

# Part 4 – Capital Investment Strategy

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## Introduction

A “Capital Investment Strategy” highlights the capital investments needed to manage growth in Wells. It is not a formal capital improvements program (CIP), but it will serve as a guide to future capital expenditures that relate to the Town’s growth. It is to be updated annually and contains in its appendix a ~~Five-Year~~Five-Year CIP.

In addition to the major investments identified in this section, the Town also faces other smaller, ongoing capital expenditures. For example, it must continually replace and maintain vehicles and equipment or address other existing deficiencies that are unrelated to growth. This chapter does not address those “as needed” items and instead only deals only with items needed to accommodate growth or to meet the policies of this Comprehensive Plan.

Two major capital items -- public water and public sewer – are the responsibilities of separate, independent districts. The Town’s capital investments therefore are free of these items except to the extent that the Town itself wishes to initiate the extension of one of the systems for its own purpose (such as to support economic development). However, as stated elsewhere in this Plan, coordination between the Town and the utilities is important to the success of the Plan. The Town is fortunate to have a good working relationship with both the Wells Sanitary District and the KK&W Water District.

The Wells / Ogunquit Community School District (CSD) was formed in 1980 through the vote of both communities as a part of the State Legislature action to allow Ogunquit to separate from the Town of Wells. The ownership of the school facilities was turned over to the CSD at that time. New facilities are bonded through a vote of the two towns and debt retirement is the responsibility of the Towns of Wells and Ogunquit through the CSD statutory funding formula. ~~In recent referendum in 2001, the voters agreed to bond up to \$19.5 million for the construction of a new elementary school and renovations to the Junior High School. In that same referendum, the voters of Wells donated public lands purchased in the 1990’s for future siting of municipal facilities next to Town Hall to the CSD for the purpose of constructing the new Elementary School. This facility was constructed~~

It also should be noted that a capital investment item, as opposed to capital expenditure that typically would be found in an operating budget, usually involves a large expenditure paid for over time or with the help of outside funds. Financing over time does not necessarily mean borrowing. It may involve a reserve fund or a tool such as tax increment financing. But, frequently, the best way to finance a capital investment is through borrowing. ~~Section 10 of the Inventory reviewed the Town’s fiscal capacity and outstanding capital debt. It documented that Wells’ debt level as of 2003 was \$26.88 million, including its share of school debts. Of this amount, \$1.24 million is the Town’s own debt and \$25.64 million is from the CSD. Wells has a very modest level of long-term debt relative to its borrowing capacity. Debt obligations in Fiscal Year 2020 amounted to about 1.05% of the total municipal valuation. As of June 30, 2020, the total amount of long-term debt carried by the Town of Wells was \$16,213,148. In addition to the Town’s debt, Wells owes a much higher level of debt to the Wells-Ogunquit~~

~~Consolidated School District. As of June 2020, the CSD's total outstanding debt level was \$22,948,385 (\$22.25 million in principal, \$723,385 million in interest). Of the total amount, Wells' current share is set at 78.77 %. This is pegged to present levels of enrollment and property valuation and changes each year as the two variables change. At the current level, though, Wells' obligation is estimated to be \$18.04 million. Adding together Town and School debts, the total debt level of the Town of Wells as of June 2020 is \$34,289,590, or 1.05% of the Town's total property valuation. The Town therefore has substantial capacity to take on additional debt to finance capital projects if it so chooses. This level is well within the limits of measures of credit worthiness for a town of its size, and the payout schedule is rapid.~~

Each of the capital investments derived from the Comprehensive Plan is rated by priority. The rating system is:

- **Urgent: First priority.** The improvement is required to address an immediate public health or safety problem, to comply with a governmental regulation or mandate, or to complete an important, unfinished project. Failure to address the problem or mandate would hinder the Town's ability to accommodate expected growth.
- **Necessary: Second priority.** The project is not needed to solve an immediate public health or safety problem but should be undertaken in the near future.
- **Growth Dependent: Third priority.** The project gives the Town the ability to accommodate expected growth and would enhance the community's quality of life, but the improvement can wait until other more pressing projects are finished and additional funds are available.
- **Desirable, further study required: Fourth priority.** The project would allow for ideal operations given the projected growth, but can be deferred without detriment to delivering the basic services.

## Capital Investments

This section outlines the capital investment needs by department for the Town of Wells. All cost figures expressed here only account for cost of buildings and facilities and do not include any potential land costs.

### ~~1. General Administration~~

~~As documented in Section 9 (Public Facilities and Utilities) of the Inventory, Wells Town Hall is overcrowded and no longer meets the needs of the Town's growing population. After several unsuccessful attempts to expand Town Hall over the past ten years, the 2004 Town Meeting finally approved funds to expand the building to accommodate more office space for the Town's Code Enforcement and Planning staff and to improve the building's accessibility. **Project completed**~~

~~These improvements will help to meet current deficiencies, but they will not be sufficient to serve the Town's needs for office and meeting space for the next 10 years. Additional Town Hall space will be needed, either at the location of the existing facility or at a satellite location. The~~

~~estimated cost of expanding Town Hall is \$4 million.~~

~~*Priority Rating: Desirable, further study required*~~

## ~~2.1. \_\_\_\_\_~~ **Public Safety**

### **Project completed**

~~**Police Department:** The Police Department has been in the same location since 1986 and its space and equipment needs have now been maximized at its present location. Space needs of the Police Department will need to be considered in the near future.~~

~~A particular concern is the location of the current facility in the Route 1 corridor. Considering that much of Wells' growth is occurring further from the coast, there may need to be a greater police presence in the Town's inland area. To meet the Town's needs, a new Police Station needs to be built and an additional substation may be needed as well. The estimated cost of a new main station would be \$2.5 million, and the cost of a substation would be \$500,000.~~

~~*Priority Rating: Growth Dependent*~~

~~**Fire Department:** The Wells Fire Department operates ~~three~~ two stations at this time, the main station at Wells Corner and ~~two substations at Wells Branch and Highpine~~ one located by the Public Works buildings on North Berwick Road. ~~The two substations are both outdated and were identified in the Inventory as not being the ideal locations to serve the Town's growing population, particularly in its southern and western sections. It is recommended that these two facilities be replaced with two new substations: a northern one in the Sanford/Meetinghouse Road area and a southern one in the Littlefield/Bear's Den Road area. Each of these stations is estimated to cost \$1 million, for a total investment need of \$2 million. Based on NFPA standards additional stations should be considered within the town to meet the four minute response times to 90% of the community. These stations will need to house several firefighters/EMTs, along with a fire engine and an ambulance based on the most recent MRI study on "Fire and Emergency Medical Services.~~~~

~~In addition to these new stations, an addition to the main station at Wells Corner is needed as well. This addition would allow the main station to raise its level of service in the coastal areas of the Town. Its estimated cost is \$750,000. **Project completed**~~

~~*Priority Ratings:*~~

~~*New substations: Growth*~~

~~*Dependent Necessary*~~

~~*Addition to Wells Corner station:*~~

~~*Necessary*~~

## ~~3.2. \_\_\_\_\_~~ **Public Works**

~~**Garage:** The existing public works garage on Route 9 (North Berwick Road) is 50 years old, outdated, and lacks some of the basic equipment for efficiency and safety, such as adequate ventilation and proper overhead doors. A lean-to facility houses much of the equipment along with a donated round metal garage building. The fueling depot is not in compliance with DEP Underground Tank regulations and an above ground storage facility is being investigated. The estimated cost for a new garage is \$3.5 million. **Project**~~

## completed

The existing public works garage on Route 9 (North Berwick Road) is 10 years old. Not all the equipment fits in the new building, and the building is not easily expandable. The current facility does not have a room large enough to allow for an area sufficiently large enough to get the entire staff together for health and safety training. If any additional equipment is added, it will have to be housed outdoors because there is no more available space.

The old garage lacks some of the basic equipment for efficiency and safety, such as adequate ventilation and proper overhead doors. A donated round metal garage building houses the rest of the equipment but is unheated and not well suited to this use. The fueling depot is not supported by an uninterruptable power supply. A generator has to be manually started to power the garage, and the pumps must be manually reset after a power outage.

If more lane miles are added to the town's roadway system, additional equipment and personnel will be needed to provide the current level of service. It is anticipated that MS-4 environmental requirements will be expanded to include Wells in the area covered by these rules. This will mean expanded maintenance and reporting requirements,

*Priority Rating: Urgent*

~~**Sand and salt shed:** Sand and salt shed: To meet a State mandate, the Town must build a sand and salt storage shed facility. The MDOT Salt Shed Priority program rates Wells a "2" with 1 the highest need. A salt shed reserve fund has been established with the Town appropriating funds to engineer and design it. The new shed will be able to store 5,000 cubic yards of sand/salt mix. Its location is on the Highway Department site. The estimated cost of this facility is \$1.4 million.~~ **Project completed**

The town has an updated salt storage facility. Routine maintenance is performed on the metal roof but will need replacement in 5 years.

~~**Solid waste disposal:** Disposal of domestic solid waste is managed through MERC from the Wells Transfer Facility off the Willy Hill Road. The facility was constructed on the parcel containing the Town's Landfill that was officially closed in 1986 and DEP Closure in 1996. The Transfer Station has been added onto in 2000 to include a recycling building. The Landfill requires water quality monitoring annually. The Transfer Station operation has become dependant on a Solid Waste and Material Broker for all materials other than solid waste. The Town contracts for hauling services of its waste trailers to MERC. These very expensive trailers wear out fairly quickly and are thus considered capital equipment. Replacing them all would cost \$100,000.~~ **Project completed**

*Priority Rating: Desirable, further study required*

### 4.3.        Flood Hazard Mitigation

The Public Works Department has identified flood problem areas in Wells:

- Mile Road
- Eldridge Road

- Furbish Road at Stevens Brook
- Post Road at the Merriland River
- Tatnic Road
- Ocean Avenue
- Branch Road at the Merriland River.

Problems include flooding, the undermining of roadways, ~~and erosion~~ and inadequate drainage capacity. Specific improvements have not been identified, but ~~generally they involve working with federal and state agencies to determine proper solutions.~~ the Town has 3 On Call Engineering firms to develop engineered solutions and obtain the proper Federal and State permits for construction. ~~The Town's adopted Flood Hazard Mitigation Plan contains additional details.~~

To address these problems, the Town needs to make a number of capital investments. These are described below.

**Stormwater management and drainage improvements:** ~~The flood problem areas identified above are in need of stormwater/drainage improvements to reduce their flood risks. In order to make these improvements, the Town needs to first inventory all culverts and bridges in these areas to determine their adequacy to handle the 100-year flood event and then improve these culverts and bridges. The estimated cost of these improvements is \$500,000.~~ The town needs a complete inventory and condition assessment of the drainage systems, with particular consideration of how the ocean outfalls will function with climate change. Individual watersheds need a hydraulic study to evaluate capacity for the current storm data. There are many private systems tied into the town's drainage that reduce the capacity of the public drainage.

*Priority Rating: Urgent*

**Property Protection:** The Town adopted a Flood Hazard Mitigation plan in 2001. One of the Plan's key recommendations was to take action to protect properties in Wells that are known to suffer repetitive losses from flooding, so as to avoid future losses. These protection activities may include relocation, acquisition, demolition, building elevation, floodproofing, retrofitting and insurance. There are seven such properties that have been identified in the Town, located on Atlantic Avenue, Ocean Avenue and Webhannet Drive. ~~A flood hazard audit and analysis of these properties needs to be undertaken to determine how the risks can be reduced. Following this analysis, investments in property protection will be needed. As with the stormwater/drainage category, the costs of these improvements are not yet known.~~ **Sea level rise studies completed**

*Priority Rating: Necessary*

**Structural Projects:** ~~The Webhannet Drive seawall has been found to be in need of major repairs. The particular improvements needed involve the seawall footings, which need to be protected by placing sheet pile facades in from the existing seawall. This project will provide protection from storm and flood damage to properties along Webhannet Drive. The project should continue for approximately 1,500 feet at an estimated cost of \$1.6 million.~~

The town has recently completed a high-level high-level engineering assessment of major

infrastructure elements. None of the infrastructure elements are in danger of ~~imminent~~ imminent failure, but several are in need of immediate attention. The proposed budget included a bond to finance construction/reconstruction. The engineering is already underway, including permitting.

Priority Rating: Urgent

#### 5.4. Transportation

Road reconstruction and paving. The town has a pavement management system and at an annual investment of approximately \$900,00 a year the pavements in town will stay as good as they currently are. Traditionally, the Town has invested about this threshold, so the pavements are improving. Any improvement to the drainage, horizontal or vertical alignments are done before, or with the paving, and the pavement techniques result in the most effective, longest lasting improvements. Many arterial and collector roads in Wells need to be reconstructed. Funding for this work is appropriated annually. Cost of this type of work for each road ranges from \$50,000 to \$125,000. Roads that should be undertaken for reconstruction are:

- Route 9B (Littlefield Road)

Bragdon Road

- Tatnie Road

Quarry Road

Drakes Island Road

- Coles Hill Road
- Burnt Mill Road

Assuming an average cost of \$75,000 for each of these projects, the total anticipated cost to the Town of these eight projects would be \$600,000.

Priority Rating: Necessary

**Route 1 improvements:** A number of improvements related to access management and mobility in the Route 1 corridor are needed to serve Wells and the surrounding region. Specific projects identified include:

- Re-pavement from the Intersection of Route 109 to Route 9 (Port Road).
- Route 109 and 1 Intersection Improvements
- Moody area cumulative growth impact on traffic study
- Regional coastal explorer bus service
- Greater investment in Chamber Trolley System
- Improvement to the intersections of Chapel and Route 109 and Chapel and Route 1.
- Upgrade to the traffic signal system to meet current traffic pattern demands

The Town has ~~included~~ discussed funding in FY2023 for a study of the Route 1 corridor with Maine DOT, including a land use component. Implementation of strategies identified in the study will be critical to ensuring successful travel along Route 1. There is funding available for implementation in the Island Golf reserve account.

Priority Rating: Desirable, further study required

**Sidewalk Master Plan:** ~~Various sidewalk improvements have been recommended in the Sidewalk Master Plan in the Wells Corner area. The immediate project that requires Town investment is for a new raised sidewalk from Harbor Road to the Wells Congregational Church. The estimated cost to the Town of this improvement is \$450,000.~~ The most recent sidewalk master plan only includes the sidewalks along Route 1 from the Public Library to the Town Hall. Creating a town-wide sidewalk plan should be a goal in the next ten years. This should be done in conjunction with an active transit master plan that includes bicycle passage as well.

Priority Rating: Necessary

## **6.5. Harbor and Marine Resources**

**Wells Harbor Pier:** ~~Following recent improvements to buildings at the harbor, it was discovered that the pier holding the Harbormaster facility is sagging and cannot hold the weight of the building. The building structurally is settling and developing noticeable sags. The Town has begun to explore moving the facility off the pier and building a new office and storage complex off the shellfish hatchery building and locating a portable bait locker (refrigerated trailer) on the opposite side of the parking lot. The pier would then be repaired and it would open it up for further tourist use. The estimated cost of this improvement is \$50,000.~~ **Complete**

Priority Rating: Urgent **Complete**

**Harbor Dredging:** ~~The Town, with the Army Corps of Engineers have submitted to the State of Maine an application to allow it to undertake maintenance dredges to the outer harbor area over a period of 10 years. The Town will be eligible for a full dredge of the harbor in 2007/2023 if the monitoring reports indicate that the prior full dredge did not cause environmental harm to the marsh area surrounding the harbor. Support for this is crucial for a viable and stable harbor. The estimated cost of the Town's matching share of the full dredge would be \$650,000.~~

Priority Rating: Desirable, further study required

## **7.6. Recreation and Historic Preservation**

**Public Restroom:** ~~The Town has developed a reserve fund to establish a public restroom facility in the Routes 1 and 109 area. Talks are ongoing with the owner of the Wells Shopping Center to establish a facility in that location. The estimated cost of providing this facility is \$65,000.~~

Priority Rating: Necessary

**Marsh Walk:** Public interest is strong for some type of coastal walkway along the Webhannet

River. However, abutting property owners have resisted the development of such a facility, and community issues would need to be resolved before pursuing the Marsh Walk. The estimated cost of this project ~~is in 2005 was~~ \$750,000 and may now require additional funding to complete.

*Priority Rating: Desirable, further study required*

**Field House:** In response to demand for additional programs and services, the Recreation Department developed a master plan for its facilities on Route 9A. The key finding of this plan was that a field house facility, including a gymnasium, multipurpose rooms and locker/restroom facilities, was needed. This has been and continues to be a major need of the Recreation Department. This was voted on in 1999 and failed but further study is required as gym space and program space is still an issue. The estimated cost of this facility ~~is in 2005 was~~ \$2 million, and it is likely more now.

*Priority Rating: Growth Dependent*

**Eastern Trail Development:** A significant portion of the Eastern Trail, a planned regional trail, is designated for Wells. An abandoned rail bed that is currently used for a gas pipeline is slated for Wells' portion of this off-road trail stretching from Kittery to South Portland. The estimated cost to develop the Wells segment of the Eastern Trail is ~~not known at this time~~ estimated at \$4 – 6 Million.

*Priority Rating: Desirable*

**Route 1/Elementary School Path:** ~~A need has been identified for a walking path connecting Route 1 to the new Wells Elementary School on Route 109 to help pedestrian access for children. This trail could be built on property owned by the Wells-Ogunquit CSD. Its estimated cost is \$40,000.~~ **Complete**

*Priority Rating: Desirable*

**Colonial Road Walking Trails:** ~~Many abandoned Colonial roads that are still in existence as public rights-of-way in Wells may be suitable for the development of walking trails. Doing so would require additional study and costs are unknown at this time.~~

*Priority Rating: Desirable, further study required*

**Land Bank:** The Town of Wells already has some funding for an Open Space Reserve Fund as part of a land bank. Further funding for acquisition and recreational development may be needed in the future, though there is no exact amount set at this time.

*Priority Rating: ~~Desirable, further study required~~ The Town of Wells, led by the Conservation Commission's efforts, has established a robust and active land acquisition program that is funded annually through taxation.*

*Priority Rating: Necessary*

## **8.7. Library**

~~The Wells Public Library has been in existence for approximately 23 years with a building starting out at 5,000 square feet with an addition in 1991 of an additional 6,000 square feet. Today the library is the largest municipal building with 11,000 square feet of heavily used space. Strategic Planning is underway to consider another addition and to landscape the front, side and rear of the library. The beautification programs will assist the town in making this facility a destination location for cultural and educational services. The estimated cost for the addition and the landscaping is \$1.5 million.~~

The Wells Public Library opened in 1978 with a 5,000 square foot space. In 1993, the first addition was completed giving the library greatly expanded children, young adult and circulation areas. A second addition was completed in 2018, adding a community room, a quiet study area and staff workspace for a total of 15,000 square feet. Space is currently adequate to meet the needs of the town residents, but an enlarged teen area and several small 2-3 person study/meeting rooms, as well as space for collection expansion should be considered in future growth plans.

*~~Priority Rating: Growth Dependent~~ Priority Rating: Growth Dependent*

## Summary of Capital Investment Strategy

The following matrix expresses all of the identified capital investment needs of the Town of Wells and displays their priority levels to the Town. These items and their estimated costs are based on preliminary input from various heads of Town departments.

No.	Item	Est. Cost	Priority Level
<b>General Administration</b>			
1.	<del>Town Hall Expansion</del>	\$4.0M	Desirable, further study required
<b>Public Safety</b>			
2.	<del>New Police Station</del>	\$2.5M	Growth Dependent
3.	<del>Police Substation</del>	\$500K	Growth Dependent
4.	Northern Fire Substation	\$13.5M	Growth Dependent
5.	Southern Fire Substation	\$13.5M	Growth Dependent
6.	Wells Corner Fire Station Addition	\$750K	Necessary
<b>Public Works</b>			
7.	<del>New Public Works facility needs study</del> Garage	30k\$3.5M	NecessaryUrgent
8.	* New Sand and Salt Shed roof	\$1.4M\$50k	Necessary
9.	<del>Solid Waste Disposal Trailers</del>	\$100K	Desirable, further study required
<b>Flood Hazard Mitigation</b>			
10.	<del>Stormwater/Drainage Improvements</del>	\$200K\$500K	Necessary, but phasedUrgent
11.	<del>Hardening of infrastructure for sea level rise and storm surge</del> Repetitive Flooding Property Protection	Unknown	Necessary
12.	<del>Webhannet Drive Seawall Repairs</del>	\$1.6M	Urgent
<b>Transportation</b>			
13.	Various Road Reconstruction/Pavings	\$600K900K	Necessary
14.	Route 1 ImprovementsCorridor Study	Unknown	Desirable, further study required
15.	* Raised Sidewalk Master Plan (Harbor Road to First Congregational Church)	Unknown\$450K	Necessary
16.	<del>Wells Harbor Pier Repairs</del>	\$50K	Urgent
17.	<del>Wells Harbor Dredging (Local Match)</del>	\$650K	Desirable, further study required
<b>Recreation and Historic Preservation</b>			
18.	* Public Restroom in Route 1/109 area	\$65K	Necessary
19.	Webhannet Marsh Walk	\$750K_or more	Desirable, further study required
20.	Route 9A Field House	\$2.0M_or more	Growth Dependent
21.	Eastern Trail Development/Maintenance	Unknown\$6.0 M	Growth Dependent
22.	<del>Route 1/Elementary School Path</del>	\$40K	Growth Dependent
23.	<del>Colonial Road Walking Paths</del>	Unknown	Desirable, further study required
24.	Land Bank	Unknown	Necessary_Desirable, further study required

<b>Library</b>		
<del>25. Library Addition &amp; Landscaping</del>	<del>\$1.5M</del>	<del>Growth Dependent</del>

~~\*—Project partially or completely funded as of October 2004.~~

*Note: This table presents a compilation off potential capital investments that may be needed by the Town of Wells.No projects on this list will be funded without Town Meeting approval.*