

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

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held on Thursday, February 2, 2017 at 6:30pm at 120 Washington Street, Salem, MA. Present were Commissioners Nicholas Downing, Jamie Metsch, Eric Papetti, Lt. Robert Preczewski and Tanya Stepasiuk. Also present were Director of Traffic and Parking, Matt Smith, Councilor-at-large, Arthur Sargent, and members of the public.

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Ms. Stepasiuk called the meeting to order at 6:31pm.

**2. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Whalen Perez of 9 Salem Street, graduate of Salem Academy Charter School, and employee at C&E Communications on Gedney Street, spoke in support of removing the bus parking spots that were placed on Holyoke Square. He stated that the parking is needed for the local businesses, and that without relief, the businesses would suffer. He stated that a petition is circulating that will go to the City Council asking to have the bus spaces removed.

William Legault, former City Councillor, spoke on the bus parking issue. He stated that the establishment of the Traffic and Parking Commission is a good idea and will help to make the process more predictable. He suggested that historically there has been much back and forth regarding traffic and parking policy, and that strategies and recommendations aren't given time to see if they work. The Commission needs to make informed decisions that respect stakeholders and stick with them.

Peter Ingemi, owner of Steve's Market, 36 Margin Street spoke. He likes the idea of the Traffic and Parking Commission. Mr. Ingemi stated that he was not in favor of all year dedicated bus parking on Holyoke Square, rather seasonal would be more realistic. He has not seen any buses parked in the spaces during the post October months. Mr. Ingemi also suggested better overall parking policy along all of Gedney was needed, and was supportive of strategies that would help solve the problem including enforcement, timings, or meters.

Kate Fox, Executive Director of Destination Salem, 81 Washington Street, thanked the Commission for the opportunity to speak. Ms. Fox said that she would be supportive of seasonal bus parking with the season starting in April and continuing through the end of October. School field trips typically begin in April. Ms. Fox also stated that the bus parking changes were the result of considerable study and discussion, and that they were approved by the City Council with two passages. Ms. Fox highlighted the importance of the motor coach industry to the City of Salem, and that bus parking locations need to be located in places where drivers can access food and other services, which Holyoke Square provides. Ms. Fox added that the Holyoke Square bus spaces were not marketed to the industry until October 2016, but have been promoted extensively for the upcoming 2017 season. She was confident they would be used. Ms. Fox also said she would be happy to look for other areas in the future to better bus parking.

Dr. Joan Jabkar, 6 Phelps Street, spoke. She took issue with Mr. Legault's statements. Dr. Jabkar stated that she created a petition and gathered 4,000 signatures several years back to prevent meters from being installed on Gedney Street, which was recommended as part of the downtown parking plan. She created the current petition requesting removal of the bus parking. Ms. Jabkar stated that the petition will remain at Steve's Market until she has collected 4,000 signatures. She then read the petition aloud.

### **3. REGULAR AGENDA**

#### ***(3.a) Holyoke Square Bus Parking / Gedney Street Parking***

Traffic and Parking Director, Matt Smith, provided an overview of the bus parking on Holyoke Square and other parking issues in the Gedney Street, Riley Plaza area. Two bus parking spaces were approved by City Council for Holyoke Square in May 2016, but not striped until later September 2016. Some buses used the spaces during October, but few or none since according to local businesses. He then detailed other parking issues in the area. Several different zones exist including 15-minute parking, 30-minute parking, all-day parking, resident parking, deed restricted parking along the western side of Holyoke Square, and the previously described bus parking on the east side of Holyoke Square. Meter spaces and monthly pass parking in Riley Plaza, and meters on Norman Street are also proximate. Enforcement of parking restrictions, particularly spaces adjacent the Post Office has been an issue, but more enforcement has been added to the area in recent weeks to address these issues.

Commission Chair, Tanya Stepasiuk stated that she is sympathetic to all stakeholders, and a solution is needed.

Commissioner, Lt. Preczewski stated he has observed the area since October, and this is the first time he'd heard complaints made to the city about the bus parking. He noted that there are several issues in the area. He noted that all City Council meeting notices about the bus parking change were posted at City Hall and online. The opportunity to speak for or against the bus spots was provided. However, he felt that the spaces should likely be removed based on lack of use.

Commissioner Downing spoke about the confusing parking resulting from the many zones – 15-minute through all day. He would like to see more consistency on the street with fewer variables that best serve the area. He suggested that regularity would help – it would help enforcement, help businesses, and parkers. He didn't believe that removing the bus parking would solve the larger parking issues.

Commissioner Metsch agreed that the many parking zones was confusing and that 15- and 30-minute non-metered parking is difficult to enforce. Suggesting constant enforcement of unmetered short-term parking is labor intensive and unrealistic given resources. Meters would be more efficient. Retailers looking for turnover would benefit from meters which encourage turnover more effectively, especially if meter feeding isn't permitted. As such, if turnover is the key issue, it wouldn't be an issue, or as much of an issue with meters. He also supported seasonal bus parking.

Ms. Stepasiuk questioned if the bus spots are needed at this location (Holyoke Square)? She was sympathetic to businesses about turnover and to studying meters, but felt bus parking should be moved elsewhere.

Commissioner Papetti was leery of removing the bus parking when there hasn't been a chance to study the utilization during the tourism season. If the spaces wind up not being used much, then they should be

removed, but the Commission does not know. He also suggested that if meters were added to Gedney Street, seasonal bus parking should remain. Mr. Metsch agreed.

Lt. Preczewski suggested a reasonable compromise was needed. He suggested seasonal bus parking for October would be an option. Mr. Downing was in favor of seasonal bus parking but that the season should be extended to include more tourist intensive months.

Ms. Stepasiuk suggested removing one of the spots as another potential compromise. Mr. Metsch didn't believe the Commission had enough information. His experience as a business owner has been an increase in buses beginning in April lasting through October, but then very few in the winter months.

Ms. Stepasiuk suggested that should the bus parking remain, the Commission should revisit in a few months and not wait until the end of October. Ms. Stepasiuk also suggested the need to identify other potential bus parking locations should the spaces on Holyoke be removed.

Mr. Metsch would agree to a longer-term solution as this is a prime location for parking. If an alternative can be identified that offers the driver amenities needed, he could support. However, he again stated that it is too early and there is not enough information.

Prior to making a Commission recommendation, additional public comments were allowed:

Councilor-at-Large Sargent stated that bus parking has never been located here, and they aren't being used for this purpose. This eliminates 6 to 8 spaces that could be used for public parking. Businesses already take a hit in October, and this is another hit. Why make it more difficult for these businesses? Having two bus parking spaces in this downtown location when buses can go anywhere makes little sense. He added that Riley Plaza meters as an alternative for customer parking doesn't take into account the elderly. It is far for many. He suggested adding a handicapped space on Gedney Street.

Ms. Fox of Destination Salem asked the Commission for more time to study the area thoroughly. She added that Destination Salem only recently began to communicate with the motor coach industry about the new spaces including distributing 5,000 maps highlighting these spaces to educate the industry so that they learn where they are located in advance of the upcoming season.

Ms. Stepasiuk stated that keeping the bus parking was not sympathetic to local businesses needs. Lt. Preczewski suggested the Commission could recommend to leave as they are as a test. If it doesn't fill up with buses, the city could add other spaces elsewhere, move one away but keep one, or another strategy.

Mr. Metsch stated he was sympathetic to the businesses. Parking is important, but his belief is that the business concerns could be addressed in another way on Gedney Street to encourage turnover. He suggested looking to the 2010 parking study to see specifically what it recommended.

Mr. Papetti suggested that the Commission must balance the needs of local businesses and tourism. Tradeoffs are hard, but the Commission should gather information and test the area, while remaining open to change.

Moved by Commissioner Metsch to recommend to the City Council to continue the 2-hour parking through March 31<sup>st</sup>, returning to bus-only parking on Holyoke Square through October 31, 2017 for study, and revisiting the subject in four months (June 2017 meeting) to assess if buses are utilizing the spaces.

Mr. Papetti seconded. Approved by a vote of 3 (Mr. Metsch, Mr. Papetti, Mr. Downing) to 2 (Ms. Stepasiuk, Lt. Preczewski).

A discussion followed about parking on Gedney Street.

Mr. Downing stated that bus parking is one part of the equation in the area. Changes on Gedney could help alleviate many issues. Mr. Downing specifically pointed out the 9 unrestricted spaces on the upper block that allow for all-day, free parking. Options to alleviate problems could include time-limited parking, time-limited meters, or other solutions to provide more parking to area businesses.

Mr. Metsch reiterated the need to learn more about what the parking study stated. Mr. Smith said he would research further, but that the area was recommended for 4-hour parking.

Ms. Stepasiuk stated that the consensus appears to suggest more information is needed to identify a solution for the area.

Mr. Metsch recalled that years ago, the implementation of the 4-hour parking was underway, but that a swift change based on opposition of the meters resulted in a return to the original parking. No changes or even a compromise based on the study findings and recommendations occurred in the area. His understanding was that much went into the parking plan and recommendations, but no time was given to see if it would work. The immediate need for the Commission is to understand what was recommended and why.

Ms. Stepasiuk asked who performed the study. Mr. Smith confirmed it was completed by consultant Nelson Nygaard. Mr. Smith agreed to circulate the study to the Commission.

***(3.b) Flashing Beacon and Design: Lafayette and Salem Bike Path***

Mr. Smith presented a short overview of the project, highlighting the initial discussion from the January 19<sup>th</sup> Traffic and Parking Commission meeting (See meeting notes from January 17, 2017 for more information). Mr. Smith asked for additional comments from the Commission.

Mr. Papetti suggested that narrowing the street at the pedestrian / bicycle crossing would be preferable either through a bump out if funds are available, or through striping or other solutions but that the project should move forward.

Mr. Smith noted that the pedestrian crossing, which was at an angle in the original design drawings would be perpendicular in the final design.

Moved by Mr. Papetti to recommend to City Engineer for the project to move forward with the pedestrian/bike crossing to be perpendicular to the average of 200 ft of Lafayette Street roadway, that the existing ramp strip be evaluated for ADA compliance, for the City Engineer to look at feasibility for beacon to move closer to roadway should bump out be possible, and to include high visibility striping that incorporates Massachusetts separated bike lane planning and design recommendations for bicycle crossings. Mr. Metsch seconded. Approved by a vote of 4 in favor and 0 opposed.

**(3.c) Traffic and Parking Regulations Discussion**

Ms. Stepasiuk stated that the goal is to have a proposal ready to go to the City Council in late February or March.

Mr. Smith provided the commissioners with a summary of the regulations matrix. He explained that each commissioner provided him with their individual recommendations for sections of the existing Traffic Ordinances that they wished to propose to City Council to move into Regulations. He informed the Commission that he had summarized the recommendations into the one document, and that sections of the existing traffic ordinances where three or more commissioners recommended moving the section into to regulations would be included in the Regulations Proposal to Council.

The Commissioners discussed, reviewed the matrix summary, and instructed Mr. Smith to consolidate the recommendations into a proposal to be discussed at the March 2, 2017 Traffic and Parking Commission meeting.

#### **4. NEW BUSINESS**

Lt. Preczewski stated that Ward 1 Councillor McCarthy requested a stop sign at the intersection of Winter Island Road and Fort Avenue.

Moved by Lt. Preczewski to add a stop sign at Winter Island Road and Fort Avenue. Seconded by Mr. Downing. Approved by a vote of 5 to 0.

#### **5. NEXT MEETING**

Mr. Smith stated that the next meeting will be held on Thursday, March 2<sup>nd</sup>. Topics to be discussed will include a summary of data gathered by Mr. Smith on Gedney Street and Holyoke Square; and the Traffic and Parking Regulations proposal. Other topics to be determined.

Mr. Papetti noted that he is unable to attend the meeting.

#### **6. ADDITIONAL PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Councillor Sargent stated that a stop sign was requested at Holyoke Square and Gedney Street. Mr. Smith explained that there is no stop sign on Holyoke Square for cars approaching Gedney Street. Mr. Smith also spoke with a business owner on Gedney Street about the issue as one of their employees was struck by a car in the intersection. Mr. Smith observed traffic patterns and confirmed some cars pull directly out onto Gedney Street without stopping.

Lt. Preczewski said the Commission needs to come up with a form similar to the one the Police currently uses for requests to the Commission for their recommendation. Mr. Smith agreed to create the form. Lt. Preczewski suggested that in the interim, the Commission could recommend or not recommend the stop sign, and Lt. Preczewski would fill out the form based on the Commission's recommendation.

Mr. Metsch felt that given the conditions in the area, a stop sign at the intersection was a reasonable request.

Moved by Mr. Metsch to recommend a stop sign at Holyoke Square and Gedney Street. Mr. Downing seconded. Approved to recommend by a vote of 5 in favor and 0 opposed.

#### **7. ADJOURNMENT**

Ms. Stepasiuk made a motion to adjourn at 8:54pm. Mr. Downing seconded. Approved by a vote of 5 in favor, 0 opposed.