

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

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held on Thursday, January 16, 2020 at 6:30pm at 98 Washington Street, Salem. **Present:** Commission Chair Tanya Shallop, Commissioner Todd Waller, Commissioner Robin Seidel, Mobility Coordinator Russell Findlay, and Assistant Director Nick Downing. **Absent:** Commission Vice-Chair Eric Papetti, Director David Kucharsky, and Commission Lt. David Tucker.

CALL OF MEETING

The meeting was called to order at 6:31pm by Commission Chair Tanya Shallop.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Commission Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Mike Ryan 129 Fort Ave:

Mr. Ryan introduces himself and expresses that Fort Avenue has become dangerous with the reconstruction as no one knows what is going on. He notes that earlier in the day he found himself driving on the left hand side of the double yellow lines after trying to plug in his phone while driving in the rain. Mr. Ryan also expresses concern there will be a parking shortage during the summer season, as all the parking in the area gets used during summer, and now 50 percent of the parking spots are gone. Mr. Ryan claims he is also concerned about the connection with the bike path, noting that drivers pull out haphazardly with boats and trailers at the intersection from Winter Island and Columbus Avenue. Mr. Ryan reiterates that no one in the area knows what is going on and states there is confusion.

Virginia Lavoy 135 Fort Ave:

Ms. Lavoy introduces herself and states she has been a Fort Avenue resident for over 70 years. Ms. Lavoy indicates the changes to Fort Ave came about suddenly, and that while it was meant to slow down traffic, drivers are stilling going very fast from Columbus Avenue to the Willows. She adds that during the weekdays people drive far above the speed limit. Ms. Lavoy also notes that children on bikes do not seem to use the bike path or bike lanes, but instead ride all over the road. Ms. Lavoy goes on to mention that resident permit parking is not well enforced in the area during events and summer, and that even when residents call police, there is no enforcement. She notes that while she is fortunate to have a driveway, many others do not, and that with the influx of parking during events and summer months, lack of enforcement, and loss of parking due to reconstruction, other residents will have no place to park. Ms. Lavoy indicates an additional concern is that cars have no space to pull over for emergency vehicles if there is traffic and bikers or runners are in the bike lane.

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Chair Shallop explains that the Fort Avenue issue is not on agenda so it will not be addressed by the commission until a future meeting, but notes that residents can reach out to Mr. Downing or Mr. Kucharsky to discuss specific concerns so they can research the issue and bring it to the commission.

TRAFFIC AND PARKING DIRECTOR UPDATE

Local Transportation Improvement Plan (LTIP) Project Update:

Assistant Director of Traffic and Parking Nicholas Downing notes the last LTIP update was a month or two ago, and proceeds to provide the following project updates:

- **ADA Transition Plan**

Mr. Downing explains that the public meeting where the plan was unveiled was held on December 17th at the Community Life Center with the Commission on Disability and the consultants from IHCD. Mr. Downing states that since the meeting the consultants have presented the plan to city department heads, and that the next step is for individual departments to review and determine priorities. He adds that the consultants have identified which recommendations are necessary as well as best practices for the long term.

- **Bates Elementary School Safe Routes to School Project**

Mr. Downing informs that the project will be advertised by the end of February with hopes for construction beginning summer 2020. He notes that a proposed cross walk at Appleton Street going to the cemetery has been ruled out by MassDOT due to the lack of an accessible path from the cemetery to the sidewalk. While it could be done by the city in the future, it will not be included as part of the MassDOT project.

- **Bike Master Plan**

Mr. Downing explains that comments from the Bike Committee and the Traffic and Parking Commission have been incorporated into the preliminary design memos. Mr. Downing states staff is working with consultants to plan for the bike connection at Washington and Mill Street to get from the bike path to the new bike lanes downtown. Consultants and staff are also working on designs for bike infrastructure along North Street and Lafayette Street.

- **Boston St. Design**

Mr. Downing states the consultants are working on the 25 percent design submittal for the MPO, and that staff are working to schedule a meeting with ward councilors to review the design. He notes that Boston Street touches Wards 4, 2, and 3, and that input will be sought on the corridor proposal.

- **Bridge Street Complete Streets**

Mr. Downing indicates the consultant is reviewing comments from the Traffic and Parking Commission and trying to incorporate them where possible without any

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negative impacts on the overall project timeline. He notes that Vice Chair Papetti had concerns about bike accommodations, specifically regarding portions of the buffer that are not continuous.

- **Derby Street Complete Streets**

Mr. Downing states a public meeting was recently held on 1/13/2020 with members of the engineering department present. Mr. Downing explains that the newest addition of proposed work for Derby Street is a buffered bike lane for the Northern side of the street from Kosciusko to Blaney. He adds that it will be a 5 foot bike lane with a 1 to 2 foot buffer. The plans will be reviewed by the Commission at the February meeting.

- **Essex Street Reconstruction Project**

Mr. Downing explains this project is on Essex Street between North and Washington. Staff has been informed that Salem has received another Complete Streets Grant for the project, just under \$400,000. The project will be rebid for a Spring or Summer 2020 construction start. Mr. Downing notes this is the third Complete Streets Grant Salem has received.

- **Museum Place Garage Reconstruction**

Mr. Downing notes the Director Mr. Kucharsky conducted a pre-walkthrough with a dozen potential bidders on 1/7/2020, noting there are several interested parties which could help in getting a good price. The deadline to respond has been extended to 1/23/2020.

- **Normand/Chestnut/Summer Roundabout Project**

Mr. Downing indicates a public meeting was held on 12/9/2020 to discuss overall design strategy and construction materials. Consultants brought in material samples, and Mr. Downing adds that there was good attendance at the meeting. Mr. Downing says the task order for the next phase of the design has been issued.

- **South Harbor Garage Maintenance Study**

Mr. Downing notes the final draft has been submitted and is being reviewed to identify maintenance projects that can be proposed for this year's capital funding.

- **City Shuttle Service**

Mr. Downing states the RFP responses are due 1/17/2020, and that staff will be reviewing them.

- **Parklets**

Mr. Downing explains there is an RFP currently out for 2 parklets in 2 of the 3 locations where they were piloted over the summer. He claims the RFP went out to approximately 8 firms to get price proposals.

Chair Shallop asks for more details on the RFP, and Mr. Downing states the bids will be to design and build the parklets. The Traffic and Parking Commission will be

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involved in reviewing the proposals, as will the Commission on Disabilities. Commissioner Seidel asks about the budget, and Mr. Downing responds it is between \$45,000 and \$50,000. Mr. Downing explains the two locations are on Washington Street near Melt and on Derby Street near Jaho.

- **Community Car Share Service**

Mr. Downing indicates Getaround has been selected as the vendor, and that staff is working on contracting, marketing, and vehicle procurement. Commissioner Seidel asks if there will be any electric vehicles, and Mr. Downing states he is unsure but will check.

Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program Project Update

- **First Street Pedestrian Improvements**

Mr. Downing states the crosswalk has been installed, and that new signage and radar feedback signs will be installed soon.

- **Valley Street**

Mr. Downing explains that a letter was sent to MassDOT requesting a speed change without having to conduct a speed study. He notes the speed limit on Valley Street was set in the 1970's and that since then the area has become more residential. The request is to make the entire stretch one speed and to lower the limit. Staff is awaiting a response. Mr. Downing adds that the Valley Street project also includes some proposed changes at the intersection of Valley and Parlee Street intended to slow down traffic.

- **Fort Avenue and Derby Street**

Mr. Downing notes that striping is complete for the bi-directional bike lanes on Fort Avenue, but that buffer materials are still being considered. One example is a mini rumble strip for the buffer area. Mr. Downing adds that residents have expressed concern regarding confusion at the Fort Avenue and Winter Island Road intersection causing near-misses. He notes staff are looking at what can be done to further clarify the striping. Mr. Downing speculates some of the confusion at the intersection may be due to how the parking area is currently striped. One potential solution is vertical delineators on the double yellow line, but nothing has been determined yet.

- **Congress Street and Harbor Street**

Mr. Downing explains that the crosswalk buffer and flashing pedestrian signs have been installed and that all work has been completed.

Chair Shallop asks if staff have received feedback on the project, and Mr. Downing states that it has been going well.

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2019 Summary and 2020 Priorities

Mr. Downing reports that some of the big and successful projects of 2019 include the Neighborhood Traffic Calming projects, the E-Scooter Pilot program, the pop-up bike lanes and parklets, the Fort Avenue bike lanes, and completion of the ADA Transition Plan. Mr. Downing also expresses that the Chestnut Street roundabout has also come a long way in 2019, and touches upon ongoing work regarding pedestrian safety, as well as resident permit parking and attempts to find longer term solutions for structure and enforcement.

Regarding 2020, Mr. Downing states staff would like to hear from Commissioners about their priorities.

Chair Shallop asks if Mr. Downing has any insight from the Mayor's office, and Mr. Downing mentions the parklet projects, city shuttle, and community car share project as items staff and the Mayor are excited about. Mr. Downing also indicates that the contract with Zagster for bike sharing is up this year, and that an RFP will be going out. He adds there is a potential for the system to grow beyond Salem into a regional bike share system with neighboring municipalities.

Chair Shallop opens the discussion to fellow Commissioners.

Commissioner Seidel comments that in discussions with residents from other towns and cities that have implemented E-scooters many reactions have been negative, but she and others were impressed with how well it was executed in Salem. Commissioner Seidel also expresses excitement regarding the parklets, and notes she is interested in other projects that are fun and that push the envelope. Commissioner Seidel states that she would like Salem to pursue more electric vehicle infrastructure. She notes other towns are beginning to do it and expresses a desire for an eventual electric vehicle car share program.

Commissioner Waller states he would like public information regarding the Traffic and Parking Commission to be more accessible. He would like to look for ways to get information out to the public so that they know what is going on here, and in Salem generally. Commissioner Waller says he would like to be able to provide a resource when confronted with residents who say they never know what is going on. Commissioner Waller also expresses he would like to find creative ways to free up parking in the city and maximize availability for businesses. He would like staff to take a scientific look at the issue and find recommendations based in facts and figures.

Chair Shallop indicates she would like to get some regulations passed, noting that the Commission has been attempting to get an ordinance passed that moves some regulations over to the Traffic and Parking Commission. Chair Shallop also states she is looking forward to the February meeting, which will be a joint meeting with the Bike Advisory Committee and the Commission on Disabilities to focus on accessibility during snow and ice events in Salem. She notes it is an opportunity to evaluate past performance and discuss best practices to inform policy and procedure going forward. Chair Shallop also

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states she would like staff to focus on resident parking and visitor parking in 2020, including enforcement and creative solutions to past issues.

Commissioner Seidel asks about the potential for a sign for cars driving into Salem that displays how many parking spots are available at various garages or lots. Mr. Downing states the city would like to pursue something along those lines when the city implements a city-wide fiber network. He notes that a fair amount of infrastructure is required to make that happen, but that it is possible and something being discussed for the future. Commissioner Seidel asks if it would be possible, if funding allows, to implement parking sensors in city garages to show availability to cars entering. Mr. Downing states he is unsure of the cost associated with retrofitting an old garage to display such information, but that he will look into it.

Chair Shallop suggests checking in with the absent Commissioners over the next month or two to see if they have any additional input. She also asks Mr. Downing how feasible some of the requests are. Mr. Downing states he is hopeful that pieces of the resident sticker parking solutions can move forward, and that the short term recommendations should be completed within the first half of the year. Regarding regulatory authority, Mr. Downing suggests looking at smaller pieces to pull out and get passed sooner while looking towards something more overarching for the long term.

Mr. Downing indicates Commissioner Waller's suggestion about making data and information accessible makes sense and would like to figure out the best way to disseminate, as Salem has many channels to communicate with residents and he is hesitant to make a new one. Mr. Downing notes, however, that he is open to having social media accounts specifically for the Traffic and Parking Commission.

Mr. Downing states he is looking forward to the February snow accessibility meeting, and notes that it is in February 20th.

Mr. Downing opines there may be some things that may not be able to be completed in 2020, but that does not mean that there will not be progress.

Chair Shallop mentions there should be an election for Chair and any other officers soon.

NEW/OLD BUSINESS

Request for Traffic Ordinance Recommendation: None

Washington Street at Lafayette Park:

Mr. Downing explains that last fall, the owners of Major Magleashe's reached out to staff about parking issues in the neighborhood. Staff met with the owners, who expressed frustration that there is metered parking nearby but not directly in front of their business. The result is that people park in front and leave their cars there for the entire day.

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Mr. Downing shows a map of the area and existing conditions, and notes there is a variety of different parking regulations in the area on the books. Mr. Downing explains that other businesses nearby mentioned similar frustrations, but not all are in favor of extending the metered zone. He discusses the difficulty of balancing the desire of some for unrestricted parking with need for parking for business owners, employees, and customers.

Mr. Downing presents additional maps showing the existing ordinances, one of which is for two-hour metered parking that covers the entire area in question (passed in 2011 but never implemented). He indicates he is not looking for approval of a recommendation tonight, but wanted to get a sense of, given the mix of parking and uses, what the Commission thinks makes sense as an approach. Another goal will be to clean up ordinances ultimately, and to do what makes sense for everyone. Mr. Downing explains that since there is a metered zone already on the books, council approval would not be necessary to go forward with that option, but that everything is currently on the table.

Chair Shallop asks about the two-hour metered parking zone pricing, and Mr. Downing indicates it would likely be 50 cents an hour, noting that the ordinances state time limitations but not price.

There is a brief discussion between Mr. Downing and the Commissioners regarding existing parking and ordinances in the area. Mr. Downing makes note of upcoming developments in the area that will likely bring in more residential cars, such as the Hampton Inn project and a new retail marijuana dispensary.

Commissioner Waller asks if there are currently meters in the parking spots, and Mr. Downing says there currently are not.

Chair Shallop asks if there are many residences in the area currently or if it is mostly businesses, and Mr. Downing indicates there is a mix. He also states there are some resident permit parking spots on Ropes Street.

Chair Shallop states she would like staff to consider where the residents who currently park in the spots under discussion will likely go, as most parking nearby is resident permit parking. Commissioner Seidel echoes Chair Shallop's suggestion.

Commissioner Waller asks about the potential for having kiosks instead of meters and Mr. Downing says it could be done. Commissioner Seidel states the kiosks in Beverly are terrible and asks that none of those be used if kiosks are the way staff goes. Mr. Downing explains that the Essex Street Project will have kiosks once completed, and that sometimes there can be issues with National Grid regarding hooking up the machines, so it may be easier to request multiple installations.

Commissioner Seidel asks what time meters in the area expire, and Mr. Downing explains they are in effect Monday through Saturday 8:00 AM to 6:00 PM.

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MBTA Bus Stop Signage:

Mr. Downing presents Commissioners with a packet of maps and says Mobility Coordinator Russell Findley will discuss the MBTA Bus Stop Signage.

Mr. Findley explains that the MBTA reached out to staff to look at 11 bus stops to update signage so that information is clear and people know not to park in restricted areas. Mr. Findley discusses the existing conditions at the following bus stops with respect to signage, existing ordinances, and ridership data:

- 6157 Loring Ave @ Vinnin Street
- 6167 Loring Ave @ Grant Road
- 16118 Loring Ave @ Station Road
- 6111 Lafayette Street @ Ocean Ave (near school of social work)
- 6174 Lafayette Street @ Ocean Ave 1:04:21
- 6100 Leavitt Street @ Congress Street
- 6101 Congress Street @ Shetland Park
- 4605 North Street @ Garden Terrace
- 4603 North Street @ Orne Street
- 4674 North Street @ Mason Street
- 4557 Essex Street @ Flint Street

Mr. Downing , Mr. Findley, and Commissioners discuss the proposed changes for each bus stop and public transportation in Salem in general. Chair Shallop and Mr. Downing discuss holding off on those proposals which require changes to city ordinances, as the process can be lengthy and there are other more urgent priorities at this time.

Mr. Downing states he will touch base with the MBTA providing a summary of findings and comments.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

UPCOMING MEETINGS SCHEDULE

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Mr. Downing notes the next meeting will be on February 20th, 2020, and that it will be a special joint meeting on snow accessibility. There is a discussion regarding the potential need for a second February meeting since the Commission will be unable to take any regular business at the joint committee meeting. Mr. Downing states he will email the Commission to get availability and suggest a date.

There is a brief further discussion about the February 20th meeting, and Mr. Downing notes engineering will be in attendance. Commissioner Seidel asks if city councilors are attending, and Chair Shallop indicates Councilors Madore and Hapworth may attend.

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL

*On a motion duly made by Commissioner Waller and seconded by Commissioner Seidel, the Traffic and Parking Commission votes to approve the December 19th meeting minutes. **The vote is all in favor, the motion passes.***

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Seidel and seconded by Commissioner Waller, the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 7:52 PM.