

City of Salem, Massachusetts



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City Ordinance Sections 2-2028 through 2-2033."**

The City Council Committee on Government Services co-posted with the Committee of the Whole
will met in the Council Chamber on May 5, 2022 at 6:30 P.M.
for the purpose of discussing the matters(s) listed below. Notice of this meeting was posted on
May 2, 2022 at 4:01 P.M.

(This meeting is being recorded)

ATTENDANCE

ABSENT WERE:

none

SUBJECT(S)

#314 Traffic Violence and Pedestrian Safety
#315 Safety issues caused by illegal dirt bikes

BAC: Beth Anne Cornell

SZ: Stephen Zrike

DT: David Tucker

LM: Lucas Miller

LM: Lev McClain

AM: Alice Merkl

CWF: Caroline Watson Felt

PM: Patti Morsillo

CP: Conrad Prosniowski

TS: Tanya Shallop

EP: Eric Papetti

Th: Ty Hapworth

BM: Bob McCarthy

AV: Andy Varella

BAC: We're talking a lot about our kids walking to school. Trying to partner with the city to make this a walkable community. Needham is a great example of a good partnership we can look at. We just want to be able to collaborate with other folks in the city to develop safe routes, partner on crossing guard placement. Happy to be a part of this initial conversation.

SZ: BA did a great job. This is a great place to collaborate with city officials and police. Want to encourage more walking. Given challenges with transportation that everyone faces.

LM: I think before we get into the data. As a newcomer to Salem, I was disappointed at the dangerousness of riding my bike. If one is not on the bikepaths, it is fraught. In terms of recent crashes, on the one hand, Salem has tended to follow the rest of Massachusetts in terms of crashes. We have seen a recent uptick in Salem that is concerning. We look to see what the commonality is, other than the presence of a car, there is no one factor. Many pedestrians were in crosswalks, many were not. Where vehicle speeds increase, the seriousness increases as well. Speed is an exacerbating factor in all crashes. I'll let Lt. Tucker get into the granular instances.

DT: Year to date, there has been 11 real incidents, we do have a couple of other reports reported after the fact. An incident that occurred with a vehicle and pedestrian, pedestrian left scene. Of the others, we've had a few in parking lots, 6 of 7 were at night with varying degrees of roadway lighting. We had a fatal crash in front of Walmart, 2 pedestrians crossing, lighting is a bit of a factor. Pedestrians did not use crosswalk. Lafayette to Dow, an 8 year old was brushed and fell down. Child was using a crosswalk. No injury. February 3, Washington and Norman, an elderly woman crossing between flagpoles and bank. Operator turned right on red. February 11, by Waters and Brown on Derby Street. Driver tried to enter parking space, she reported solar glare, there was a bicycle approaching from rear. Didn't hit cyclist. March 5, pedestrian crossing at Lincoln. (Lists multiple accidents that have occurred)

DOT Crash portal can sort data

Pedestrians trying to cross road

North Street, unsure of the intent of the pedestrian in this location. My experience tells me, possibly a maneuver the gentleman has done a number of times. We have not proven that the light is not functioning correctly. Sometimes we have a report that the signal isn't working correctly. I think the signal works, but it's 1 in 50 or 1 in 100 when it doesn't work. North Street, gentleman crossing into Murphy's parking lot. May have been obscured by another vehicle. Very serious injuries there.

Last one I included in the list, elderly woman in Walmart parking lot, no injury, driver had a technical problem with license, inattention of driver. I mention that because we've had some incidents.

Eric Papetti: How often are you all able to subpoena cellphone records, are there any impediments to doing this legally. What is your process for visiting pedestrians after the fact. Drivers often get interviewed but less pedestrian

DT: In terms of cellphone data, we can get that, but it is a process. The time involved and the intrusion, reserved for significant events, not minor crashes. It's a little bit of a process. Courts don't want us to do that often for minor crashes, it can be done. In successful prosecution cases, we tend to see lots of activity on phone. In terms of interview, on serious injuries, if it is moderate to mild, officer performs follow up. Serious will have detective assigned

JC: I have a couple of comments, on a positive note, since I've been a councillor, I have reached out to Mr. Kucharsky and Tucker, a couple of times, along with Councillors Prosniewski and Varella, they let us know what they were hoping to do many have issues crossing Lafayette, being seen by vehicles. I have had many reach out about Saltonstall. Some planning to redesign crosswalk

LM: Lt. Tucker, can you talk to us about trends on a macro scale, what kind of trends do we see in the city in terms of long term patterns. Which streets more problematic, which conditions, what do we see. How are our enforcement efforts directed?

DT: We look at, in 2021 from the state portal we had 627 crashes reported to the state. Out of those 627 on a case by case basis if we can demonstrate a crash was caused by a defect or conditions that were unfavorable. Generally, I couldn't tell you right now, I'd have to do a better analysis. Generally the higher the volume, the higher the crash rate. The top things we're seeing is distraction, speed and aggression. Distraction is the #1 thing we see. We have 6 radar based traffic collectors, they capture volume and speed for the time period we put them out. A big portion of that, generally a response to complaints. We mount the devices, capture data for at least a week, sometimes more. Broken down by time of day, size classification. Pretty comprehensive.

LM: How is that data used and captured?

DK: The clock starts when we receive an application, how many people are observing high speeds and dangerous behavior. We reach out to Lt. Tucker to place devices to confirm data. Look at crash history on road, look at land uses, is there a school nearby, senior housing? We are constrained by staff, resources etc

All of the data is uploaded, anyone can see the data we've captured. We have the before data, we go out and collect in same locations. In many cases we've shown a reduction in speeds. It's an iterative process, taking roads built around cars trying to make them safe for everyone.

LM: That answers my question, trying to understand how this is balanced with high volume roads. There is speeding everywhere

DK: We work with engineering who are working on larger capital projects, we try to focus on local streets, near schools, where we see high speeds.

DT: Speed is relative to your street. Some of the smaller streets, the volume has far exceeded what we can comfortably handle. GPS has allowed cutthroughs, seeing more volume on streets that weren't used prior. We're trying to learn what's really going on. Traffic calming will hopefully make street more comfortable again. Did data collection on Valley

AM: enforcement at crosswalks, is it an issue to get vehicles to stop at crosswalks. Is there anything that makes a difference?

DT: It is an issue that we see first hand and get reports about. Generally I would have to dig into that to get percents for you. Not an issue we can't deal with. Paint on crosswalks can wear quickly, that's a budget item.

LM: MO of SPD in terms of traffic enforcement, Lt. Tucker runs traffic division, the rest of patrol force does enforcement, much more while they are going about their patrol.

TH: What should people do when they notice a crosswalk that needs to be repainted or lighted

DK: Traffic Calming application, See click fix, reach out to councillor.

PM: First acknowledge that this has been a tough week for residents in Salem and responding police officers. I hope Derby has been helpful. I would love to advocate getting rid of right on red at Riley Plaza. I walk everyday, drivers do not care if there is a walk light on. If they want to turn they turn. Would love to advocate getting rid of that turn on red

How much do we enforce distracted driving? Distracted driving and speeding is number one concern I receive from residents.

Many more cars going down residential streets that are not used to this level of traffic. How do we stop that?

DT: I agree completely. In 2020, we were third in state on distracted driver citations. At the end of the discussion, we do see distraction on pedestrians part too. In some cases that leads to crashes.

BM: back to the beginning, with discussion around kids getting to school, with school choice, what are we seeing for kids walking or biking to school? When I go to Bentley, the line of cars for dropoff is staggering. We obviously want to promote safe streets, are kids waling to school. What data are we looking at with kids walkikng to school? How can we help? We are moving to a complete streets system, just because you put in an unprotected bikelane doesn't mean they are invincible.

BAC: That is where district is looking to be good partners with the city and think about safe roads. Holistically. This is what we are seeing in palces like Needham. In Needham you can't ride your bike to school until you get a license. When I was listening to David Kucharsky talk about Speed Assesments. How do we develop strong walking routes to school, can we provide them with a map? Here is best route, here is where crossing guards are. That's why I'm here, to think about big picture

BM: nobody on this screen had anything to do with it. Those foolish blinking lights, nobody pays attention to those, they don't know what they are.

CP: I spent a career on the police department, we drove 8 hours every shift, we got to know what was working what wasn't. We're not the midwest, we were laid out with cart paths and horses in mind. The genreal public realizes that many changes are for the better. When I was a police officer, I wondered why intersections wheren't changed. I wasn't in any position to make those changes. Now I'm saying same things. Why don't they come to fruition, simple changes. The system slows things down. I know we're always talking about pedestrian safety in October. Crosswalk at Essex and Washington is a mess. Need a pedestrian light there. Washington and Bridge had a rotary which is now gone. Now It's an asphalt speedway. Do we need a rotary back there? Use abandoned railway under bridge for pedestrians

AV: appreciate conversation, I think there should be focus on lowering death rate. 9 years ago an 83 year old woman was killed by a hit and run driver on Loring ave. If we can figure out a way to mitigate speed, focus on eliminating death, that's the conversation we should be hving. Mitigating speed, is the conversation we should have

TS: This is a really important conversation. Want to build off what Andy was saying and Councillor Morsillo. I have been really sad, angry, frustrated

(Vision Zero Presentation Shared)

AV: Recdommends stay in committee

CWF: Second

5-0

Dirt bikes:

LM: Not unique to Salem, still an issue in NY, particularly frustrating for citizens who complain about it when they see police aren't doing very much. That's because we have a very rigid no chase policy. Unless the crime we are chasing them for, if the escape represents a greater danger than crime, we won't chase. The act of committing a serious traffic violation doesn't outweigh danger that would entail. Police chases tend to end tragically. Something that I won't bend on. For what it's worth, the frustration a police officer faces when he or she is unable to chase, is high. It's a necessary policy. It's also worth pointing out that when we talk about dirt bikes and marauders. There is a huge spectrum from extreme gang members, presenting a serious danger. Sometimes it's kids on bikes behaving badly. In between is motorscooters etc. We are really talking about 5 different types. Bikes, motorized bikes, motorized scooters, dirt bikes, atvs, not authorized to be used on roadway. Unregistered motorcycles. They are each policed a little bit differently. What I seek to do, in addition to citing for traffic violations is seize vehicle. Where we are able that is something we will do. Looking at that spectrum of offenders. Juveniles, addressed by education. Encourage parents to keep an eye on kids acting irresponsibly. On the extreme, we have put together a plan with neighboring police departments. Many of these offenders do not come from Salem. Lynn has a gang task force that they have offered to assign this to. Many neighboring police departments are also anxious to join in. We haven't been totally unsuccessful here. Last year our complaints quadrupled. It is something, if you call the police we will come. We haven't had that volume of complaints yet this year, but we anticipate that will pick up.

One of ways we were successful last year was by photographing offenders. If people want to photograph, they could, don't recommend a confrontation, we will accept those photos and investigate. Exploring a reporting tool to generate intelligence. BM: The no-chase policy, difficult but understandable. How can we help? You detain someone, cite them, they get their dirt bike back. Is there anything on a local level we can do to help? Any way we can help you to keep their bikes away from them. It's a nuisance. God forbid they cause an accident or crash. How can we help you? I usually tell people, you need to report it.

LM: Start by addressing our dispatcher who told them there was nothing they can do. That was addressed internally within police department. In terms of changing law. Our ability to seize these bikes, whether they are motorized or not, I don't think the council could extend that. It's based on whether or not a vehicle is registered. No local ordinance. Encourage constituents to continue reporting, provide us with extra info. Discourage behavior if it's a friend or a family member. Extra education may help.

LevM: Encouraged to hear that there is coordination happening. I've had some complaints from constituents. Some using trails behind Strongwater. Nice to hear that Peabody is helping. Many reading Boston Globe about some activity they are having with scooters and bikes, assaults, rumor mill is going. Are people using these to commit crimes, gang activity.

LM: vast majority of complaints, there is not an associated crime. I don't doubt there is dangerous activity. Fortunately most of bad behavior is less nefarious. Reckless driving is crime.

AM: Has it been helpful to provide education through schools.

LM: Dr. Zrike and I speak on a regular basis. I haven't pursued that venue yet, that could work, something we could pick up.

LM: reiterate personal frustration.

CWF: I will ask for reporting incidents, is there a dedicated email or a specific person that we can share with our constituents.

JC: Leave in committee

5-0

JC: Motion to adjourn

5-0

On the motion of C. Cohen
_____ 8:30 _____ P.M.

the meeting adjourned at



(Chairperson)