

**City of Salem
Traffic and Parking Commission
DRAFT Meeting Minutes
Thursday, March 2, 2017**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held on Thursday, March 2, 2017 at 6:30pm at 120 Washington Street, Salem, MA. Present were Commissioners Nicholas Downing, Jamie Metsch, Robert Preczewski and Tanya Stepasiuk. Commissioner Eric Papetti was absent. Also present were Director of Traffic and Parking, Matt Smith, and Councilor-at-Large Tom Furey.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Stepasiuk called the meeting to order at 6:35pm.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Phil Gates, 2 Gifford Court, spoke about heavy traffic along Carpenter Street heading towards Bridge Street and that it was a concern for safety of pedestrians. He also spoke about parking issues along Gifford Court.

Commission Downing asked what specifically was the parking problem.

Mr. Gates stated that the number of cars increased 4 years prior due to more housing units built or converted. The street can't accommodate all of the cars. He also noted that MBTA train riders park there, particularly near Flint and Bridge Street.

Ms. Stepasiuk explained that currently, the Traffic and Parking Commission is purely advisory, but if there was a specific request, they could provide a recommendation at some point. Mr. Downing stated noted that this type of information, and the present conditions, is important for the Commission to know about so that when more formal decisions or recommendations are made, it helps to inform them.

Lt. Preczewski suggested that Mr. Gates should reach out to his Ward councilor for any recommended change, and should he do so, the Traffic and Parking Commission would then present a recommendation.

3. TRAFFIC AND PARKING DIRECTOR MONTHLY UPDATE

Matt Smith, Director of Traffic and Parking, presented his monthly update. Discussed were January 2017 parking revenues from garages, lots, meters and enforcement. Total revenues were up 11 percent year-over-year.

Mr. Smith next provided an update on Museum Place Garage upgrades to the stairwells. In summary, a contractor was identified through an emergency procurement process, and will commence work as soon as funding is allocated by the City Council. The project is expected to be completed in phases, with 2 stairwells completed by July, and the full project completed before October.

4. REGULAR AGENDA

(3.a) Holyoke Square Bus Parking / Gedney Street / Zone 1 Parking

Traffic and Parking Director, Matt Smith, provided a presentation highlighting parking issues and utilization along Gedney Street, in Riley Plaza and Norman Street. Commission had recommended to leave the bus parking on Holyoke Square this year, study the utilization, but to revisit in June.

Issues that complicate parking in the vicinity include multiple parking zones (e.g. 15-minute, 30-minute, open parking, resident parking, metered parking in Riley Plaza, permit parking). The existing time restrictions don't work for some businesses, and lack of enforcement in the past resulted in all day parking in the short-term spaces. Additionally, Riley Plaza parking appeared to be highly underutilized.

Mr. Smith presented data collected throughout the month of February about parking availability and initiatives underway. First, Gedney Street has been added to the meter enforcement route. Increased enforcement appears to be working. At least one, and up to nine 30-minute spaces were available during more than half a dozen site visits. 15-minute spaces were highly used, but turnover was frequent. Parking along Holyoke Square – which was signed stating that 2-hour parking was now allowed by automobiles - was limited. No more than 4 cars used these at any time, but typically it was 2 or less. Meter spaces within a one block walk of the intersection of Gedney Street and Holyoke Square were also underutilized during every site visit. Between 2 and 7 spaces – allowing up to 4 hour parking – were available at the metered spaces in Riley Plaza at the foot of Gedney Street. More than 30 Zone 1 monthly spaces were always available in Riley Plaza as well, despite the passes selling out at the Parking Office – pass holders do not use the lot on a daily basis. Key finding: parking in and around Gedney Street was available at all times for customers of Gedney Street businesses including free on-street spaces and metered spaces within one block. Discussions with business owner said enforcement was effective in creating more parking turnover and availability. There also appeared some openness by one Gedney Street business to allowing metered parking in the future – if it didn't exceed 2 hours.

Mr. Smith said he would continue to monitor parking in the area and then provide recommendations at the April 2017 Traffic and Parking Commission meeting.

(3.b) 25 mph Speed Limit

Councillor Furey spoke to the Commission advocating for the lowering of the city speed limit to 25 mph. He asked the Commission to make a recommendation in favor or against the order to the City Council's Committee on Public Health, Safety & Environment.

Mr. Smith provided a summary of M.G.L. Chapter 90, Section 17, which regulates speed limits to 30 mph on local streets, and then M.G.L Chapter 90, Section 17C, adopted as part of the 2016 Municipal Modernization Act, which allows municipalities to establish a speed limit of 25 mph on any roadway inside a thickly settled or business district on any way that is not a state highway. Public safety is the impetus for the law – fatalities or severe injury of pedestrians struck by vehicles decline significantly as speed decreases. For example, there is an 18% likelihood of fatality or severe injury when struck by a car traveling 20mph, but 50% likelihood if a car is traveling at 30mph.

Mr. Downing was very supportive of reducing the speed limit. Change is important for safety but also for Complete Streets policy to design for safety of all users. This would better protect pedestrians and bicyclists – it would reduce speeds.

Ms. Stepasiuk was generally supportive, but concerned that lower speed limits could create a situation that could result in increased speeding stops due to “racial profiling.” Ms. Stepasiuk was supportive from a safety standpoint. She would like to see more information and study, and requested more information from the Police Department.

Lt. Preczewski stated that in 30+ years, he and the force have not stopped a speeding driver based on the driver’s race or ethnicity. A speeding ticket is issued if someone is speeding. It’s that simple.

Mr. Metsch stated that lowering the speed limit to 25 mph is a no brainer. He supported it.

Mr. Downing made a motion to recommend to the City Council to reduce the City speed limit to 25 miles per hour. Mr. Metsch seconded.

Ms. Stepasiuk called for more discussion. She stated that because she would like to see further study, it does not mean she is not supportive of the issue. She wants more information.

Lt. Preczewski said the law allowing for the 25 mph speed limit also allows for the creation of 20 mph safety speed zones. This will likely come up in the future as part of traffic calming discussions.

Commission voted on Mr. Downing’s earlier motion. 3 voted in favor of recommending to reduce the speed limit to 25mph (Mr. Downing, Mr. Metsch, Lt. Preczewski). 1 abstained from voting (Ms. Stepasiuk).

(3.c) First Street and Swampscott Road Intersection

Mr. Smith updated the Traffic and Parking Commission about the public meeting related to the intersection of First Street and Swampscott Road. He explained that two options to calm traffic and increase safety were presented to the public. One was to place a traffic signal at the intersection. The other was to create a roundabout to manage traffic from all directions. Based on the presentation by consultant Stantec, and City Engineer, David Knowlton, the majority of attendees were in support of the roundabout. The next step would be for Stantec to continue the design and make a final determination about how to proceed.

Lt. Preczewski stated he had seen roundabouts in many places and felt this was a good idea.

Mr. Metsch said he was familiar with these from his time in Ashville, NC, where they are effective.

Mr. Smith said he would update the Traffic and Parking Commission as the project progressed.

(3.d) Parking 2.0.

Mr. Smith discussed the concept of conducting a Parking 2.0 Update Study of the City’s 2010 Parking Management Plan, which was completed by consultant Nelson Nygaard. The parking study was very effective in creating parking zones at different rates to allow different choices to park downtown (higher or lower cost), encourage turnover to support business, and for employment parking for downtown workers. The study needs updating given all of the investment in downtown over the last 5 years, and the investment to come. In particular, future demand, shifts in demand (resulting from increased

development), and parking rates should be studied, particularly in areas that are more heavily parked now compared to 2010. The South Harbor Garage was mentioned as an example. Current parking rates are 25 cents per hour, but the garage fills up on many weekend days and on many evenings. Demand for parking here suggests the rate is too low. The Museum Place Mall Garage is also used more now. Rates here were once \$1.50 per hour, and are now 75 cents.

(3.e) Traffic and Parking Regulations Update

Mr. Smith provided an update on the Traffic and Parking Regulations proposal to City Council. The full draft was complete based on the Commission recommendations of elements to include. Mr. Smith would meet with the City Solicitor on some final elements. The hope was to submit the proposal by April.

Ms. Stepasiuk asked if the public had any questions.

Nina Cohen, 22 Chestnut Street: How is the issue of pedestrian access and walkability discussed in the regulations. She highlighted access as an equity issue, particularly for those with no or limited access to a car. She also noted the relatively poor condition of the pedestrian environment in the Downtown, including lack of concurrent signals, faded crosswalks or poor design, etc. She felt no one had been looking at these issues, and were only addressed by default when roads were repaved or reconstructed. She also presented a health-based argument and asked that the Commission revise design standards and think of this as a natural way to solve and make changes to traffic congestion and patterns.

Ms. Stepasiuk agreed with her points, and stated that the Commission is very much interested and will be working on the pedestrian environment, but that the Commission is a new body, and the regulations proposal in its current form generally includes elements that the City Council is currently the decision making body. However, the Commission will have an advisory role no matter the outcome, and pedestrian access and improvements are part of this.

Mr. Downing added that the Commission has been charged with implementing the City's Complete Streets policy. This includes creating an accessible pedestrian environment, as well as all other users.

Joyce Kenny, 285 Lafayette Street, spoke about her concern around commercial vehicles parking on Ocean Avenue, and the lack of enforcement, even after calling the police.

No additional comments were presented from the public.

Mr. Metsch made a motion to advance the draft Traffic and Parking Commission Regulations proposal with input from City Solicitor. Mr. Downing seconded. Approved by a vote of 4 to 0.

5. NEW BUSINESS

Lt. Preczewski presented a request for a handicap parking space at 74 Tremont Street for a couple in their 80s with a valid handicap plate. He was seeking the Commissions recommendation so that he could file the opinion.

Lt. Preczewski moved to send a favorable recommendation to the City Council. Mr. Downing seconded. Approved by a vote of 4 in favor and 0 opposed.

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Commissioner Stepasiuk made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from February 2, 2017. Approved 4 in favor, 0 opposed.

7. NEXT MEETING

Mr. Smith stated that the next meeting will be held on Thursday, April 6. Topics to be discussed will include a recommendation for parking changes in the Gedney Street area, and an update on the Traffic and Parking Commission regulations proposal. Other items would be added.

8. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Stepasiuk made a motion to adjourn at 8:15pm. Mr. Downing seconded. Approved by a vote of 4 in favor, 0 opposed.