

**City of Salem
Traffic and Parking Commission
DRAFT Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 19, 2017**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held on Thursday, January 19, 2017 at 7:00pm at 120 Washington Street, Salem, MA. Present were Commissioners Tanya Stepasiuk, Jamie Metsch, Eric Papetti, and Lt. Robert Preczewski. Commissioner Nicholas Downing, was absent. Also present were Ward 7 Councilor Steve Dibble, Councilor-at-large, Arthur Sargent, and Director of Traffic and Parking, Matt Smith.

1. WELCOME

Ms. Stepasiuk called the meeting to order at 7:01pm.

2. REGULAR AGENDA

(2.a) Loring / Canal / Jefferson Intersection

Councilor Dibble discussed the current design for the intersection of Loring, Canal and Jefferson included as part of the Canal Street. Construction is roughly one year away. Overall Councillor Dibble stated that he is happy with the plans, but he wants a second set of eyes – in this case, the Traffic and Parking Commission. The councilor presented a map and a list of proposed improvements to the current design developed through outreach with the community from one year prior. Recommendations were presented to the Mayor and City Engineer who supported them, however the engineering consultant did not incorporate. Key changes to reconsider include adjusting the curb width between the two sets of lights in the southbound lane, widening the curb for bicycle and snow at the intersection with Jefferson, maintaining right turn green arrow at most times from Canal to Loring, and breaking the intersection into two pedestrian zones. All are recommended to improve overall traffic flow. Councillor Dibble also suggested that the TPC take a look at the full set of plans to ensure design decisions make sense.

Commissioner Metsch stated that he would support dimensional changes to address bicycle access and safety concerns. Mr. Papetti, who also sits on the Bicycle Advisory Committee, supports these efforts as well, and was surprised to see none of the recommendations had moved forward from previous reviews. He also suggested looking to various resources for intersection design guidance such as NACTO, ITE, and others. Councillor Sargent also brought up that “Smart Lights” are not always effective, in that when pedestrian crossing is triggered, the whole light sequence starts from the beginning.

Moved by Commissioner Stepasiuk to recommend that Councillor Dibble and Director of Traffic and Parking, Matt Smith meet with City Engineer, David Knowlton to further discuss the intersection changes suggested. Seconded by Commissioner Metsch. Approved by a vote of 4 in favor and 0 opposed.

(2.b) Holyoke Square Bus Spaces and Gedney Street Parking

Councillor Sargent explained that bus parking space added to Holyoke Square just before October 2016 and which restrict all other vehicles from between 8am and 6pm have not been used by buses since the

end of October. These bus spaces eliminated 2-hr parking from the area that many businesses and local residents relied on. In addition, lack of enforcement along Gedney Street – cars park all day in 30-minute spots - further impacts parking for local businesses and residents.

Background about the spaces was provided. The Councillor noted that Destination Salem had done a study with good intentions which recommended the spaces along Holyoke Square to replace bus parking spaces formerly by Immaculate Conception Church on Hawthorne Boulevard.

Mr. Metsch stated that bus tours and parking has expanded in Salem as tourism has increased beyond the fall peak season.

Councillor Dibble added that downtown, where parking is at a premium, may not be the best location for long term bus parking. Alternative locations should be studied.

Ms. Stepasiuk highlighted that we don't have any data yet about the bus parking utilization at the location. She asked if the Councillor was looking for a recommendation of some sort.

Councillor Sargent stated that he was looking for a recommendation from the Traffic and Parking Commission as to whether the bus parking should be removed.

Lt. Preczewski provided an overview of the bus parking changes - he wrote the bus parking ordinance for Holyoke Square. Bus parking spaces were moved from Derby Street near Liberty Street and from Hawthorne Boulevard in part for safety concerns during busiest times of year. The ordinance Lt. Preczewski wrote for Holyoke Square was for two spaces – two smaller buses and one larger tour bus – on one half of Gedney Street. The portion of the street closer to Norman Street was to remain 2-hour parking. The ordinance passed. However, when the spaces were painted, the whole street was designated for bus parking – two long tour spaces. It was decided to keep spaces as painted.

Mr. Smith added that since this time, maps have been printed with the spaces for the tour bus industry and that Destination Salem recently attended a major tour bus conference where they promoted the new bus parking location along Holyoke Square for the upcoming season. According to Destination Salem, this was the first time the new spaces were promoted to the industry prior to the full season. They were on a map previously, but the industry often takes a season or two to adapt.

Lt. Preczewski stated that without a request, it wasn't clear what was being asked of the Commission to do, and that the next step would be for Councillor Sargent to file an order requesting a desired outcome. At that time, the Traffic and Parking Commission would have a more formal discussion of the issues. Councillor Sargent stated he ultimately feels the spaces should return as they were, and that bus parking should be removed.

Commissioner Metsch suggested that more study was needed given that the spaces are in place, marketing materials are out to the industry, and usage should be measured during the higher tourism season. However, he suggested a temporary solution could be to allow for 2-hour off-season parking (now through end of March) and then return to bus only during the tourism season for study of utilization. Lt. Preczewski suggested another TPC meeting with stakeholders would help.

Moved by Commissioner Metsch to recommend continuing Holyoke Square bus parking discussion to February 2 meeting and to invite businesses, Destination Salem and the Ward Councillor. Seconded by Commissioner Papetti. Approved by a vote of 4 in favor and 0 opposed.

(2.c) Flashing Beacon and Design: Lafayette and Salem Bike Path

Councillor Dibble requested that the Traffic and Parking Commission review the current design for the rectangular rapid flashing beacon (RRFB) to be installed on Lafayette Street at the Salem Bike Path crossing near the Marblehead line. Question for the Commission to consider: Does the design make sense and is it effective for bicyclists?

Based on current design from the City’s engineering consultant – to be updated by engineer according to City Engineer – the crosswalk is at a slight angle. Mr. Papetti stated that the crosswalk should be perpendicular to minimize the crossing distance to the greatest extent possible. Lt. Preczewski agreed.

Councillor Dibble requested that intersections throughout the city where RRFBs are installed to have a uniform design. For example, the RRFB on Loring Avenue (bike path crossing) includes bump outs to narrow the roadway and improve safety. Wherever budget allows, these should be used elsewhere.

Moved by Commissioner Papetti to recommend reviewing updated design when made available and provide a written recommendation at the February 2, 2017 regular monthly meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Stepasiuk. Approved by a vote of 4 in favor and 0 opposed.

(2.d) Old Salem Jail Parking Lot Rates

Mr. Smith explained that Mayor Driscoll entered an order at the January 12, 2016 City Council meeting to establish 4-hour parking at \$1/hour at the Salem Jail parking lot. The City Council referred the issue to committee and requested input by the Traffic and Parking Commission.

Mr. Smith confirmed that the requested time allotment and/or rate are consistent with other nearby off-street surface lots such as Church Street East and West, and the Salem Green. The time restriction and fee would prevent all-day parking, such as those riding the commuter rail.

Moved by Commissioner Metsch to recommend 4-hour parking time limit at \$1 per hour at the Old Salem Jail parking lot. Approved by a vote of 4 in favor and 0 opposed.

(2.e) Zagster Bike Proposal

Jeff Elie, Energy and Sustainability Manager in the City of Salem’s Department of Planning and Community Development, provided an overview of the Zagster Bike Share proposal currently before the City Council, and for which a recommendation from the Traffic and Parking Commission was requested.

The Salem Bicycle Advisory Committee developed an RFP in 2016 seeking a bike share operator for the City of Salem. The purposed of a bike share is to promote bicycling as an alternative to the car, offer a “last mile” option for commuters (e.g. commuter rail riders who reside or work beyond a reasonable walk), transportation for visitors such as ferry riders and those arriving by train (or car), etc. Cambridge-based, Zagster and one other company responded, and Zagster was selected based on the RFP scoring criteria.

Based on the Zagster proposal, which would cost an estimated \$35,000 for the first year, the ride share would begin with 3 stations – one at the MBTA commuter rail station, one at Blaney Street Wharf (Salem Ferry) and one in Downtown Salem. Each station would have 6 bicycles. Users would pay a fee – options include daily, weekly monthly, etc. – to be determined. All revenue would come directly to the City, not Zagster.

The system is designed to grow over time, and discussions are already underway with large employers including Salem State and North Shore Medical Center. Long term, the hope is for the system to grow within Salem, but also regionally to other communities such as Beverly and Peabody, etc., and to one day offer a “North Shore Membership.”

Mr. Metsch asked if there was a revenue capture goal of the contract expense, and how would it be known if it was an effective system? Mr. Elie explained revenue capture would depend on how aggressive the fee structure was, but that 20% appeared reasonable in the first year. Regarding an effective system, the Zagster system will provide significant data to the city – ridership, station use, etc. This will assist both in future expansion, but also in tweaking station locations to if necessary to improve connectivity and ridership, which in turn would improve revenue capture.

Mr. Papetti, also a member of the Salem Bicycle Advisory Committed, stated that far more similar programs throughout the country have succeeded than not, and that bike share systems are still a new industry and models are evolving. Boston’s Hubway for example involved a huge capital expense - the cities owned the hardware and bikes- but contracted out operations; whereas Citibike in New York City is privately owned and operated, but uses public property for stations. He sees the model converging, more like Zagster, where the company owns and maintains a system for a fee, but the City receives the revenue. It’s a good, flexible model.

Mr. Elie said he is working with the City Solicitor and others to revise contract language to ensure that maintenance and other issues are addressed appropriately.

Commissioner Metsch made a motion to recommend that the City Council support the bid from Zagster for the city bike Share. Mr. Papetti seconded. Approved by a vote of 4 in favor and 0 opposed.

3. TRAFFIC AND PARKING REGULATIONS DISCUSSION

Commissioner Stepasiuk explained that the Traffic and Parking Commission is currently only an advisory commission, but that once the City Council adopts a set of regulations, they will determine the Commission’s authority. This is the first step in the process, discussing the process.

Mr. Smith walked the commissioners through the options and process for creating a proposal to put before the City Council. The City Council must adopt any regulations before the Commission has any regulatory authority. The first step is for the Commission to go through the existing traffic ordinance and identify sections that they would propose to be moved to regulations. A matrix provided by Mr. Smith would be used for this task. Once identified, a proposal would be written and reviewed with the City Solicitor, and then provided to the City Council for review. The regulations will likely go to Committee where they will be discussed further with the Commission. Once out of committee, the Council will vote on the proposal.

Three options were discussed:

- 1) propose to move the entire Traffic (and parking) Ordinances into regulations.;
- 2) propose an incremental approach, where only a few sections of the Traffic Ordinances – handicapped parking was an example – would be moved to regulations initially, and then make amendments over time to move additional sections to the regulations (per Council’s approval);

- 3) develop a more detailed, but specific, proposal to move sections of the Traffic and Parking ordinances.

Consensus was to go with option 3, developing a detailed proposal which would provide a reasonable amount of authority to the Commission to alleviate the work of the City Council, while allowing for more complex issues to remain with City Council. In such cases, the Commission would serve in an advisory capacity. This approach would result in an iterative process between the City Council and Traffic and Parking Commission to attain a realistic balance of regulatory authority between the two.

Mr. Smith suggested that each of the commissioners go through the matrix provided and suggest which sections of the ordinance each member felt should go to regulations. Mr. Smith would compile all comments from the commissioners prior to the next meeting. Sections where a majority of commissioners were in agreement would not need to be discussed and would remain or move to regulations as voted. Discussion would revolve around those sections where there are differing opinions.

A discussion of the role of the Commission followed. Important to the members, in addition to the adoption of regulations, was the need to build into traffic and parking related projects, a role for the Commission to provide comments and guidance. This could be through the RFP process, design phase, both, or other ways. Another suggestion was for the Commission to maintain a list of all projects under development within the City, and for Mr. Smith to provide updates based on his interactions with City departments. Ms. Stepasiuk suggested there could be a 3-pronged approach to how the Commission operates.

- 1) Basic decisions (e.g. regulatory authority)
- 2) Specific project recommendations (e.g. transportation project design)
- 3) Policy considerations (e.g. complete streets, or comprehensive studies)

4. NEXT MEETING

Mr. Smith explained that the next meeting of the Traffic and Parking Commission will take place on Thursday, February 2 at 6:30pm, which is the regular monthly meeting time – the first Thursday of every month.

As discussed during the meeting, among the topics will be a larger discussion around tour bus parking along Holyoke Square and the regulations.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTS

Commissioner Metsch made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from December 15, 2016. Ms. Stepasiuk seconded. Approved by a vote of 4 in favor, 0 opposed.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

Barry Neely of 15 Lynde Street brought to the Commission's attention several issues with the Visitor Parking Pass program. Mr. Neely has been collecting data on the passes through routine observation of vehicles using the passes and sees considerable abuse of the program throughout the city in residential zones. His main concern involves residents who are selling visitor passes to non-residents – either those who work in town or those who commute using the train station. He stated that it is a significant problem and that he has considerable data he is happy to provide the Commission. He noted that according to the ordinance, passes are to be used by the same vehicle for no more than 14 days, but that many are using

them for weeks if not months. Lt. Preczewski stated that each residence in resident zones is allowed two visitor passes. The cost is \$1 per pass. Passes are good for two years and can't be replaced if lost or stolen, etc. Enforcing the passes is difficult, but that they have done so, and when violations have been proven, passes have been revoked, but that it is very hard to enforce. Mr. Neely would like the Commission to study the visitor pass program more.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Stepasiuk made a motion to adjourn. Mr. Papetti seconded. Approved by a vote of 4 in favor, 0 opposed.