

February 11, 2022

Dear Comprehensive Plan Update Committee Members:

A month ago, you made it clear that you don't take climate change seriously. By a show of hands, only two of you agreed that we are experiencing a climate crisis. Sadly, that is not an informed opinion. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel On Climate Change (IPCC) has repeatedly warned us of dire consequences if we don't respond quickly. Eleven thousand scientists from around the world signed a declaration that we have a climate emergency.

They have known for several decades that greenhouse gas emissions are driving up the earth's average surface air temperature. Even though it has risen only 1.1 degree Celsius (about 2 degrees F) above pre-industrial levels, that temperature increase has already caused significant climate impacts, including the following:

- California forest fires –the five largest during the last three years
- A historic heat wave in the Northwest, in 2001, with all time high temps in Portland and Seattle; British Columbia reached 121 degrees Fahrenheit
- An ongoing drought in the Southwest that is the worst since record keeping began in 1895, with reservoir levels in the Colorado River down about 150 feet
- More severe Atlantic hurricanes, with nine out of the ten costliest occurring since 2000
- A decrease in Arctic Sea ice--approximately 52% in the last four decades
- Melting of the Greenland ice sheet--at least 60% faster than in the 1990s, most recently at 1.2 trillion tons per year

Scientists also know that climate impacts rise exponentially with temperature. We are on a trajectory to reach a temperature that is between 2.5 and 3.0 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels and that such temperatures will have catastrophic climate impacts throughout the world---- massive extinctions, droughts, fires, severe storms, rising sea levels, and tens of millions of people fleeing inundated coastlines and drought stricken regions.

Most of the world's leaders are now using the words, "crisis", "emergency", and "catastrophe" when they talk about climate change.

The only way we can maintain a habitable planet for our children and grandchildren is to rapidly transition to renewable energy in all sectors of human activity-- power production, agriculture, manufacturing, transportation, and heating. Otherwise, the earth's temperature will keep rising, and climate impacts will get progressively worse.

As members of the Wells Comprehensive Plan Update Committee, you have a responsibility to help the citizens of Wells transition to sustainability and renewable energy by thoroughly incorporating climate realities into your work. Please, educate yourselves about climate change. Otherwise, your document will be worthless, and a great disservice to the Town.

Respectfully,

Joe Hardy

