

**City of Salem  
Traffic and Parking Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, November 15, 2023**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held remotely on Wednesday, November 15, 2023, at 6:00pm, in accordance with Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023.

**Present: Traffic and Parking:** Acting Commission Chair Jaime Garmendia (arrived late), Commissioner Jeff Swartz, Commissioner Brendan Casey, Commissioner Lt. David Tucker, Assistant Transportation Director Christina Hodge, and Transportation Planner Brendan Linard. **Absent:** None

Acting Commission Chair Jaime Garmendia was not present at the start of the meeting, and pursuant to consulting with City Councilor Stott who was present, the Commission decided to have a temporary acting chair until Mr. Garmendia could log on.

**Motion and Vote:** Commissioner Lt. Tucker motions to nominate Commissioner Jeff Swartz as Temporary Acting Chair. Commissioner Casey seconds the motion. **The vote is three (3) in favor, and none (0) opposed, the motion passes.**

**CALL OF MEETING**

The meeting was called to order at 6:15pm by Temporary Acting Chair Swartz. Ms. Hodge explains how members of the public may participate during the remote meeting.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Temporary Acting Commission Chair Swartz opens the floor to public comment, but there is none.

**NEW/OLD BUSINESS**

**Director's Update**

Ms. Hodge states that there is a candidate for the open vacancy on the Traffic and Parking Commission, and a vote will be put before City Council. A second vote would occur on December 7th, so if approved, the new commissioner would be able to participate in the next meeting.

Ms. Hodge notes that with respect to Fort Avenue work, the contract is being finalized and will begin imminently. Ms. Hodge also indicates that at the next meeting there will be an October recap similar to what was done last year. She also states staff are working with DPS to remove all temporary traffic calming equipment as temperatures begin to drop. Staff also hope to provide a recap of the calming measures at one of the next Commission meetings.

## **Tremont Street at Grove Street/Tremont Street at School Street**

Ms. Hodge explains that this meeting is to discuss the Tremont Street redesign project, and that staff and consultants from BETA will review conceptual designs of the two intersections and discuss the differences. The intent is to receive feedback from the Commission and public so that BETA can proceed with a more detailed design of the preferred concept for each intersection. Ms. Hodge provides some project history and timeline highlights, including a presentation of existing conditions beginning in April 2022, subsequent neighborhood meetings and data collection. Ms. Hodge indicates the public comment period is open and will be until December 15, 2023, along with ability to vote for the preferred design alternative. This is open to all residents, not just those who live in the immediate vicinity. The website for public comment can be found at [www.publicinput.com/tremontintersectionsproject](http://www.publicinput.com/tremontintersectionsproject).

BETA consultants Chris Turgeon and Dennis Flynn introduce themselves and begin the presentation regarding the intersection options. Mr. Flynn provides a general overview and background, noting early collection of traffic data at both intersections as well as those in the general project area. Peak periods in the morning and afternoon were focused on, and the data was analyzed and used to evaluate the operations and potential interventions. Mr. Flynn explains the team also reviewed crash data, noting that instances such as near misses are not reflected. Along Tremont Street, the prevailing speed based on data collected appears to be between 33 to 34 MPH (85th percentile speed), and Mr. Flynn notes that this means there may be vehicles that travel at faster speeds. For School Street, the prevailing speed is 31 to 32 MPH, and on Grove Street, it is 29 to 30 MPH. Mr. Flynn states that while these may not sound like high speeds, they can seem fast to a pedestrian on the street.

Mr. Turgeon presents the various design concept alternatives, focusing first on the Balcomb, Bradford, and School Street intersection. Mr. Turgeon discusses existing curb lines, and he presents proposed narrowing of lanes to standard width at the Bradford/Balcomb intersection and the addition of ADA compliant crosswalks. This intersection design is consistent across all design options. He next discusses the first option for the intersection at Tremont and School Street, where a small roundabout is proposed with one departure and receiving lane at all three legs of the intersection. Mr. Turgeon next discusses the first option for the intersection at Tremont and Grove Street, where there is no proposed change to the roadway geometry, but the design would introduce ADA compliant pedestrian ramps. A second design alternative would involve “T-ing” off the Grove Street intersection are proposed, and it would again introduce ADA compliant pedestrian ramps. Consultants and staff will work with all adjacent and abutting property owners in all areas. Mr. Turgeon presents the second option for the intersections, where the School and Tremont Street intersection would not have a roundabout, but improvements would include bringing out existing curb lines and the introduction of ADA compliant crosswalks across School Street and both sides of Tremont. He also presents an alternative option that moves one of the Tremont Street crossings closer to and as a part of the School Street Crossing (apex style crossing). Mr. Turgeon explains that the second option for the Grove Street intersection proposes maintaining a similar roadway and

striping alignment, but it would separate the pedestrian ramps so that they are not in the apex configuration. The variation between Option 2 and 2A only involves the location of pedestrian ramps and whether they are constructed to be head-on or apex style. Mr. Turgeon notes that apex crossings are ADA compliant but less desirable, because someone who is impaired could have difficulty orienting to cross safely based on slopes.

Commissioner Jaime Garmendia joins the meeting and takes over as Acting Chair.

Commissioner Swartz questions whether the roundabout for School Street will actually slow traffic if it is possible to make a straight shot through. Mr. Turgeon acknowledges the speed complaints, and he suggests there should be some slow down, perhaps not as much as ultimately desired. Mr. Flynn explains the roundabout option a bit more, noting the purpose is traffic calming rather than operational control necessarily.

Commissioner Lt. Tucker suggests the volume and speed data may not warrant a roundabout, but he acknowledges there are outliers, and that the roundabout could help, although he states his preference would be for the second design options. Lt. Tucker asks if the crosswalk just west of Grove Street is necessary with the others around. Commissioner Lt. Tucker also states preference for the non-apex crossings. He also expresses concerns about the east crosswalk and whether it could be placed further east.

Acting Chair Garmendia states that he is in favor of creating more right-angled turns for the intersections. Mr. Garmendia asks about the driveways that are in the way of ideal solutions, and whether they are curb cuts and appropriately permitted. Commissioner Garmendia also suggests that crosswalks should be where people expect them to be for best utilization and safety, and this location would either be right at the corner of intersections or a bit farther away. Mr. Garmendia indicates he is in favor of the roundabout option for the School Street intersection. He recalls from neighborhood meetings that there are not as many pedestrians in this area as residents would like because they do not feel safe along this stretch with the sidewalk conditions, crossings, and driver behavior.

Mr. Turgeon states they will work with the City to work on the crossing locations and final number of crossings based on feedback. Regarding the driveways, permits have not been reviewed but he states they can work with the City on that to see what other options could be available.

Commissioner Swartz states he is in favor of the roundabout as well as the right-angle intersection for Grove Street. He also echoes the concerns regarding crosswalk locations. Lt. Tucker notes that most vehicles leaving Grove Street turn left onto Tremont. He also suggests there may not be that much of a speed problem here outside of the outliers.

Commissioner Casey states he is in favor of the roundabout as they are much safer statistically. He also asks if the tactile strips can be the cast iron type as they last longer than the fiberglass style.

Acting Chair Garmendia opens the floor to public comment.

Christine Derby, of 73 Tremont Street, introduces herself and states she is against the roundabout because of the location of her driveway location. She states that she currently needs to back into her driveway due to visibility issues with exiting, and perhaps an island may be a better option to narrow the street as in design option two because no one will stop to allow her to back in with a roundabout. Ms. Derby suggests better lighting and crosswalk improvements, along with some type of signal control. She also is against apex style crossings. Mr. Flynn appreciates the feedback regarding the driveway and roundabout, noting that the feedback will ultimately drive final decisions. Mr. Turgeon adds that in urban settings some roundabouts include commercial or residential driveways, and that improving sight lines is something that can be looked at.

Heather Allen, of 8 Grove Street, introduces herself and states she is disappointed that no one has seemed to mention how regularly the stop sign at Grove Street in front of her home is not respected, which was one of the major concerns at the beginning of these discussions. Ms. Allen suggests oversight and enforcement can be an issue as well. She suggests there may not be as much of a speed problem as there is an enforcement issue and drivers following other road regulations.

Andrew Edmonson, of 48 Tremont Street, introduces himself and states that while looking at this location, the data that was collected was prior to other nearby traffic calming measures being implemented. He suggests that since those measures have been in place, more cars are choosing to zip down Tremont Street, and it is having an impact. Noting the comments that the average speeds have not been that high, Mr. Edmonson reminds that the speed limit nearby is 25MPH, and the surrounding neighborhood is residential. He also suggests pinch points, speed tables, chicanes, and other measures as potential traffic calming options. He also speaks in favor of having the three proposed crosswalks near Grove Street. Ms. Hodge confirms that data collection was prior to North Street calming measures and the installation of permanent speed humps nearby and that the data can be revisited. Commissioner Lt. Tucker confirms as well.

Captain Mark Gallow, of 13 Grove Street, introduces himself and states he is not a fan of the roundabout. He also agrees with Lt. Tucker that perhaps one of the crosswalks by Grove Street should be removed. Mr. Gallow also speaks to the lack of sidewalk nearby and drainage issues as a result.

Lily Dagal, of 48 Tremont Street, introduces herself and states she was originally a fan of the roundabout, but after hearing from neighbors she agrees that it could be difficult for nearby homes and driveways abutting the circle. She states she would be in favor of the second option. Ms. Dagal also suggests the crosswalks should be done in whatever manner that most adheres to ADA requirements and suggestions. Ms. Dagal expresses concerns regarding speeding drivers and the lack of stopping at stop signs. She encourages the City to look at the area more holistically.

Councilor Meg Stott introduces herself and thanks staff for the presentation. She thinks any improvements to the area would be welcome, and she suggests the concerns about too many crosswalks are not analogous to the situation on Washington Street where multiple nearby crosswalks are constantly being used by high volume of pedestrians, noting that here the crosswalks are just used by families trying to get to the park.

Mark Gallow introduces himself again, and he suggests that the new condos built in the area have and will continue to have an impact on traffic. He asks that updated data collection and counts be done.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS THAT MAY LEGALLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION**

None.

#### **UPCOMING MEETINGS SCHEDULE**

The next meeting is scheduled for December 13, 2023, at 6:00PM.

#### **MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL**

**November 1, 2023**

**Motion and Vote:** Commissioner Swartz motions to approve the minutes from the November 1, 2023, meeting as drafted. Commissioner Lt. Tucker seconds the motion. **The vote is all in favor, the motion passes.**

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

*On a motion duly made by Commission Lt. Tucker and seconded by Commissioner Swartz the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 8:05 PM.*