**City of Salem**

**Traffic and Parking Commission**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, January 17, 2019**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held on Thursday, January 17, 2019 at 6:30pm at 98 Washington Street, Salem, MA. **Present**: Commission Vice-Chair Eric Papetti, Commissioner Jamie Metsch, Commissioner Robin Seidel, Commissioner Lt. David Tucker and Director David Kucharsky**. Absent**: Commission Chair Tanya Stepasiuk

**CALL OF MEETING**

The meeting was called to order at 6:35pm.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

*Phil Gates, 2 Gifford Court* noted he has lived in Salem 30 years, he says that suddenly his neighbors told him he cannot park outside his house. All of Carpenter Street and Bridge Street there’s no place to park anymore. He said lately there were a couple of incidences where they tore up the street to see about gas leaks on Federal Street through Front St and Bridge Street, and all the way through Carpenter Street. There was a pipe leaking on Carpenter and National Grid tore up the street.

**NEW / OLD BUSINESS**

* Traffic Ordinances Recommendations

**Holyoke Square On-Street Parking Regulations:** Director Kucharsky said he had indicated during the last meeting that as part of the host community agreement with CDX Analytics, approximately seven on-street parking spaces along the west side of Holyoke Square from Norman Street to Gedney Street will no longer be subject to an easement and will be returned to the City for public use. In anticipation of this, the Commission will consider a proposed ordinance change to restrict parking to a two-hour limit similar to what is already in place along the east side of the street. Director Kucharsky and Lt. Tucker believe, as an interim step, that the regulation on the west side should mirror what is currently on the east side. Vice Chair Papetti asked when these spaces would be returned to the City and the Director said he believed the agreement had already been signed. He said he wanted to bring it to the Commission’s attention in order to bring a recommendation to the Council and avoid have the area unregulated for a lengthy period of time.

Vice Chair Papetti noted the Commission had proposed other recommendations in this area last year and asked for the diagram that shows all the different types of parking in that particular area. The Director said he did not have this but would provide it later. The Director explained that in addition to the spaces; CDX is permitting the public to use their elevated surface lot after 5pm on weekdays and all-day Saturday & Sunday.

Vice Chair Papetti said he was in favor of recommending parking there for the short term and he wanted the Commission to think about a more long-term solution for these small parking areas. He asked for an overall budget for parking and inventory over time. Lt. Tucker said a 4-hour limit is too long especially without meters in place. Vice Chair Papetti said no action had been taken to date by the Council on the other recommended changes that were submitted months ago and brought up the possibility of resubmitting the recommendations with this latest one.

**VOTE:** Vice Chair Papetti made a motion to approve the ordinance change as presented and to be combined with the other Gedney Street recommendations. Commissioner Lt. Tucker seconded the motion. All were in favor.

**Bike Lane Parking Restrictions:** The Director explained to the Commission that prior to the opening of the ATG Marijuana Dispensary at 50 Grove Street, temporary parking was permitted along the south side of Harmony Grove where a buffered bike lane exists. He asked the Commission to discuss raising public awareness of the State Law which states: “*The operator of a motor vehicle shall not stand or park the vehicle on an on-street or lane designated by an official sign or marking for the exclusive use of bicycles, except in a case of emergency”* for consideration for an ordinance change to prohibit parking be proposed.

*Joseph Pano, 3 ½ Essex Street*, said he supports the bike lanes and prohibiting parking on said lanes. He would like to see the Massachusetts State Law upheld. He stated that there are plans to develop 300 condominium units on Grove Street which will generate a demand for more on-street parking. He also indicated that motorists are travelling faster than the 25mph speed limit.

*City Council President Beth Gerard, 49 Larchmont Road*, agreed with what Mr. Pano said about honoring the Massachusetts State Law. She said she would like to start a conversation with ATG to make them aware that this was a problem with the original plan. She asked if there are bike lanes on both sides of the street and wanted to know how far back the cars are parking since ATG opened its recreational sales. Council President Gerard said she reached out to the Chief of Police to keep the parking restrictions. She said that it is important to speak with ATG. Commissioner Lt. Tucker said he spoke with the security director of ATG initially and planned on speaking to him again about using their parking lot. He informed the Commission that Chief Butler said that there’s an opportunity to park on the west side of Grove Street, the only problem there, is the curve. He went on to say that parking would be allowed on Harmony Grove up to the cemetery but none beyond that. He said the problem with Mason Street is its’ narrow. Lt. Tucker informed the Commission that the lot is shared between ATG and the Moose Lodge and parking issues might arise if there is an event at the Moose Lodge. He said the bike lane was painted when Harmony Grove was a quiet cut through street and now due to development that is no longer the case and the bike lane now eliminates any chance of parking. He suggested that going forward there needs to be consideration for the potential impacts of removing on-street parking when bike lanes are installed.

Vice Chair Papetti asked if there was a need for an official “no parking” ordinance or was the State Law enough. Lt. Tucker said they only way to enact it would be an ordinance for a parking citation that the Police could place a ticket on a wind-shield. Currently the only way to issue a motor vehicle citation is to wait to hand it to the owner of the vehicle. He recommended an ordinance.

Council President Gerard asked Lt. Tucker to draft a recommendation and submit to the City Clerks office and she can bring it up at the Council meeting. Lt. Tucker informed the Commission that the Police still had the right to allow the Moose Lodge a temporary reprieve to park on the street. Commissioner Seidel asked about sidewalks in that area. Lt. Tucker said there are sidewalks on the south side. Council President Gerard said Legacy Park owned part of the sidewalk by the cemetery, and Legacy were talking about perhaps a community space or more parking. Lt. Tucker asked if Council President Gerard met with Legacy and she informed him that Mr. Joe Correnti, Esq. was the current contact person for them. Lt. Tucker pondered a way to work with Legacy on sharing space.

**VOTE.**

Commissioner Seidel made a motion to recommend no parking on the Harmony Grove road between the Peabody Line and Grove Street. Vice Chair seconded the motion. All were in favor.

**Downtown Valet Parking Pilot:** Director Kucharsky explained to the Commission that the Mayor and staff met with local businesses to discuss the re-submittal of an ordinance to the City Council to create a pilot program for valet parking in the downtown area. He said the City would be involved to ensure there are approx. 4 spaces held for this program with signs to notify the public of these spaces.

*Matt O’Neill, 59 Stanley Road, Swampscott (owner of Ledger Restaurant),* spoke to the Commission about the difficulty his customers are having finding parking. The restaurant has been in operation for approximately 19 months. He said he gets the sense that people avoid downtown due to a lack of parking and was aware that the idea for valet parking had surfaced 10 years ago and was not perceived as a good idea then, however, due to the growth of the City and having met with the Mayor he felt it reasonable to revisit the idea. He said other business owners feel the same, particularly with reservations with large parties. There is a .75% meal tax which goes to the City which he believes would generate more revenue than the lost revenue from the four metered parking spaces needed for the program.

Vice Chair Papetti asked if the City would be the sponsor of the program and if anyone visiting downtown could use it or was it only for the restaurant(s) that contract with the valet service. Director Kucharsky said that initially, working with the support of the Chamber of Commerce, the intent was to get several of the downtown businesses on board working to participate with the service and if for any reason they were not meeting their fees then the City would subsidize the service. Mr. O’Neill concurred that at the time, they could not get enough restaurants to subsidize the service. Director Kucharsky said the current vendor they are working with is proposing $12 per car, and their price to operate for a weekend (2 evenings) would be approx. $550. In order for them to make their money which includes insurance and management fees they would need approx. 45 to 50 cars per weekend (25 a night). There is some flexibility in cases where the service needs to be canceled, due to weather, within a 4-hour notice timeframe. He said this is a new proposal and some kinks need to be ironed out; he said the Mayor asked for the Commission’s thoughts.

Vice Chair Papetti said last year when this was proposed, there were issues with procurement and there was some advice from the City Solicitor, which he could not recall. Director Kucharsky said that given this is a pilot program, it was determined that it did not have to go out for a full procurement. If the program is deemed successful and is extended into a long-term program then a procurement process would need to take place.

Commissioner Seidel said she was generally in favor of this program. She asked when the trial period will start. Director Kucharsky said it could be February. Commissioner Seidel asked if it were better to start this in the Summer as parking is more in demand. Director Kucharsky said it’s sometimes better to try in the quiet season to see how it works out. Mr. O’Neill agreed that the winter time is a better time to do this, due to slippery sidewalks and cold weather, when people try to avoid going out, if there is valet parking it makes it much easier.

Vice Chair Papetti asked if there needed to be an ordinance to pass relating to reserving those spaces and would City Council need something else to approve this for something to happen. Director Kucharsky said yes, it would be to reserve those spaces, he said he is still looking through everything to find out what is needed. Commissioner Lt. Tucker said this would need to go through City Council and the ordinance, he didn’t think it would qualify under the emergency ruling, he asked where these spaces would be located. Mr. O’Neill said outside Ledger or near Oak and Moss store near the Adriatic and then bring the vehicles to park at Riley Plaza. Lt. Tucker asked how the valets get back. Mr. O’Neill said there would be multiple valets, depending on the number of reservations. The other option is validation and would be up to each business.

**Traffic and Parking Commission Regulations:** The Commission reviewed and discussed the proposed regulations and ordinance. Vice Chair Papetti asked Director Kucharsky if he had done any research since the last meeting. The Director said he looked though the matrix that was put together last year to get a sense of what staff and the Commission were proposing at that time in terms of what would be removed/amended in the ordinance as well as adopted regulations. Based on the discussion that took place on January 3rd which included three City council members, he believes the way to move forward is to identify specific items in the ordinance that can have some language tweaks, clarifications and then reference specific regulations as to how these ordinances get implemented.

Vice Chair Papetti said he is not opposed to doing it in sections, as long as it moves forward, he said for example the approval of handicap parking appeared to be a section of the ordinance the Commission could oversee. Director Kucharsky noted there are two types of handicap zones, zones currently established by the City Council as needed and limited time zones requested by residents primarily to provide on-street handicap parking in close proximity to their place of residence. The Police process the bulk of these through a paper form which expires after two years. Lt. Tucker indicated there are a couple of points that need to be adjusted in the current ordinance, for example the ordinance currently indicates “distinctive plates” need to be used however the Registry of Motor Vehicles issues placards to handicap individuals. Commissioner Seidel asked if this could be done on-line as opposed to all these other steps in order to streamline the process. The goal would be to ultimately have the Commission work with Police to approve them instead of it having to go before the City Council. Councilor Gerard agreed and said she would support a process which improves the assessment and approval of these requests.

Director Kucharsky said he would investigate how this could be streamlined. Vice Chair Papetti asked for a sign-up process for people that have surgery which would allow them to request a placard in advance. Lt Tucker believed if it is a temporary situation they would not qualify for a handicap space. Commissioner Seidel disagreed and said if they had a Doctor’s note, one could get a temporary sign.

Commissioner Seidel asked about the two-year renewal process and wondered if this is something the Commission could review. Lt. Tucker said the reason for the time limit is that if people pass away, then the placard needs to be returned and signage removed. Vice Chair Papetti noted a landlord has some obligation to their tenants with disabilities, before they start asking the City for help. Lt. Tucker said that may be a zoning issue and in terms of automating the process cautioned against removing the Councilor/constituent relationship. Councilor Gerard said she did not believe it a problem. Director Kucharsky said if it can be automated there is no reason it could not be set up in a way that would notify both the Ward as well as the Police. Lt. Tucker said his experience is such that the space is necessary for the older population, but a lot of these people do not use computers.

Director Kucharsky said there were other ordinances such as Article II Section 20A Experimental regulations for the purpose of trial which should be amended as well as ordinances related to bus stops and taxi locations. His hope is to develop regulations that will formalize what the Commission working with staff was intended to do when it was created. Director Kucharsky indicated that Chair Stepasiuk asked for a meeting with he and the Mayor and he requested that this topic be placed on the agenda of a future meeting in order to discuss this further.

During the discussion on Handicap spaces, Lt. Tucker indicated he had recently received a request for a space on Goodhue St which he could submit to the City Council if he were to get a recommendation from the Commission. He noted that there is currently one handicap space on this section of Goodhue and he would be adding a second one.

**VOTE**:

On a motion duly made by Lt. Tucker and seconded by Commissioner Seidel, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the submittal to Councilor Flynn designating two handicap spaces on the south side of Grove St near the intersection with Beaver St.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

Director Kucharsky informed the Commission that the City is looking to have the old Superior Court buildings redeveloped and the idea is to include the Crescent Lot in the package as it goes out to bid through the Salem Redevelopment Authority (SRA). He said this would involve the City Council declaring it surplus property. He indicated that the Mayor asked him to notify the Traffic and Parking Commission. The Council President said that part of this is including the lot in the HDIP zone, and some outreach occurred to gather public input. Vice Chair Papetti said he would encourage the City to talk to the MBTA to discuss air rights over the bus turn around the City lot in an effort to do a joint development. Director Kucharsky said that during the development of the garage the City approached the State to ensure that the City have the option of future development. Commissioner Seidel asked if the garage at the MBTA is able to absorb the cars that are currently parking at the Crescent lot. The Director provided data that shows there is additional capacity. Planning Department conducted some research and determined that having the Crescent Lot as part of the deal would attract more bids from developers. Vice Chair said the Board is in support of the Crescent Lot being included in the sales package.

**MEEETING MINUTES APPROVAL**

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Seidel and seconded by Lt. Tucker, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes from the December 6th, 2018 Traffic and Parking Commission meeting.

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Seidel and seconded by Vice Chair Papetti, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes from the January 3rd, 2019 Traffic and Parking Commission meeting.

**ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Seidel and seconded by Vice Chair Papetti, the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 8:47PM.