

**City of Salem
Traffic and Parking Commission
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 18, 2018**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held on Thursday, January 18, 2018 at 6:30pm at 120 Washington Street, Salem, MA. Present were Commission Chair Tanya Stepasiuk, Commissioner Lt. Robert Preczewski, and Commissioner Robin Seidel. Commission Vice-Chair Eric Papetti and Commissioner Jamie Metsch were absent. Traffic and Parking Director Matt Smith and Assistant Director Nicholas Downing were also present.

CALL OF MEETING

The meeting was called to order at 6:32pm.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Joyce Kenney of 285 Lafayette Street raised a parking violation issue with the Commission that she has brought to the Commission before. Ms. Kenney indicates she called the Police Department about this problem today but no one was sent. Lt. Preczewski indicated he would follow up with this department on why no one was sent.

TRAFFIC AND PARKING DIRECTOR MONTHLY UPDATE

Director Smith gave the Monthly Director Update.

The City has begun planning for the 2018 Zagster rollout. The first year was very successful with 1150 members (hourly, annual, and Salem State members) taking over 2500 rides. Despite only being available for 2 of the 6 months, the SSU memberships accounted for 26% of the total rides. Zagster estimates these numbers took about 750 single occupancy vehicle trips off the roads. For 2018, we are hopeful to have closer to 80 or 100 bikes available. The company is in the midst of changing its business model to a more dockless system called Pace. We are working with them to determine how that would work in Salem. Other municipalities have expressed interest as well.

The Route 107 project has moved through the project review committee and has been determined to be eligible for federal aid bridge funding. This moves the project from concept to design, and estimates the total cost at \$38 million. As the project continues to move forward, there will be multiple points for the Commission to provide feedback and recommendations.

Director Smith provided an end of year update for the Commission. In 2017, the Commission made over 40 ordinance or order recommendations, with handicap

parking requests being the most common. The City Council moved all but 2 of these recommendations forward, making a stronger case for the Commission to be given some regulatory authority.

Director Smith is still working on data from the last 2 months for utilization and enforcement, but has some numbers to share. Over 1400 parking citations were issued in December, mostly Downtown. Over 200 resident parking citations were issued, mostly in the evening by the part-time staff assigned to that specific task. Chair Stepasiuk asked if this seemed like a typical month. Director Smith answered resident parking was busier than normal, but overall it was a little slower than November. He hopes to have year-to-year comparisons soon.

NEW / OLD BUSINESS

- Skerry Street Tow Zone

The Commission received a Request for a Traffic Ordinance Recommendation from Ward 2 Councilor Christine Madore, requesting the implementation of a No Parking Tow Zone on Skerry Street, Mondays through Fridays from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. as a pilot to last up to 60 days. Department staff met with Councilor Madore at the site to discuss the issue. When parents arrive in the afternoon to pick up their children from the Carlton School, the queue spills out of the parking lot and onto Skerry Street. The first block of Skerry Street off of Bridge Street allows parking on both sides, so when the queue reaches this block, the roadway becomes blocked, preventing the safe passage of vehicles and access from Bridge Street. The queue does dissolve very quickly once school is out, so a limited time window is all that is needed. Lt. Preczewski supports this pilot tow zone as the least disruptive way to address the issue. Chair Stepasiuk asked if there would be increased enforcement, and Lt. Preczewski answered yes, there would, but initially enforcement would be a warning, with tickets and towing to come only once residents in the area are used to the change.

On a motion duly made by Lt. Preczewski and Seconded by Commissioner Seidel, the Commission voted unanimously to recommend the implementation of a No Parking Tow Zone on the Northerly Side of Skerry Street from Bridge Street to the Carlton School, Mondays through Fridays from 2:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. for a trial period to last up to sixty (60) days.

- Downtown Valet Parking Pilot

Assistant Director Downing spoke to the Commission about a proposed Downtown Valet Parking Pilot program. Some downtown businesses as well as the Chamber of Commerce and Salem Main Streets have had conversations with the Department about a downtown valet parking program. Based on conversations the businesses

have had with potential vendors, spaces on Washington Street would work best for the pick-up and drop-off area, with Riley Plaza being well situated for storing the cars. Director Smith indicated that a valet program has been attempted previously, but given the turnover and new openings of restaurants and other businesses in downtown, downtown is substantially different than it was 7 or 8 years ago when the last pilot was attempted and ultimately scrapped.

One of the major discussion points has been how to pay for the program. Per the vendor's proposal, the service would cost approximately \$1000 per weekend to run, and would cost \$10 per car to use, requiring 100 cars per weekend to cover costs. The businesses are concerned about having to cover the gap in cost if not enough patrons utilize the service. There was an inquiry as to whether the City had funds available to act as stop-gap funding as the pilot got off the ground in the first few weeks.

The parking spaces in question for the pick-up and drop-off are metered spaces, with meter enforcement in effect until 6:00 p.m. Staff would recommend that for the pilot, no fee be charged for the use of these spaces, as the loss in revenue would be negligible. The spaces in Riley Plaza are currently unregulated spaces, and are the least utilized spaces in that lot. That location would also be easy to sign as being for valet only while leaving access to the rest of the lot intact.

Chair Setpasiuk asked a question to clarify if a private company would be running the pilot but the City would provide the spaces? Assistant Director Downing answered yes, the City would allow the service to use the spaces, but the valet would be run by a private company.

Chair Stepasiuk asked how long would the pilot run for? Director Smith answered that it should be given enough time to truly gauge its success or failure, so getting through the October season would be helpful. However, there would be no commitment in terms of the contract with the valet service – that service could be cancelled at any time if the pilot proved to not be workable.

Commissioner Seidel asked why user would pay rather than restaurants, as it has been her personal experience that is how valet services operate elsewhere? Director Smith answered that restaurants or other businesses could choose to comp the valet fee for customers if they wanted to, but a business would not be required to. The valet service would be open to customers for any business or restaurant in the area.

Commissioner Seidel asked about October, with a concern that drivers would use valet to access cheaper parking. Director Smith answered that the fee would likely increase in October to match other parking rates in downtown, and would still only be for limited hours on certain nights. Additionally, compensation for use of city spaces in October should be discussed prior to signing any agreement.

Chair Stepasiuk asked about the spaces for pick-up and drop-off – would it be six (6) total spaces? Assistant Director Downing answered the map was not drawn to exact scale. The vendor has indicated needing between four (4) and six (6) spaces for the pick-up and drop-off.

Chair Stepasiuk asked about any potential requirement to put this proposal out to bid. Director Smith answered that as the solicitation and operation of the valet would not be undertaken by the City, there would not be a requirement to solicit bids.

Chair Stepasiuk asked about the perceived benefit to the public, given the City potentially giving up public, on-street spaces as a benefit to private businesses. Director Smith answered that by using on-street spaces for a valet and using the spaces indicated in Riley Plaza for storage, the City would in effect be increasing on-street parking supply. Drivers who want to use the valet would go right there, rather than circling for parking, and drivers who did not want to use it would then have less competition to find other available parking. With the low utilization of the spaces in Riley Plaza, and they are often entirely empty, these 4 to 6 on-street spaces would serve as several dozen additional on street spaces. The businesses involved have told staff repeatedly there is a perception among patrons of a lack of parking or a lack of easily accessible parking in downtown, so this pilot would act as a way to combat that narrative.

Commissioner Seidel asked about when the pilot would go into effect. Director Smith answered that any pilot would need City Council action (to authorize use of the parking spaces), but as it would be a pilot, it would be a Council order and one passage, so it could be up and running as early as mid-February, or more likely March. Timing it to begin during a festival (Salem So Sweet, or Salem Film Fest) would help with overall promotion of the service. But the Commission could recommend a start and end date, and if the Council passed the order, it could begin anytime in a given window.

Lt. Preczewski indicated his personal support for a valet service, and says the City needs it with the new activity in downtown. Lt. Preczewski added, and the Commission agreed, that he would not necessarily support additional City resources being spent to cover the costs of a pilot, given that the spaces needed for the pilot would be provided by the city free of charge already. The Commission also generally agreed that the action they take should provide flexibility to allow the pilot to expand to Thursday nights if successful, and have the service end at 1:00 a.m. to allow the last patrons of the evening to use it.

On a motion duly made by Chair Stepasiuk and seconded by Commissioner Seidel, it was voted unanimously to authorize up to four (4) spaces on Washington Street to be used on conjunction with the two (2) southernmost rows of parking in Riley Plaza for a valet parking pilot to last up to January 1, 2019 on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights from 5:00 p.m. to 1:00 a.m.

On a motion duly made by Chair Stepasiuk and seconded by Lt. Preczewski, it was voted unanimously to recommend that any such valet parking pilot should be paid for participating businesses, business organizations, and user fees.

- Traffic and Parking Commission Regulations

The Commission continued to discuss the resubmission of its proposed regulations to the City Council. The Council did not take action on the proposal submitted in 2017, so submitting a new proposal ASAP is important to give the Council ample time to consider it this year.

Lt. Preczewski feels that the Council is unlikely to grant the Commission the entirety of the regulatory authority in what was submitted last year, and he wants to make sure that there remains some Council oversight even if the Commission were granted all the authority it requested.

Chair Stepasiuk feels the Council passed the ordinance to create the Commission, so they should be ready to give it some of the authority that ordinance outlined. The goal should be to speed up the process, because right now, it has slowed down. Whatever we submit will likely change in the committee process, and that is fine.

Director Smith will update the current proposal with all of the changes made to it in the last year by the Commission and the Council to be discussed at the next meeting.

- 2018 Priorities

Staff and the Commission discussed priorities for the upcoming year. Director Smith indicated that for the Department the priorities are (1) getting the proposed regulations submitted to and passed by the Council; (2) resident and visitor parking permit changes; (3) formalizing and simplifying the Neighborhood Traffic Calming program; (4) city-wide circulation study; (5) and an updated downtown parking strategy. The city-wide circulation plan would be done inclusive of or in conjunction with the ADA Transition Plan update.

Chair Stepasiuk expressed her support for the priorities and wants to make sure the ADA update doesn't fall off the list if the city doesn't get the grant it applied for. Project track is also important as well, and the Commission should continue to get regular updates. The City should also keep parking enforcement as a priority.

Lt. Preczewski expressed his support for the Neighborhood Traffic Calming program being ramped up, especially if overall parking revenue is up. This is a good way for residents to be involved and the changes can have a big impact on a neighborhood.

Commissioner Seidel asked staff to prioritize bicycle and pedestrian circulation and infrastructure within the city-wide circulation plan, and hopes Zagster continues to grow, especially with other interested municipalities. Commissioner Seidel also expressed an interest in having the Commission meet jointly with other boards and commissions when topics overlap, especially regarding issues of climate change and resiliency.

- Museum Place Garage Maintenance, Utilization, and Revenue

The Commission agreed to move this item to the agenda for the next meeting on February 1, 2018.

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL

On a motion duly made by Lt. Preczewski and seconded by Commissioner Seidel, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes from the December 19, 2017 Traffic and Parking Commission meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Lt. Preczewski and seconded by Chair Stepasiuk, the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 8:18 pm.