting, people are concerned about development in Wells. Voters are
32 saying if the town keeps developing they are not going to vote in favor of this. She appreciates
33 Joe Hardy's hard work. With the issues of housing development and affordable housing, we are
34 seeing more and more immigrants coming into the state of Maine, and these also are affordable
35 housing issues to be looked at. She would be curious about how other towns are managing the
36 issues of housing, and is concerned about how to have a healthy community with open space and
37 protection of the environmental resources that keep us all alive, and not become a community
38 that rejects people with needs.

39
40 Sean Roche stated the 105% growth cap does not include permits for affordable housing,
41 according to the State ordinance.

42
43 Martin Morse suggested maybe including some of this factual information in the Plan. The old
44 growth ordinance was 132 units per year, but in the 70s and 80s the growth was impacting the
45 schools. With the present growth there has been no impact to the schools. The elementary
46 school is the closest to being in danger of being effected in terms of space.

1 Tim Gowen asked about accessory dwelling units and the bill that might allow accessory
2 dwelling units. Mike Livingston added the Select Board is speaking to the growth issue and
3 looking at making revisions such as with cluster zoning.

4
5 In response to Tim Gowen on the cluster zoning issues, Mike Livingston explained they will be
6 requiring a buffer along town roads, larger street frontage, and lot sizes which would minimize
7 the amount of driveway cuts coming on the town roads.

8
9 Jim Smith suggests the comments from Committees should be part of the packet when the
10 Committee begins discussions on the sections that deal with those comments, and he asked that
11 the information for review be distributed as it comes available so there will be a longer period of
12 time to review it. Steve Whitman answered that a partial package can be sent out, and he will
13 work with the staff to do that. The information can be rolled out in a couple of phases.

14
15 Linda Grenfell agrees the information should be received when available, and feels the
16 Committee has done a good job reading and interpreting the materials.

17
18 Jim Smith asked that we do the introductions of Committee members attending, and he also asks
19 that everyone's camera should be on during the zoom meeting.

20
21 **OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

22
23 Joe Hardy noted the comment in the Conservation Committee report was a prediction, not meant
24 as a threat. He stressed that the town has to reduce greenhouse gases in all sectors of the
25 economy, and we should be helping people on this path through this Comprehensive Plan. The
26 townspeople need a way to accomplish this, and we have to set standards for renewable energy
27 and try to get these things in place in ten to fifteen years. We have to reduce emissions, and we
28 have to do our part. He offered to provide information to be part of the Plan.

29
30 **OTHER BUSINESS**

31
32 None.

33
34 **ADJOURN**

35
36 **MOTION**

37 Motion made by Martin Morse, seconded by Jim Smith to adjourn. Motion approved.

38
39 Meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

40
41 MINUTES APPROVED _____, 2022

42
43 ACCEPTED BY:

44
45
46
47 _____
48 Carol DesJardins, Recording Secretary

Chris Chase, Chairman