

City of Salem
Traffic and Parking Commission
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, April 16, 2020

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held remotely on Thursday, April 16, 2020 at 6:30pm, pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place.

Present: Commission Chair Tanya Shallop, Commission Vice-Chair Eric Papetti, Commissioner Todd Waller, Commissioner Robin Seidel, Commission Lt. David Tucker, Director of Traffic and Parking David Kucharsky, and Assistant Director Nick Downing.
Absent: None

CALL OF MEETING

The meeting was called to order at 6:30pm by Chair Shallop.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Commission Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Ward 2 City Councilor Christine Madore offers comments and feedback from residents regarding the sign board that went up in the Bridge Street neck neighborhood. Councilor Madore indicates there is support for making streets safer during this time, and that she is supportive of the idea as well, but notes that communication could be improved. Ms. Madore contends it is important to make it clear to the public why we are doing this and to provide information regarding timing and what is or is not allowed on streets if they are closed to traffic. She notes that if this is successful, it could be repeated in other neighborhoods.

Councilor Madore notes that some of the confusion may have resulted from the phrase "no thru traffic" on the sign board, as she asked various people what they thought it meant and found various interpretations. She stresses it is important to make sure the message is clear to minimize confusion.

Councilor Madore also states it is important that any effort include the businesses in the neighborhood, noting that they are suffering in the current circumstances and would welcome any business they can get. Councilor Madore says it is important for businesses, customers, and residents to understand what is happening through clear communication.

Chair Shallop asks Mr. Kucharsky for updates regarding the sign board Councilor Madore referenced. Mr. Kucharsky explains that staff looked into implementing suggestions from the previous Traffic and Parking Commission meeting, one of which was the utilization of variable message boards. Mr. Kucharsky indicates DPS was contacted and the signs were

Approved at Traffic and Parking Commission on June 25, 2020

deployed earlier in the day. He agrees that the information and communications should have been clearer and more robust, but notes the situation and circumstances are unprecedented. Mr. Kucharsky adds that the signs are still out but currently shut off, and that he will contemplate the messaging further.

NEW/OLD BUSINESS

Request for Traffic Ordinance Recommendation

October Parking Recommendations

In an effort to improve the implementation of temporary resident parking regulations during the month of October, staff have drafted several amendments to the Traffic Ordinance based on past City Council Orders. The intent of these recommendations is to set expectations for both residents, visitors and staff in terms of where temporary resident parking will be established as well as assist with both administrative and enforcement efforts.

Mr. Kucharsky explains that last year the city explored expanding the number of streets that would be eligible for resident permit parking. Following Halloween, staff tracked comments received through emails and phone calls to learn about the impact on residents, businesses, and to get feedback on the number of streets, relevant times of day, etc. Mr. Kucharsky states staff also received feedback from DPS, the Collectors Office, and Lt. Tucker regarding enforcement, communication, and implementation. As a result, the existing Traffic Ordinance was reviewed closely with respect to October regulations.

Mr. Kucharsky states that in his review he found many ordinances where streets are listed multiple times for temporary October resident parking. In recent years, through Commission recommendation and passage of Council additional streets have been included for temporary residential permit parking. There are also orders related to free weekend parking designations, use of the Universal Steel lot for fundraisers, rooftop spaces at the Museum Place Garage, and issuing emergency passes on a case by case basis. Mr. Kucharsky indicates all the past ordinances and orders were reviewed with the intent of creating new language that does not need to be passed annually. The end goal is consistency in order to set expectations and eliminate confusion among residents and tourists.

Mr. Kucharsky explains the proposal includes time limitations on parking, rather than 24/7 restrictions the entire month of October. Some local businesses and doctor's offices indicated employees and customers/patients had difficulty finding parking. In addition, staff heard from residents with home health aides and hospice care who experienced issues getting to their patients. As such the proposal recommends parking only be enforced from 5:00PM to 7:00AM Monday through Friday and from 12:00PM to 7:00AM Saturday and Sunday.

Approved at Traffic and Parking Commission on June 25, 2020

Mr. Kucharsky states the proposed fine is fifty dollars (\$50) per infraction. Mr. Kucharsky adds he would also like clarity regarding the authority to issue passes. Mr. Kucharsky presents a map demonstrating streets with year-round residential permit parking as well as streets that are proposed for inclusion in the October Ordinance. Residents of such streets would be eligible to receive permits in the mail. Mr. Kucharsky says he will share maps with DPS to inform proper placement of signage.

Mr. Kucharsky presents the drafted ordinance language. Section I identifies past ordinances and rescinds prior ordinances as necessary to clean up inconsistencies and duplications. Section II adds temporary residential permit parking for certain streets in October, identifying effective hours and affected streets. Mr. Kucharsky states the language also addresses permits issued at the Director's discretion, noting it will be in consultation with the Mayor's Office, City Collector's Office, and Salem Police Department. The Ordinance also discusses reserved parking for certain condos that are required to purchase passes each year, and free weekend parking for Salem residents at the Church Street West lot. Section III memorializes the fundraising that takes place at the municipal parking lot on Bridge Street. Section IV outlines the fifty dollar (\$50) fine for infractions.

Vice Chair Papetti asks how the proposed fine compares to what currently exists in October. Mr. Kucharsky and Mr. Downing clarify that violations are twenty-five dollars (\$25) during the year and go up to forty dollars (\$40) on weekends in October.

Vice Chair Papetti next asks if the list of streets has any changes from the previous year or if it is mostly consolidating ordinances. Mr. Kucharsky explains the map consolidates what is in the ordinance and that some streets were eliminated from last year as unnecessary based on resident and business feedback.

Chair Shallop asks if Mr. Kucharsky has any indications from the City whether things are going forward as normal or not with respect to October. Mr. Kucharsky says they are mainly focused on challenges related to Summer at this point. He notes this proposal is meant to address overall issues long-term, and that if October activities are cancelled and social distancing is still in effect the Ordinance will at least be clean and in place for the following year.

Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Councilor Madore asks about Warren Street, noting that it was included in the expansion last year and that feedback from residents (with the exception of two or three individuals) indicated that it was not needed. She asks if it could be removed from the list entirely between Pickering Street and Flint Street, or if the restrictions could be limited to one side of the street in October only. Mr. Kucharsky contends that the Warren Street area was reduced a bit from last year, but will look into it.

Chair Shallop says she has no concerns regarding Councilor Madore's proposed change, but that she also is not familiar enough with the specific area.

Councilor Madore indicates detailed changes can happen when the proposal is before City Council, and also mentions the stretch of Essex Street between Monroe Street and Flint Street (near the Salem Public Library and Salem Athenaeum) as a location to consider removing.

Mr. Kuckarsky reiterates the change in time of enforcement, and wonders if it would still pose a burden for the library operations and residents in the area. Chair Shallop notes this is a recommendation that will ultimately go before the Council and potentially get workshopped further. Mr. Downing suggests making a recommendation and including the request that he and Mr. Kucharsky make modifications as appropriate based on changes discussed with the Commission.

Motion and Vote: *On a motion duly made by Commissioner Waller and seconded by Vice Chair Papetti, the Traffic and Parking Commission moves to recommend the adjustments to the Traffic Ordinance with the ability for Traffic and Parking staff to edit as necessary based upon professional judgment. **The vote is five (5) in favor and none (0) opposed. The motion passes.***

Handicap/Accessible Parking and Commission Regulatory Authority

Staff presents regulatory language and proposed amendments to Sections 50A & 50B of the Traffic Ordinance pertaining to handicap parking. The intent is to give the Commission greater authority to evaluate and establish handicap parking spaces.

Mr. Kucharsky explains that last year Councilor Madore put in an order requesting Traffic and Parking staff and Commission review Sections 50A & 50B which deal with issuing long-term and two-year on-street handicap spaces respectively. There is updated ordinance language proposed and crafted regulations. Mr. Kucharsky indicates Councilor Hapworth also submitted proposed amendment changes and notes that he will have a chance to explain them.

Mr. Kucharsky presents the ordinance that created the Traffic and Parking Commission and all proposed changes to existing language. Updates in Section 2-988 – Powers & Duties indicate the Commission will have the sole authority to adopt or repeal rules and regulations with respect to the handicap on-street parking spaces defined in 50A & 50B. There are also specific amendments for the Traffic Ordinance changing the title to Accessible Parking Spaces and indicating the Commission will establish the location and use of the spaces. Section 50B for Accessible Parking Spaces – Residential outlines the two-year expiration and other requirements.

Chair Shallop explains the current process for handicap parking space requests, where requests come before the Commission, the Commission makes recommendations to City Council, who ultimately make decisions based on two passages, and that this change would move the responsibility fully to the Commission.

Approved at Traffic and Parking Commission on June 25, 2020

Mr. Kucharsky next presents the Traffic and Parking Regulations draft language and explains some of the various components.

Section I lays out Commission authority and schedule; Section II outlines resident requests along with steps for review and approval, and lists the streets with existing accessible parking spaces.

Mr. Downing clarifies that this is the first step in the process of granting the Commission further authority, and that if the Commission is supportive of the recommendation it would go before the Council and require two passages. He also notes that a regulations document was drafted simultaneously.

Mr. Kucharsky next presents Councilor Hapworth's proposed updates to the ordinance with respect to Sections 2-988 & 2-989, which include allowing Council to intervene if there is some concern or if they determine discussion is required on the matter before the Commission.

Vice Chair Papetti asks about the process of turning ordinances into regulations, and what would occur if the Commission passed a regulation that conflicted with an ordinance, as all existing traffic ordinances would still exist. Chair Shallop suggest there may require some further edits to address this, but asks if Councilor Hapworth has comments.

Councilor Hapworth explains the proposed updates further, noting the first order converts existing traffic and parking ordinances to regulations and that they can be created and governed by the Commission. The second redefines the role of the Commission to have authority. Mr. Hapworth explains the major change is the creation of a backstop where any change made within a neighborhood or ward could be brought back before the City Council for potential veto. Any ward councilor would have forty eight (48) hours to bring the issue back before the Council for veto.

Councilor Hapworth continues to discuss changes from 2018 to present, noting challenges around traffic and parking in a variety of communities. He notes that cities that have done things correctly or well have not had a city council with full authority over traffic and parking. The complexities and variety of inputs and outputs require a dedicated group to study issues and look for a way forward for Salem. Councilor Hapworth notes how long current requests and changes can take, often creating safety issues, and expresses he is in favor of a Traffic and Parking Commission with more authority.

Commissioner Seidel states she is excited the process is finally moving forward, and acknowledges it could use some light editing. Ms. Seidel suggests forty eight hours may be a short turn-around time for all parties involved, and that a week may be more appropriate. Chair Shallop and Commissioner Waller agree.

Vice Chair Papetti asks if other cities have a similar mechanism providing veto power to the select board or city council, or if there are any examples within Salem city ordinances where ward councilors are given special legal abilities above and beyond having a single

vote on council. Mr. Papetti expresses concern that precedent would be set allowing ward councilors to have more than one vote on an issue. Councilor Hapworth acknowledges Mr. Papetti's comments and clarifies that a ward councilor would have no more authority than anyone else in the situation, and that this would just allow the issue to come back before the Council, with each councilor still receiving one vote. He adds there is no ability for one councilor to "torpedo" the changes of the Commission, but that they could bring the issue before Council, who may ultimately decide the change should go forward. Chair Shallop expresses some editing and clarification could help, and suggests perhaps having a threshold such as three councilors, rather than just one.

There is further discussion regarding the existing ordinances being converted to regulations and preventing any potential conflict.

Vice Chair Papetti, Chair Shallop, and Mr. Kucharsky discuss the process further and how finalized language needs to be now considering OLLA will likely have their own changes. Commissioner Seidel states she is generally comfortable with the language, and believes it will get edited anyway along the process by Council and OLLA. Her preference is to participate in the process and keep it moving forward. Councilor Hapworth adds that timeliness is important as OLLA is filling up fast, but that he wants the Commission to be comfortable with what they are recommending.

Commissioner Waller indicates he has read the language and agrees with the majority of it. He suggests making certain edits, such as the previously mentioned changes to extend the time window and to require two or three ward councilors. Mr. Waller agrees with moving forward.

Mr. Kucharsky presents a document demonstrating every section of the Traffic Ordinance that would be deleted and the regulations that would replace them. There is additional discussion regarding the process and the difference between ordinances and regulations.

Lt. Tucker indicates he had discussions with the Chief of Police who expressed a desire for language that allows the Chief to retain the authority to temporarily override as necessary, such as restricting parking or for construction. Lt. Tucker also suggests that the power to bring the issue before the Council not be restricted to the affected ward councilor, but extended to any councilor in Salem.

Chair Shallop proposes that under Section 2-989 the language be modified to require three councilors to bring an objection within a week in order to bring the issue before the City Council for a vote. Vice Chair Papetti opines this will be a hotly debated section that councilors will have strong opinions about and is not particularly invested in the specific language without any examples of how other cities may have done this. Chair Shallop indicates she has done some research and that many traffic and parking commissions are not made up of members of the public or experts, but rather DPW directors and various others, making them very different bodies than the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission.

Councilor Madore explains the intent of the changes is to take politics out of traffic and parking issues, but to also allow one or a small group of councilors to have deciding votes in traffic and parking matters. Councilor Madore indicates she does not agree with giving ward councilors additional authority over other councilors, as traffic and parking matters are not limited to specific wards and can affect everyone. She indicates there will likely be additional discussion when this comes before OLLA.

Chair Shallop acknowledges the comments and concerns raised thus far, and notes it makes sense to move forward and have the language continue to be edited throughout the process as needed. Vice Chair Papetti asks if councilors would still retain some authority if the councilor veto language were not included. Chair Shallop indicates that ultimately they could rescind the ordinance that provides the Commission with their authority, but that it would not be likely over a single issue.

Mr. Kucharsky offers that bringing this before the Council for discussion makes sense. All commissioners indicate they are in favor of going forward with both recommendations, acknowledging that they may move at different paces.

Lt. Tucker notes that City Council and the Chief of Police would likely require some kind of failsafe language, and that some alternative would need to be approved ultimately.

Mr. Kucharsky reviews the proposed changes discussed thus far, including: 1) changing the timeframe to a week from forty eight hours; 2) requiring three councilors to bring an issue before City Council; and 3) language that incorporates the Chief of Police. Vice Chair Papetti questions if it is appropriate to give additional veto power to the Chief of Police if she already has a vote on this board, and states he is not supportive.

Chair Shallop says she is comfortable with sending the recommendation forward and requesting that Council work with Traffic and Parking staff and the Chief of Police on language as the process moves along so the process is not held up. Commissioners Waller and Seidel agree.

Councilor Hapworth indicates he is fine with the changes discussed and acknowledges that language will be further sharpened during OLLA's review.

Motion and Vote: *On a motion duly made by Commissioner Seidel and seconded by Vice Chair Papetti the Traffic and Parking Commission moves to recommend Councilor Madore's proposed ordinance regarding accessible parking spaces. **The vote is five (5) in favor and none (0) opposed. The motion passes.***

Motion and Vote: *On a motion duly made by Commission Lt. Tucker and seconded by Commissioner Seidel the Traffic and Parking Commission moves to recommend Councilor Hapworth's ordinance change regarding the Traffic and Parking Regulations with the discussed edits, and to work with the Traffic and Parking Director and Chief of Police to craft additional language. **The vote is five (5) in favor and none (0) opposed. The motion passes.***

Approved at Traffic and Parking Commission on June 25, 2020

Street Closures to Promote Social Distancing

Chair Shallop explains that this is an update on the Traffic and Parking Commission's response to provide space to social distance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mr. Kucharsky states two variable message boards were placed on either end of Bridge Street where it converges with the bypass. Staff had put up three messages based on the character limit parameters: "Bridge Street - No Thru Traffic"; "Be Alert 4 Bikes and Peds"; and "salem.com/covid19".

Mr. Kucharsky indicates the messaging went through internal staff channels and was shared with both the mayor and the Chief of Police with no objections, but that staff received calls from city councilors who expressed the messaging was confusing. The signs have been turned off for now pending further discussion by the Commission.

Mr. Kucharsky states he also investigated extending sidewalk space by removing some parking temporarily and adds that Mr. Downing researched what the city of Beverly has proposed for pedestrians to navigate sidewalks. Staff is working with the Mayor's office to promote recommendations for ways that individuals can get around safely. Mr. Kucharsky adds they are also working on walking maps that identify distances and routes pedestrians can take, as well as information on how to social distance properly. He hopes those will be on the website and social media shortly.

Mr. Kucharsky explains staff is also looking at instituting temporary fifteen (15) minute parking in front of various businesses that are conducting carryout services. He adds that Kate Fox has been maintaining a list of businesses, and that there are approximately twelve (12) locations identified for signage that would indicate fifteen-minute parking only for takeout. The signs still need to be fabricated.

Chair Shallop acknowledges the Bridge Street issue may have been confusing with no context, and that if that is the route Salem goes then we want to be more clear with messaging. She suggests more signage for pedestrians with more information. Commissioner Seidel suggests "Local Traffic Only" may be a clearer message, and Mr. Kucharsky says he will see if it is possible given the space and character limitations of the variable message signs. Chair Shallop adds there should be social media messaging and additional types of signage as well as a website presence to provide clarity.

Chair Shallop notes that in Beverly signs direct pedestrians to walk on certain sides of the sidewalk and that it seems to be affective. She suggests looking into that for Salem's heavily walked streets.

Vice Chair Papetti acknowledges the work done since the last week's meeting and expresses interest in seeing how far the city can take this and think about how to spread out safely and equitably. Mr. Papetti contends that no single neighborhood should be the sole benefit, and that this concept should be introduced in every neighborhood. He stresses equitable access and not encouraging everyone to congregate in one location. Vice Chair

Papetti says the safest approach is to think big and look for any streets that can be opened via extended sidewalks or closing streets to local traffic only. Commissioner Seidel says she is excited to see that something happened so fast. Ms. Seidel echoes Mr. Papetti's desire to go above and beyond to be a positive example for other cities and adds she has concerns as people will want to go out as the weather gets warmer to get fresh air and exercise.

Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Mark Chase, a resident of Somerville, introduces himself as a lecturer at Tufts University that founded a group called Neighbor Ways. The group connects schools, parks, and squares with low stress streets for kids to get around. Mr. Chase adds that since the pandemic, his group has partnered with the Solomon Foundation to research what people are doing. He indicates he is interested in what Salem is doing and trying to learn from the city's experience. Mr. Chase indicates many cities are thinking about this issue and he would like to build a community of cities to help make it doable and not taxing from a human resources standpoint.

Mr. Kucharsky says staff will continue to work to identify potential streets for closures or width reduction and reach out to businesses and councilors to provide more communications.

Commissioner Seidel suggests a campaign about "walking smart" or "walk healthy" with information about keeping safe as there seems to be confusion with some people about masks and social distancing. Chair Shallop suggests working in conjunction with Parks and Recreation, and perhaps the Health Department to develop a website about safe recreation during a pandemic and best practices with information about safe routes, the Willows, and other topics.

Mr. Kucharsky discusses some of the work that would be required for moving forward with various suggestions and notes he will work with Lt. Tucker, Mr. Downing, and other city departments. There is an additional discussion about directional sidewalks and whether it is enforceable or merely recommendations, as there are concerns regarding ADA compliance for those with visual impairments. The consensus is directional sidewalks would be a recommendation at most.

Councilor Madore suggests using strata heat maps and windows of time to see what time people have been walking and biking to help in the process of determining where closures or traffic limitations should occur. She also states that kids would enjoy biking outdoors, so she wonders if some streets being closed for children to ride their bikes would be possible.

Chair Shallop indicates there will be no specific recommendations at tonight's meeting, but that everyone will continue to work and do their part to keep things moving.

Bridge Street MassWorks Project

Mr. Kucharsky explains the city has wanted to implement this project for some time but has had some issues with DEP and compensatory storage. The project has taken longer than expected, and when a design was reached that finally met the requirements the City put the project out to bid. Mr. Kucharsky indicates there was a MassWorks grant for \$3 million, however the three (3) bids that came in were all over that amount. As such the engineering department had to remove some items from the scope of work to take advantage of the grant and execute the project. Mr. Kucharsky presents a map and identifies the following items that have been removed, but could be revisited in the future:

- Proposed improvements on Goodhue Street (road pavement, sidewalks, drainage, and landscaping)
- The underdrain system along Bridge and Goodhue Streets
- Various landscaping items

Mr. Kucharsky also notes that the cycle track that runs along the Southeast side of Bridge Street and adjacent to the CLC has also been removed but is going to be bid as an alternate if additional funds are available. Mr. Kucharsky adds that the Mayor has reached out to MassWorks to ask about additional funds, but with everything going on currently that might not be possible.

Vice Chair Papetti asks a brief clarifying question about the bid process and scope modification, and Mr. Kucharsky confirms noting the project will be rebid with the new scope and additional project as an alternate.

Vice Chair Papetti next asks about options regarding partial re-signaling have been considered at Bridge and Flint Street, or perhaps the reuse of existing mast-arms. He notes that in recent years there has been a trend of replacing every mast arm with excessively large ones that look like they were built to withstand a category five hurricane. Mr. Kucharsky says he can look into it.

Commissioner Seidel asks about the possibility of new bids coming in under cost due to any changes in the markets. Mr. Kucharsky explains that is why the alternate was included.

Snow Removal Policies and Procedures

Chair Shallop indicates she liked the momentum of previous discussions and that she wanted to check in to start thinking about forming a working group to address snow removal policies, procedures and best practices.

Mr. Kucharsky states there will need to be a subcommittee with representatives from each committee and that staff will be involved as well. Mr. Findley will be participating and providing his GIS skills to develop maps for the public.

There is a brief discussion regarding the logistics of having two members representing each committee or group.

Commission Elections

Chair Shallop introduces the topic of elections. Mr. Downing notes the terms are from February to February and that the ordinance requires a Chair and Vice Chair be elected.

There is a brief informal discussion regarding who would like to run for Chair and Vice Chair.

Motion and Vote: *On a motion duly made by Commissioner Seidel and seconded by Vice Chair Papetti the Traffic and parking Commission votes to recommend Tanya Shallop as Chair. **The vote is unanimous in favor, the motion passes.***

Motion and Vote: *On a motion duly made by Commissioner Waller and seconded by Commissioner Seidel, the Traffic and Parking Commission votes to recommend Eric Papetti as Vice Chair. **The vote is unanimous in favor, the motion passes.***

OTHER BUSINESS THAT MAY LEGALLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

Mr. Downing notes he had a call with KZLA, the architect for the parklets, and that they are figuring out how to fold in commission feedback on potential designs. He suggests an additional meeting may be required.

UPCOMING MEETINGS SCHEDULE

The next meeting is scheduled for May 21, 2020.

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL

None.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Seidel and seconded by Commissioner Waller, the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 8:36PM.