

**City of Salem
Traffic and Parking Commission
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, July 23, 2020**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held remotely on Thursday, July 23, 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, §20, 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, Assistant Director Nick Downing, and Russell Findlay. **Absent:** None

CALL OF MEETING

The meeting was called to order at 6:33pm by Chair Shallop. Chair Shallop explains how members of the public may participate during the remote meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Commission Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment but there is none.

TRAFFIC AND PARKING DIRECTOR UPDATE

Traffic and Parking Director David Kucharsky provides an update on the following recently completed and ongoing projects in Salem:

Fort Ave and Derby Street

- The intent is to go forward with the installation of some vertical features with additional striping
- Delineator posts are being installed on Derby Street
- A combination of rumble strip and small armadillos, which are barriers between travel ways and cyclists, are being installed
- Work will proceed to improve the intersection with Winter Island Road

Salem Harbor Connector

- The majority of work has been completed
- Contractors are currently working on installing pedestrian rectangular rapid flashing beacons ("RRFBs") at some crossings, along with additional signage and striping

Canal Street Phase 2

- Work has begun, and contractors completed rough grading in the area

- Some contaminated soil was identified, which has resulted in delays to remediate the situation properly
- Project will be complete by the end of 2021

Workshop for North Street Design Project

- 50 participants attended and provided feedback for staff and Tool Design to help begin developing recommendations
- Participants broke into workshops to take down information from smaller groups of individuals as to what they would like to see on the roadway, and to note any concerns
- Part of the outreach includes developing a project specific website, which has documents and continuous updates and information, as well as the ability for members of the public to provide comments
- The website also has a map that shows the bounds of the projects

NEW/OLD BUSINESS

Traffic Calming and Shared Streets Pilot Program

Mr. Kucharsky explains that earlier this week Commissioners received an email from him laying out the next steps and plans going forward. There will be a pilot program where certain streets will be closed to thru-traffic from Friday to Sunday. Mr. Kucharsky notes that staff are working with Neighborways and utilizing the Solomon Foundation grant for two of the locations.

Mr. Kucharsky indicates that speed and volume data have been collected at all locations, and that prior data from before the pandemic is also available. The intent is to implement the pilot and collect additional data once materials are on the ground. Further materials are being worked out and ordering will begin soon. Mr. Kucharsky notes that Ward Councilors have been notified, and that abutters will receive fliers to inform them of the changes. The hope is that the neighborhood will benefit from drivers adopting the desired changes in behavior.

Chair Shallop asks for a map to show the four streets that are being piloted, and asks about a target date. Mr. Kucharsky states the target date is in August, but will depend on getting signs fabricated and getting materials ready.

Mr. Downing presents a map, which identifies Buffum Street, Chestnut Street, Fairfield Street off Lafayette, and Peabody Street at Ward as the areas being piloted.

Chair Shallop thanks Mr. Kucharsky and Mr. Downing for taking the feedback from the last meeting and widening the scope of streets being examined and keeping equity in mind.

Mr. Kucharsky provides some additional background regarding the project and materials, noting that saw horses, signage, bump outs, flex posts, and ground paint will all be utilized,

and that the goal is to reduce vehicular speeds in these areas. Mr. Kucharsky also states that they are trying to incorporate local artwork where possible as well.

Mr. Downing presents the Neighborways Design website which has images of prior work to give the Commission a sense of how the pilot will look. Staff will work with Salem Police Department to collect data to determine how effective efforts are.

Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Andy Lippman of 28 Chestnut Street introduces himself and says he applauds the work that was done to plan for these four streets to be piloted. Mr. Lippman states that all the streets identified have become less safe over the years for non-vehicular traffic as they have essentially turned into through-fares. Mr. Lippman indicates he supports this being done throughout the city, and suggests speed cushions, as well as working with the police department to potentially lower speed limits on certain streets.

James Davis of 32 Buffum Street introduces himself and contends that his street has become a problem as people use it as a cut-through to Route 114. Mr. Davis indicates he is starting a family, and that there are several young families in the area, so it is very important to get these streets under control. Mr. Davis also suggests the use of speed cushions.

Councilor Christine Madore introduces herself and says she is excited about the pilot, but has questions about funding and longevity. Councilor Madore asks if it is only funded through grants, or if any of the City budget is subsidizing the work. Mr. Kucharsky explains that the grant covers Peabody and Fairfield, and that some of the traffic calming budget will be used to take care of the other two streets. Mr. Kucharsky adds that if the pilots are successful, additional funds would be requested to deploy in other locations.

Councilor Madore next asks about prioritization, noting that this year's traffic calming budget was cut more than she would have liked. Mr. Kucharsky states there will be a presentation later in the meeting regarding prioritization, as staff has been utilizing GIS to use objective parameters to prioritize locations and projects.

Councilor Megan Riccardi introduces herself and also thanks staff for all the work completed to date. Councilor Riccardi also praises the work done regarding the North Street Design project working group. Ms. Riccardi acknowledges that Buffum Street can be rather scary currently, and is excited about the traffic calming measures. She suggests that as part of the analysis staff look into whether traffic just moves to a parallel nearby street.

Mr. Kucharsky, Mr. Downing, and Mr. Findley present the tracker and map to demonstrate location and project prioritization. The tracker and map contain various data points and fields which can identify transit levels, low to moderate income areas, speeds, volume, road classifications, whether schools or other essential services are nearby, and other nearby projects. Vice Chair Papetti asks how income areas are defined, and Mr. Findley indicates it is from U.S. Census data.

Chair Shallop says the tracker is fantastic, and that combined with the map it should be a great tool for guidance and prioritization. There is a brief discussion amongst staff and commissioners regarding budgeting and CIP funding requests.

Councilor Madore says it is important to track the budget, and notes that if advocating for more funding it needs to be associated with value, so she suggests tracking outcomes if possible. Councilor Madore mentions Bridge Street and Winter Street as examples of low cost changes that have had significant impact.

Mr. Findley provides additional information regarding the map and GIS, noting particular points of interest, city buildings, hospitals, schools, libraries, parks, and other areas. Mr. Findley explains that prioritization is identified with color, and that further data such as crash information and ways to identify more vulnerable populations.

Chair Shallop thanks staff for the work and presentation regarding prioritization. Ms. Shallop indicates it will be a useful tool to help promote equity in the city.

Mr. Kucharsky states it will be a living document that will be continuously updated.

Request for Traffic Ordinance Recommendation

Hampton Inn Hotel Parking and Traffic Circulation Changes

Mr. Kucharsky explains that city council passed the majority of recommendations with the exception of making Dodge Street Court a one way, and requested that it come back to Commission for review. The recommendation did not come from the Commission, but from a traffic engineer in 2015. Mr. Kucharsky explains that two separate traffic consultants indicated it would improve circulation due to the narrowness of the street, angled parking on one side, and parallel parking on the other. Mr. Downing presents a map of the area surrounding Dodge Street Court.

Chair Shallop indicates this topic was revisited several times, and that while the Commission provided changes and recommendations regarding the bike lane, they did not alter any recommendations regarding traffic or directional flow as the Commission deferred to the findings of the traffic engineers in prior years. Ms. Shallop clarifies that the Commission did not suggest this become a one-way street.

Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Councilor Prosniewski introduces himself and states he is opposed to making the street one way. Mr. Prosniewski's main concern is that Dodge Street Court is a bleeder artery for people that come down Lafayette Street and see that traffic is backed up. If taken away, Councilor Prosniewski fears traffic on Lafayette street might worsen and begin blocking more side streets. Councilor Prosniewski explains the history of the area a bit, noting that

the street is narrow because it was made for carriages not cars. He acknowledges it is a narrow street, but does not believe it has been problematic.

Mr. Kucharsky indicates that the developers spoke with public safety officials at the time who were comfortable with the proposed change, but acknowledges the concerns put forth by Councilor Prosniewski. He adds that the proposal was made before the Department and Commission existed, so he does not have enough information to say one way or another what would be better.

Chair Shallop asks if Lt. Tucker has an opinion on the matter. Lt. Tucker states that he tried to understand the rationale behind the proposal, but that he ultimately feels the street has not presented a problem.

Mr. Kucharsky and Mr. Downing explain that part of the rationale has to do with the geometric parameters of the street, and that there were concerns that the new development would increase traffic on the street creating issues.

Chair Shallop suggests this could be something that could be revisited in the future. For now the street can remain as is, and perhaps a year from now it could be revisited once there is data regarding traffic after the hotel opens. There appears to be some justification, but it is too early to tell whether it is a compelling enough reason to make a change.

Vice Chair Papetti asks about when the hotel project would be finished, and Mr. Kucharsky says it is unclear at this time, but at least a month or two away.

Lt. Tucker agrees with Chair Shallop that it could be revisited at a later date to see if the street actually becomes an issue. Commissioner Seidel and Vice Chair Papetti agree.

Mr. Kucharsky states he will communicate to the developer that the one-way recommendation did not pass but that all other aspects of the proposal can be implemented.

Motion and Vote: *On a motion duly made by Vice Chair Papetti and seconded by Commissioner Seidel, the Traffic and Parking Commission moves to recommend that no change to Dodge Street Court occur at this time and will revisit the issue once the hotel is operational and more data is available. **The vote is five (5) in favor and none (0) opposed. The motion passes.***

OTHER BUSINESS THAT MAY LEGALLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

Mr. Downing notes that Vice Chair Papetti developed an internal document that will be discussed at August's meeting. The document is meant to ensure that when projects come before the Commission for review they have all the requirements completed and relevant information for the Commission and members of the public to understand the requests.

UPCOMING MEETINGS SCHEDULE

The next meeting is scheduled for August 20, 2020.

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL

Staff and Commissioners begin to review and discuss the minutes for the June 25, 2020 meeting.

Vice Chair Papetti proposes two changes to page three of the minutes to add a word and fix a typographical error.

Motion and Vote: *On a motion duly made by Commissioner Papetti and seconded by Commissioner Waller, the Traffic and Parking Commission moves to approve the meeting minutes from June, 25, 2020 as amended. **The vote is five (5) in favor and none (0) opposed. The motion passes.***

ADJOURNMENT

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