

City of Salem, Massachusetts



**"Know Your Rights Under the Open Meeting Law, M.G.L. c. 30A ss. 18-25 and
City Ordinance Sections 2-2028 through 2-2033."**

The City Council Committee on Ordinances, Licenses and Legal Affairs co-posted with the Committee of the Whole and Joint meeting with the Traffic and Parking Commission

met in the Council Chamber on Thursday February 15, 2024 at 6:08 P.M.

**for the purpose of discussing the matters(s) listed below. Notice of this meeting was posted on
February 12, 2024 at 12:53 P.M**

(This meeting is being recorded)

ATTENDANCE

ABSENT WERE: None Councilor Watson-Felt joined remotely for a short time.

Also in attendance: Councilors Hapworth, Prosniewski, Jerzylo; David Kucharsky from the Traffic and Parking Department.

Also in attendance from Traffic and Parking Commission: Jaime Garmendia, Jeff Swartz, Lt. David Tucker, and Erin Turowski (remote), and David Kucharsky from Traffic and Parking Department

Note: the Zoom session was dropped at the Clerk's computer twice at the beginning of the meeting, and by the final time it started, the microphone was not on for the first few minutes, so attendees from the public could not hear until the mic was turned on again. The SATV recording is complete though.

#437 Right on Red Ordinances for Traffic Lights in South Salem and Highland Avenue area

Traffic and Parking Commission Chair Garmendia introduces the commission members, with Ms Turowski attending remotely.

Chair Morsillo introduces the night's discussion area: Loring Avenue and a small part of Paradise Road, and Highland Avenue. She explains that she would like to go light by light, with Mr. Kucharsky explaining how the lights are signed and what the ordinances say, an explanation of the crash data from Lt. Tucker, and then allow those from the public who would like to make comment.

David Kucharsky begins discussion of the 18 lights on the two maps, most under DOT jurisdiction. He begins on southern Loring Ave/Vinnin Square, where there are 4 traffic signals. The two lights on 1A are under DOT jurisdiction, the two on either side are under city jurisdiction. The data on the maps represent crashes since January 2023. All of the lights represent ordinances. All of the lights allow right on red.

Lt. Tucker goes through the crash data: one bicyclist struck; driver cited on Paradise. Bicyclist in the crosswalk, no indication of light cycle at the time. He notes that if the bicyclists is peddling, they are not considered a pedestrian strictly speaking. Another crash, side swipe, car merging hit another car. One hit and run in September, may have been a right-on-red, fled the scene, so could not verify the scenario. One rear end accident. In June, both cars claimed to have green light, went straight into each other. Another crash involving a car turning left. Collision in January 2023, both vehicles heading into Salem, side swipe while merging. Two cars coming from opposite directions on Vinnin St, both with green lights, crashed.

Councilor Morsillo asks what Lt. Tucker offers as a suggestion for making the intersection safer. The Salem police and Swampscott police work together. He says that the two departments do have their eyes on this intersection.

Councilor Harvey reviews the data, noting that only one accident may have been due to right-on-red. Lt. Tucker agrees. He goes on to say that he thinks we are wasting time discussing all incidents at intersections, and not just those related to right-on-red.

Councilor Cohen explains that at the gas station, there are two lanes, and it looks like there are two lanes that can go straight, and if the lanes are marked for left lane only, it could clear up some confusion for drivers. Lt. Tucker agrees that the merge does create some confusion, on both sides of the light on Paradise Road. Some definition could help. Councilor Cohen states that a few of the crashes were sideswipes, indicating that they were trying to merge.

Loring Ave at Vinnin is next, and shows no accidents. Further on Loring Ave where it meets 1A, there was a single vehicle crash heading south on Loring, struck the traffic pole. This was a drunk driving accident.

Pickman Road at Loring Ave. and Harrison Rd at Loring Ave. One crash at Harrison Rd. Crash at Harrison was a vehicle stopped for a school bus, and rear ended.

Two signals at Jefferson Ave and Canal. They are not in the ordinance but are signed as No Turn on Red. This was a relatively recent state project. The geometry of the approach likely indicates not allowing right on red. The accident was a pedestrian struck by a car. The pedestrian believes he did not use the cross walk light, was wearing dark clothing, the driver did not see him. Councilor Cohen says that he and Councilor Varela were talking with Lt. Tucker and David Kucharsky about an additional crosswalk on Jefferson Ave, because there were complaints about crossing.

Councilor Prosniowski says that this is one of the most unique intersections in Salem. He says that he is surprised there has been only one accident. Cars coming from Loring into Salem think they can take a right. It's not a right-on-red. **He suggests putting up a sign for No Right On Red, to help with confusion.** Mr. Kucharsky says they will look into this. Councilor Cohen thinks this will help with speed. Councilor Prosniowski states that the speed limit is 25 MPH. Lt. Tucker says there is a State sign explaining the lanes which may be causing confusion. Maybe clearer signs will help. But right on red is not allowed there.

Lafayette/Loring/West light was redone recently under Complete Streets. The approach from West Ave and from Loring Ave are in the ordinances, but not signed. The approach from Lafayette northbound is not signed and not in the ordinance. The southbound approach is signed and not in the ordinance. It may have been from the state project. Mr. Kucharsky thinks we should adopt the southbound approach. He is still looking into the signals, which include a right arrow, which may be timed with the pedestrian signal. Councilor Cohen states that this intersection has improved dramatically with the new design. He thinks there is more than a 100% improvement. Councilor Prosniowski agrees that the intersection has become much safer for drivers and pedestrians. Removing the right-on-red has helped a great deal, even though some still violate it, but they are learning. Also, there used to be islands, which used to be hit often. He thinks it is safer than it has ever been.

Moving to Highland Ave, beginning on the southern end of the road. Three lights at Walmart, Olde Village Dr, and Barnes Road, all under State jurisdiction. No crashes, all allow right on red.

Light at Highland Ave/Swampscott Rd/DiPietro. Approaching from Swampscott Rd and DiPietro are both signed No Right on Red, not in ordinances. One accident, side swipe, both turning.

First Street at Traders Way. All approaches right turn on red allowed. There were two collisions. One from March, vehicle on First St turning to Traders Way, claimed to have green, rear ended. Another was a crash with a parked car due to an icy road. Councilor Prosniowski notes that the roundabout at First and Swampscott Road has greatly improved the intersection. He thinks it is probably the most improved intersection in the city due to the roundabout.

Highland Ave at Marlborough Road, three intersections allow right on red, and the light is under state jurisdiction. There was an accident at the CVS intersection, another car traveling Marlborough Rd in left lane to go straight but turned right, side swiped a car. In May, two vehicles on Traders Way facing Highland Ave, car traveling north on Highland hit the cars as they turned left onto Highland. Car turning left from Traders as car from Marlborough was turning right and struck the other car. This was likely a right-on-red crash. Car traveling south on Highland hit by car turning left from Traders Way, witness said car from Traders Way did not have green. Councilor Morsillo states that several residents have reported cars taking left on red

because of short cycle, which makes the intersection unsafe. Dave Kucharsky states that MassDOT is looking at a redesign of this roadway into Lynn. Councilor Harvey states that he knows the State has adjusted the lights several times, and it is tricky because lengthening the cycle for Traders Way causes more backup for Marlborough Road. He says the State is working on a smart light system for the corridor, to help with this situation. He feels that enforcement at this intersection is important. He worries about emergency vehicles getting through when the intersection is blocked. We need enforcement. Councilor Jerzylo asks how many cars go through the intersection. She doesn't remember a lot of accidents at this intersection when she was a member of the police department. Five crashes at that intersection is amazing due to the volume of traffic. Councilor Prosniewski states that cars are cutting through Witchcraft Heights to get to Peabody creating congestion in the neighborhood. He asks how the State is taking this into consideration. Mr. Kucharsky states that the State has collected data and is working on a design. Jeff Swartz thinks video enforcement at this intersection would be helpful. Councilor Morsillo explains that the State needs to make video enforcement legal first.

Marlborough Rd at McGrath Park, no crashes reported, all approaches allow right on red.

Hawthorne Square at Highland, three approaches allow right on red, no accidents.

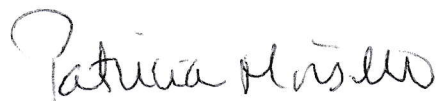
Willson St at Highland Ave, two approaches are signed No Right on Red but not in ordinances. Northbound on Highland Ave allows right on red. One crash in January 2023 involved a fire truck passing a car, and not relevant. Councilor Morsillo states that she has received comments about this light and the right on red from Highland to Willson St. She reads some written comments sent in related to pedestrian safety when right on red is allowed, and cars turn without looking first or even stopping first. Mr. Kucharsky asks if there is a crossing guard at the intersection. Lt. Tucker says that the crossing guard is at the driveway of the high school and there is a pedestrian bridge that is rarely used. Coming from Cherry Hill Rd there should not be a right on red because of site lines. Northbound on Highland, he doesn't see a problem removing the right on red. From Willson to Highland Ave right-on-red is already not allowed. Councilor Jerzylo asks about the sign on Willson St, which is on the right. She asks if it can also be hung straight ahead at Cherry Hill so that the drivers can see it ahead. David Kucharsky will look into this. Councilor Hapworth says that in the future we may have the middle school at this location also, and we should be making this intersection safer. Councilor Harvey agrees with Lt. Tucker that removing right-on-red on Highland at Willson won't be difficult because it is a two-lane road and the car in front may not be taking a right anyway. Lt. Tucker reviews the second accident which involved an ambulance, and the lights did not activate.

Councilor Morsillo states that the next meeting will be held on February 29 and will cover the northwest area of Salem.

Councilor Harvey moves to keep the item in committee, seconded by Councilor Davis, the motion carries 4-0.

Jeff Schwarz moves to adjourn the Traffic and Parking Commission, seconded by Lt. Tucker. The matter carries 3-0.

On the motion of C. Harvey the meeting adjourned at 7:10P.M.



(Chairperson)