**City of Salem**

**Traffic and Parking Commission**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, February 7, 2019**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held on Thursday, February 7, 2019 at 6:30pm at 98 Washington Street, Salem, MA. Present were Commission Chair Tanya Stepasiuk, Commission Vice-Chair Eric Papetti, Commissioner Robin Seidel, and Commissioner Lieutenant David Tucker. Director David Kucharsky was also present.

Recorder: Sarah Cahill

**CALL OF MEETING**

The meeting was called to order at 6:34pm. Director Kucharsky noted audio of the meeting was being recorded to assist with notes.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Joan Gilman, 9 First Street, Cloister Condominiums, said she was representing herself and the condo association.

Linda Stark, Essex Street condominiums stated that she was interested in the upcoming public meeting pertaining to 65 Washington Street.

**TRAFFIC AND PARKING DIRECTOR UPDATE**

* Local Transportation Improvement Program (LTIP)

Director Kucharsky gave his update which included an overview of the projects listed on the LTIP. As previously mentioned during the January 3rd meeting, the City was awarded a grant to update the existing ADA Transition Plan which will allow us to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the various City owned buildings, parking garages and lots as well as city streets, parks and open spaces. A Request for Proposals (RFP) from qualified consultants will be released next week. The assessment will identify areas for improvement and gaps in the infrastructure. Having an updated plan will allow the city to apply for future grants to address any identified issues. Status:

Chair Stepasiuk asked if Nick Downing is still the project manager overseeing this or is Director Kucharsky taking this over as well as other projects. Director Kucharsky explained that Mr. Downing will be returning in June as Assistant Director of Traffic and Circulation and in the meantime, he would be spearheading these projects. Vice Chair Papetti asked if the transition plan incorporates all city projects or just public rights of way and transportation, he also asked if there is a comprehensive budget to complete all the work. Director Kucharsky explained that it incorporates all City owned facilities as well as public rights of way, including open space, and the intent is to develop a comprehensive document that identifies what the city has done to date and where there is room for improvement. On the budget, the Director informed the Commission that the State had awarded the City a $75,000 grant and that the City is identifying additional funds if needed. The RFP is worded such that, if the City has additional needs, it may negotiate with the selected contractor(s). Director Kucharsky is working with the City’s Purchasing Department to move this forward.

Director Kucharsky noted that the Planning department is finalizing a contract with *Toole Design Group* *(a consulting firm in Boston)* to further develop 6 infrastructure recommendations that were identified in the recently completed Bicycle Master Plan. City is also in the process of confirming the start date of the planned Downtown Bike Upgrades which MassDOT is overseeing as part of their Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP).

Director Kucharsky explained that MassDOT is also the proponent on the Bridge Street Reconstruction project from Flint St to Washington St and a request has been made by staff for more information on the status of this work. Vice Chair Papetti asked why the City had to provide City funds for any segment given its MassDOT’s jurisdiction. Director Kucharsky explained that he was not certain but that there was some agreement when Washington and Bridge Street were reconstructed a number of years ago and this may be why there is some commitment from the State to do this portion of the road.

Director Kucharsky also informed the Commission that there will be two public meetings ***February 11th from 6.00 -7.00pm on the Essex Street Reconstruction project*, and *7.00-8.00pm on the 65 Washington Street project*.**

Vice Chair Papetti mentioned that the Essex Street project has been underway for a number of years and a parking study was never really conducted as part of this effort. He feels that all these decisions have been made on what to do and not do based on on-street parking and whether it be wider sidewalks, better bicycle lanes, etc. He said data needs to be collected to weigh it against the overall parking strategy and design. From looking at the plans, he felt that it’s a basic tear up of the street and then a reconstruction without any changes made except slightly wider sidewalks, he went on to say that it’s a missed opportunity to think bigger about what we want to do downtown. He felt that over the years there have been many closed meetings where only the abutters are aware of the plans and he pointed out that those abutters do not own that street that it is for the entire community just like Salem Common; he felt he needed to push back on the process that has led to this and that it should involve the entire community. Commissioner Seidel agreed, she said that the residents may or may not know all that could be done to create a great space and given residents from all over Salem pass through that area on a daily basis, there should be input from the entire community.

Director Kucharsky mentioned that at one point there was a suggestion to remove all parking on the south side. Chair Stepasiuk said that in the past this has been a problem for the Commission, as projects develop without their input and they were unable to have an opportunity to contribute any ideas. She said that she will try to get to the public meeting but it would be better if the Commission knew beforehand of the plans, she asked Director Kucharsky to communicate this to other senior staff, which Director Kucharsky agreed to do so.

Director Kucharsky informed the Commission that a notice to proceed to repair the Museum Place Garage Elevators had been filed and staff had met this week with the contractors to begin the inspection of the site, the equipment has been ordered which according to the Building Department may take several weeks to arrive. The intent is to begin work in the Spring soon as the equipment arrives, involving the repair of one elevator at a time. Commissioner Seidel asked would there be access to the elevators from the mall and Director Kucharsky said would look into that.

Director Kucharsky informed the Commission that MassDOT began work on the North Street Bridge this week with shoulder closings but still maintaining two-way traffic. He said they are still waiting for a narrative on the bigger scope of work but believe some of the maintenance work is focusing on repairing gaps in the railing. Vice Chair Papetti asked Director Kucharsky to reach out to Mass DOT and ask them not to use the pedestrian walkway as a parking lot, he said he noticed this as it is his daily commute to the train. Director Kucharsky agreed to do so.

Director Kucharsky updated the Commission on the South Harbor Garage study, he said the RFQ is being developed and he’s working with the Building Department on this. A member of the public, David Friedberg, asked if this was for rehabilitation or additional parking. Director Kucharsky responded that it was an assessment of stairwells and other features.

Director Kucharsky also gave an update on the Szetela Lane multiuse path extension project. The Planning Department recently applied for a Mass Trails construction grant. He said they have funding for a full design so if they get this we can move forward with the construction. Vice Chair Papetti asked if there was an estimated budget for construction. Director Kucharsky responded that it was about $500,000 and the grant we requested was for $300,000. Vice Chair Papetti also stated that it was important the trail crossings approach the local streets perpendicularly to ensure cyclists and motorists see each other clearly especially near the schools.

* 65 Washington St (Old District Court House)

Director Kucharsky presented a power point of the plans for the Old Court House at 65 Washington Street. The Director, Lieutenant Tucker and other staff from Police, Fire and Building Departments met with the contractor to discuss the demolition/construction phasing of the building. He said that there is no start date yet most likely they will have more details at the February 11th meeting. He went through the plans; a construction zone will be established on Federal Street for the duration of the 18 month long project and that will involve pulling either 7 to 9 smart meters that are in that area and possibly installing one kiosk after the project is completed. Vice Chair Papetti asked if the developer would be reimbursing the City for lost revenue. Director Kucharsky said there had been some discussion on this and he would look into it.

Lieutenant Tucker explained there a couple of phases of demolition before reconstruction, they will remove the brick façade and do some abatement on the structure underneath, he informed the Commission that the contractor will bump out Washington Street with Jersey barriers and there will be a temporary two-week parking restriction across the street on the west side of Washington Street, parking will be prohibited on the eastside for the duration of the project. The Lieutenant went on to say that the bus stop which was recently located in front of the court house will need to be temporarily relocated back to its’ original site. Commissioner Seidel asked when would this happen; Director Kucharsky responded that it would most likely be within a month. Lieutenant Tucker said there would be provisions for pedestrians in the plan, with a Police detail during peak hours. Director Kucharsky showed where traffic would be impacted on the map.

Ms. Stark asked about how all this would impact the month of October in Salem and Director Kucharsky responded that the demolition should be completed well before October. Chair Stepasiuk asked about the truck routes as shown on the screen and Director Kucharsky explained that some of the trees will be removed and trucks can pull in to deliver equipment and an exit with a gate has been established for the trucks to pull away with debris. Due to the demolition of the south side of the building, there will be 4 days where a portion of Church Street will be blocked off to vehicles; however scaffolding will be built overhead for safety reasons to ensure a pedestrian walk through on the south side of the street. The plan is to work with Salem 5 and the Essex condos before that to provide instruction, there will be a signage plan provided. Chair Stepasiuk asked if there would be pedestrian access along Washington Street. Lieutenant Tucker explained that there would be jersey barriers placed on Washington Street to maintain pedestrian access and it would most likely be covered to avoid any falling debris.

Commissioner Papetti thanked the Director for providing an explanation of the project and mentioned this was the first time that they’ve had a traffic plan shared with them. He asked if the City had a written policy for what you have to submit for a traffic management plan for projects or is it just worked on in a case by case basis. Director Kucharsky replied that he imagined it was on a case by case basis unless it was specified in a special permit where the contractor and developer agreed to conditions with the City, but that he would look into it.

Vice Chair Papetti thought it a good idea to implement this policy in order for the appropriate entities to spell out what the developer needs to provide and staff can evaluate. Commissioner Seidel added that it should include where the construction crew plans to park, as more often than not, they park in the residential areas or on sidewalks. Chair Stepasiuk agreed and added that traditionally the problems have been pedestrian access and parking issues with the crews working there.

Vice Chair Papetti asked what happens if MassDOT shows up to do their striping while this project is underway. Director Kucharsky said this has been anticipated and that he spoke with the City engineer David Knowlton to discuss.

* General Departmental Updates

Director Kucharsky gave an update on the Norman/Chestnut/Summer Street roundabout pilot program, he said they are in the process of scheduling a meeting with the public for the first week in March, he’s working with Councilor Madore. The Director said that if the pilot is deemed a success the City engineer, David Knowlton, would approach MassDOT to see if the State could somehow incorporate it into the HSIP work.

Chair Stepasiuk asked if there were more updates regarding a potential new member. Dave informed the Commission that Todd Waller, a local business man and resident, is very engaged and interested in joining. The only formality at this stage is to have the City Council confirm his appointment.

Director Kucharsky said that he and the Chair met with the Mayor to discuss ideas on how to move forward with the proposed Commission Regulations which would involve developing a framework that would be shared with the Councilors. The Director will put together a draft framework for the Commission to review which will then be shared with the Mayor, to begin a discussion with the Councilors. Chair Stepasiuk said this is up to the Commission to dig into proposed regulations with the idea of reviewing those to an extent and still be talking with the Mayor and seeing how to present to the City Councilors. She said this is important right now, and they should look at the current proposed ordinance changes in order to streamline it. She suggested that it be a topic on the agenda for the next meeting to discuss.

Director Kucharsky informed the Commission that they had recently asked Passport to lock out users after a 4-hour time limit. They were hearing from the business owners that users were “feeding the meter” after the 4-hour limit; he said they have identified some quirks with the application and are working on putting out an FAQ with some information about the lock out as well as other recent updates made to the programs user interface. For instance, if you pay for two hours and you let it expire, the way the algorithm works, the system locks you out for thirty minutes. He says the best idea would be to sign up for a 10-minute notification before the session ends where you can add more time up to a 4-hour limit.

Director Kucharsky indicated the Mayor is bringing the location of the carnival to the Council to decide whether it be located at the Salem Common or Riley Plaza. If the Council wants it to be located at Riley Plaza, then the Mayor would recommend having a carnival there in June coinciding with the Salem Arts Festival. This would allow Police, Fire and other staff to observe operations and determine if there are any issues. This will help decide if the event can occur at this location during the Haunted Happenings festivities in October. Chair Stepasiuk asked if the Mayor was looking for a recommendation or a plan from the Commission to put forward as she believes they are the appropriate body to narrow it down due to definite parking implications. Director Kucharsky indicated the Mayor was seeking a recommendation on the two locations being considered.

**NEW/OLD BUSINESS**

* Traffic Calming Program: First Street

Director Kucharsky received three traffic calming applications from Joan Gilman, Barbara Lakis and Cyndy Anslemo. The common issue identified is speeding in the area. Mr. Kucharsky noted there is a crosswalk on First Street which serves the neighborhood including schoolchildren that use it to access the school bus that pulls into Pequot Highlands. The residents would like to see additional police detail to enforce the speed limit and install radar feedback signs. Chair Stepasiuk asked Lt. Tucker to give his perspective on the area, he said there are no elevated reports of accidents in the area, however, over the years residents had called often to report high speed traffic, he said there is a high percentage of cut through traffic. Lt. Tucker said that he and Director Kucharsky went out to study the area and the first suggestion would be striping and possibly fog lines to give the perspective that the road is narrower. Mr. Kucharsky suggested evaluating the existing signage and consider relocating the crosswalk. Ms. Gilman suggested that the crosswalk be moved so that it can be seen clearly. The Director proposed double sided crosswalks signs on the road and possibly some reflecting strips on the posts. Chair Stepasiuk asked what the Traffic Calming Program budget is, as she did not think they had spent much this fiscal year. The Director indicated he believes there is approximately $75,000 however there are a few ongoing projects that he is hoping to complete this construction season including the crosswalk improvements at Chestnut at Pickering, Endicott at Margin and the materials for the roundabout at Norman and Chestnut. He is currently working on FY20 capital requests and expects to request more funding for this type of work. The Director also mentioned that he has met with the electrical and engineering departments as he wanted to make sure that when it is decided to install equipment like radar feedback signs, that we have the operations budget to cover future maintenance costs.

Chair Stepasiuk asked how much this would cost, Director Kucharsky said some of the work would be done “in house”, but radar feedback and crosswalk relocation would require capital requests, he said they can try to implement some things sooner than others. Ms. Gilman mentioned that Pequot Highlands are not shoveling their sidewalks, which makes it impossible to walk and she said the crosswalk sign is very nondescript. She thinks some type of yellow flashing light would be a good start. Vice Chair Papetti said they need to be out there with the speed tubes to collect as much data as possible in order to provide concrete facts to justify implementing all that was suggested. Director Kucharsky responded that they would go out and collect information; he said they are also looking at a radar feedback system that can be deployed very easily and mounted to utility poles; it collects volume and speed data. He said they have found this to be very accurate as it helps to capture normal driving behavior. Vice Chair Papetti said he tends to be skeptical about signage as a deterrent, and said that more reflective fog lines or a median refuge island works well and better than spending money on a radar feedback system. Ms. Gilman also said that the opening of the marijuana shop on Highland Avenue and First Street will likely increase the volume of traffic on First Street. She voiced concern that the traffic is going to turn right on First Street to go South as there is no other route unless you go all the way down Highland Avenue to Wilson Street, she also said that the apartments being planned at Traders Way and First Street, will also add to the increase in traffic. Chair Stepasiuk asked if they could get some data from the Police on incidences in that area. Lt. Tucker said they are trying to work on getting units for radar feedback on First Street, he said it would not be a permanent fixture but would help in collecting data, he said the Police would do some selective speed enforcement in this area.

Chair Stepasiuk would like a plan drawn up to prioritize how projects in the Traffic Calming program get funded. She also asked about the status of the intersection of Bridge Street, Northey Street and Winter Street; Director Kucharsky informed her that some concept plans had been put together but nothing beyond that at this time. She also asked if they could get data from the SeeClickFix. Commissioner Seidel asked if after some of these projects have been completed is there were a way to market them so that the program could be promoted. Moving forward we could get a sense of how many applications we receive each year in order to help determine what should be the annual funding request to address them. Chair Stepasiuk agreed and suggested this be explored further by staff as the program grows.

* Traffic Ordinance Recommendation

Chair Stepasiuk introduced the next item on the agenda concerning parking restrictions where bike lanes have been installed. Lt. Tucker gave an update on drafting an ordinance related to prohibiting parking in a bike lane. He checked with the City Collector’s office and they are fully on board with ticketing for parking in bike lanes. Vice Chair Papetti asked the amount of the fine and Lt. Tucker responded that it was $25. He went on to say that they are working with Alternative Therapies Group (marijuana dispensary) in regards to parking along Harmony Grove Road. Lt. Tucker met with ATG and suggested they should go back and speak with their Landlord about parking in their parking lot. He explained there are numerous tenants but no assigned parking. With 79 spaces the Moose Lodge has been given priority parking. Vice Chair Papetti believes that this is their problem to solve. Lt. Tucker agrees it is their problem, however, he has been working with ATG prior to their opening and at the time Harmony Grove was identified as a temporary solution. Vice Chair Papetti suggested that there be a sign indicated when the bike lane might be closed due to events at the Moose. Chair Stepasiuk agreed with that approach. Vice Chair Papetti also suggested using funds from the Neighborhood Traffic Calming program to purchase flex posts to be placed in the buffer zone along a portion of Harmony Grove.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

Chair Stepasiuk asked if there was anything else to discuss as they had completed the agenda. Director Kucharsky mentioned that he had sent the Commission the plans for the Willows and that could be discussed at the next meeting. Vice Chair Papetti said another item to discuss is the creation of a 1-year overview of agenda items they need to address. Chair Stepasiuk said they should look at the previous year’s goals and marry that with the agenda items. Lt. Tucker informed the Commission that he had met with residents of Whalers Lane to address a proposal to restrict parking on the east side of Whalers Lane; he said everything on the inside would be no parking on Cavendish and First Street. Chair Stepasiuk asked that there be a vote on this before it goes to City Council.

Commissioner Seidel made a motion to recommend the proposed parking restrictions on Whaler’s Lane as written.

Vice Chair Papetti seconded the motion. All approved.

**8:15PM**: Meeting Adjourned