

Mike Livingston

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, February 20, 2025 8:27 AM
To: Mike Livingston; Michael W. Pardue; John K. MacLeod
Subject: 2025 PROPOSED COMP PLAN VISION STATEMENT FEEDBACK

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All,

Please pass to CPUC, Select board members, Planning Board members and others as needed. I know that all have already gone through the draft plan, including the vision statement and found it "worthy". I think breaking it down will help people see the issues more clearly.

Here are some comments I, and others, have made repeatedly over the years. I am owning these comments, but they also reflect others who do not wish to subject themselves to the process.

I broke them down sentence by sentence so it is easier for people to understand and see just how out of sync and non-visionary the vision statement is. The vision is the driving force of all that follows in the Comp Plan. Thus, it is arguably the most important piece to get right because it provides the guardrails for the future we envision.

A good vision statement is ambitious, aspirational, feasible, practical and, importantly, desirable. It should inspire residents, town officials, developers, etc to believe in the vision and to want to take actions to achieve it. The company hired to help the CPUC should have known this. If they didn't, we hired the wrong company. If they did but were shut down, we either had the wrong people on the CPUC or the company failed to provide adequate support needed to develop a typical vision statement. As a result, we ended up without a true vision. In my opinion, the draft vision statement lacks all of the elements, noted above, and required to make it a worthy vision.

PROPOSED 2025 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN VISION STATEMENT

BOTTOM LINE UP FRONT: The vision statement as written does not provide an actual vision beyond developing "an interconnected transportation system" as the only concrete "vision" element. There is marginal reference to resiliency to climate change and coastal hazards. Statements of the past and or statements of the present are not "visionary".

Items in UPPER CASE reflect my comments so that they are easier to find. (I am not yelling; I just want it to be clear which is in the draft and what my comments are) I made comments specific to each

paragraph or sentence, to better demonstrate how this vision statement is not a vision statement in the traditional way that vision statements are formulated. I did not reconstruct verbiage or resident input that the CPUC has but did not incorporate. They can easily go back and find relevant resident input to formulated a new vision. That is, they have input, it just wasn't used.

Draft Vision Statement

"As a historic coastal New England community, the town of Wells contains valued natural resources including conserved forest lands, protected surface waters, an active harbor, a productive estuary supporting wildlife and fisheries, and several prized beaches." STATEMENT OF FACTS ...LARGELY IRRELEVANT TO A VISION STATEMENT UNLESS THE NEW VISION INCLUDES A VISION TO IMPROVE OR MAINTAIN THESE CHARACTERISTICS. THIS CURRENT DRAFT VISION STATEMENT FAILS TO DO SO MAKING THIS IRRELEVANT ALTHOUGH, TRUTHFULLY, IT SHOULD BE RELEVANT THE VISION STATEMENT NEEDS TO BE MODIFIED TO MAKE PROTECTION OF "valued natural resources including conserved forest lands, protected surface waters, an active harbor, a productive estuary supporting wildlife and fisheries, and several prized beaches" AN ACTUAL PART OF THE VISION.

"Over the past decade, Wells has worked to protect and steward this important network of natural resources while seeking to guide new development activity in ways that both preserve and enhance the community's distinct character." STATEMENT OF PAST ...LARGELY IRRELEVANT TO A VISION STATEMENT. STATEMENTS OF THE PAST AND PRESENT ARE NOT VISIONARY BY DEFINITION.

"As the community continues to transition to new types of economic activity and away from the land-based industries it relied on in the past, Wells remains a highly desirable place to live and work because of its welcoming people, network of protected open spaces, history, and coastal location." STATEMENT OF CURRENT/PRESENT STATE. ALSO, WHAT ARE THE NEW, NON LAND-BASED INDUSTRIES? THESE SHOULD BE SPECIFIED, OR AT LEAST EXAMPLES PROVIDED, SO WE KNOW WHAT WE MEAN. GIVEN ALL THE DEVELOPMENT, IT SEEMS THAT LAND-BASED INDUSTRIES HAVE BEEN THE STATE OF THE PAST AND ARE ALSO THE STATE OF THE CURRENT. THUS "NON LAND-BASED INDUSTRIES" IS TOO NEBULOUS. NO ONE KNOWS WHAT THIS MEANS. IT NEEDS CLARIFICATION.

"Together, the citizens of Wells are working to embrace new residents and economic opportunities, while making the community more resilient to the changing climate and coastal hazards." STATEMENT OF GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT, WITH SOME UNDEFINED VISION FOR ENHANCED RESILIENCY TO CLIMATE AND COASTAL HAZARDS. RESIDENTS ARE LOOKING FOR SUSTAINABLE GROWTH MEANING GROWTH THAT OCCURS AT A PACE THAT THE TOWN CAN ACCOMMODATE. CURRENTLY, OUR GROWTH HAS OUT-PACED TOWN'S CAPACITY AND IS AT RISK OF OVER-WHELMING INFRASTRUCURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES. SO THIS VERY OPEN-END "LETS KEEP GROWING UNRELENTINGLY" IS OUT OF SYNC WITH JUST ABOUT ALL THE FEEDBACK RESIDENTS PROVIDED TO THE CPUC. GUARDRAILS ARE NEEDED BUT NONE ARE PROVIDED.

"This has been accomplished through both new land use regulations and infrastructure investments." STATEMENT OF PAST...LARGELY IRRELEVANT TO A VISION STATEMENT. ALSO, THIS IS A STATEMENT OF FACT; THIS IS HOW THE VISION, WHATEVER IT IS, WILL BE ATTAINED.

"These changes are now guiding and informing new business and housing opportunities that add value and reinforce the character of the community." STATE OF PRESENT/CURRENT. ALSO, WHAT "CHARACTER" ARE WE REINFORCING? THIS NEEDS DEFINITION, OTHERWISE IT CAN BE ANYTHING FROM CHARMING SEASIDE COMMUNITY TO RURAL FORESTED FARMLAND TO HONKY TONK OR "URBANIA", SUCH THAT "ANYTHING GOES" WITH REGARD TO THE CHARACTER OF THE COMMUNITY. RESIDENTS ARE SICK OF THE ANYTHING GOES APPROACH TO PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT. WITHOUT CLEARER DEFINITION, ANY AND ALL DEVELOPMENT WOULD BE PERMITTED. THUS, THIS LACKS ENFORCEABLE "VISION". IT LACKS ADEQUATE DEFINITION AND GUARDRAILS RESIDENTS ARE LOOKING FOR. THE TOWN CHARACTER CAN BE JUST ABOUT ANYTHING NO MATTER HOW HORRIBLE.

"Quality municipal services with an emphasis on health, safety and sustainability, and an interconnected transportation system also contribute to the quality of life for residents, and continue to attract seasonal visitors." THIS LAST PARAGRAPH IS THE ONLY ONE THAT PROVIDES A "VISION"! WHAT IS MEANT BY SUSTAINABILITY IN THIS PARAGRAPH? SUSTAINABILITY MEANING "GREEN" OR SUSTAINABILITY MEANING GROWTH COMMENSURATE WITH CURRENT AVAILABLE MUNICIPAL RESOURCES TO ENSURE SUSTAINABLE VICE UNSUSTANANLE GROWTH? MUCH TOO VAGUE.

IN SUMMARY, THE VISION STATEMENT AS WRITTEN BOILS DOWN TO HAVE "AN INTERCONNECTED TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM". THIS IS A VERY, VERY, WEAK VISION. NOR DOES IT REFLECT IN ANY WAY THE MAJORITY OF INPUT PROVIDED TO THE CPUC. RESIDENT INPUT SHOULD NOT BE DISREGARDED AS "WORDSMITHING". RESIDENT INPUT IS MUCH MORE MEANINGFUL AND IMPORTANT TO BE DISREGARDED SO EASILY. ALSO, THIS "VISION" LACKS MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING SMALL TOWN AND RURAL FEEL THAT MOST RESIDENTS WANT. IT LACKS DEFINING, IN BROAD TERMS, THE TYPES OF DEVELOPMENT WE WANT. IT CONTAINS VIRTUALLY ZERO PERCENT OF RESIDENT FEEDBACK THAT THE CPUC COLLECTED OVER THE YEARS, EXCEPT, IT SEEMS, FOR FEEDBACK PROVIDED BY THOSE WHO HAVE A TIE TO DEVELOPMENT.

Thanks for your consideration of the above concerns.

Sue

