

**City of Salem
Traffic and Parking Commission
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, March 15, 2018**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held on Thursday, March 15, 2018 at 6:30pm at 120 Washington Street, Salem, MA. Present were Commission Chair Tanya Stepasiuk, Commission Vice-Chair Eric Papetti, Commissioner Jamie Metsch, and Commissioner Robin Seidel. Director Matt Smith and Assistant Director Nicholas Downing were also present. Commissioner Lt. Robert Preczewski was absent.

CALL OF MEETING

The meeting was called to order at 6:33pm.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Joyce Kenney of 285 Lafayette Street informed the Commission she may be applying for a handicap parking space soon, as she recently received her handicap parking placard. She spoke to Director Smith before the meeting about how to go about requesting a space.

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL

There were some technical issues as the meeting was beginning, so the Commission took an agenda item out of order and considered the meeting minutes from March 1, 2018 for approval.

Commissioner Metsch pointed out some small typos, and Vice-Chair Papetti corrected the notes in a section that indicated he had provided a comment that should have been attributed to Commissioner Metsch. Assistant Director Downing made note of those changes, and with those changes noted, the Commission voted.

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Metsch and seconded by Vice-Chair Papetti, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes from the March 1, 2018 Traffic and Parking Commission meeting, with Commissioner Seidel abstaining.

NEW / OLD BUSINESS

- 15-Minute Parking at Jefferson Avenue; Removal of Handicap Parking Space at 93 Bridge Street

Assistant Director Downing provided a brief update on both of these items. Whereas previously, these items have been coming first to the Commission for a

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recommendation and then to the Council for action, both the request for a 15-minute parking space at 247 Jefferson Avenue and the request for the removal of the handicap parking space at 93 Bridge Street were sent to the Council by Lt. Preczewski before the Commission could consider them. The Commission has had conversations previously about some items being more appropriate for administrative or staff review, but had never made a decision specifically laying out what items would or would not come to the Commission. Given that these requests have already been sent to the Council, the Commission can still make a recommendation, but we should note they have begun moving through the process already.

Vice-Chair Papetti commented that the Commission was created to make recommendations and exactly these types of changes. In the absence of the Commission being granted any regulatory authority, the process does take somewhat longer now than it had previously, but there seemed to be an agreement that the Commission would still use this process and develop a regular pattern of communication with the Council by doing so. Vice-Chair Papetti expressed his disappointment that this process seems to have suddenly changed and did not understand why it had.

Commissioner Metsch asked if we are discussing just these items or jumping into the later agenda item re: protocols and procedures? Chair Stepasiuk replied that we can do either. Commissioner Metsch agreed with Vice-Chair Papetti's comments, and also noted we were looking to streamline some procedural items, but we had not yet settled on what those would be.

Chair Stepasiuk echoed the sentiments from Vice-Chair Papetti and Commissioner Metsch, and is unsure why Lt. Preczewski proceeded in this manner for these two items. This puts the Commission at a disadvantage in terms of the regulations getting passed because the Council may see the process as being to go only to the Lieutenant and not involving the Commission, so they may not see the need to act quickly on the regulations.

The Commission made no recommendation for either the 15-minute parking space at 247 Jefferson Avenue or the removal of the handicap parking space at 93 Bridge Street.

- Gedney Street Area Parking Meters

Assistant Director Downing gave an update on the proposal for changes to parking restrictions on Gedney Street and the nearby streets. Based on comments at the last meeting, the Commission wanted to consider the whole street and area in one recommendation and ordinance change, rather than multiple, and wanted feedback from the meeting with GESNA to be incorporated into that recommendation. Based on comments we heard from GESNA, the recommendation has changed to include more resident permit parking on the western end of Gedney Street on the southerly

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side between Summer Street and Gedney Street Court. Previously the northern side of Gedney Street between Summer Street and Holyoke Square had been included in the recommendation as 2-hour metered parking. Assistant Director Downing and Director Smith proposed that this section could remain unrestricted.

Vice-Chair Papetti commented that he thought there was agreement last time about this section being metered, as it lends consistency to the street and otherwise there isn't much of a change to the parking overall. Commissioner Metsch also commented and agreed that he felt the consensus at the last meeting was for this section to be metered. Director Smith indicated that from the staff level, there is openness to either option. Assistant Director Downing added at the GESNA meeting and the meeting with business owners in the area, focus was more on the eastern end of the street and the southern side of the western edge, so meters for this section would be consistent with what those groups had seen and been supportive of.

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Metsch and seconded by Vice-Chair Papetti, the Commission voted unanimously to make the following ordinance change recommendation:

- Gedney Street, on the southerly side between Summer Street and Gedney Street Court, Resident Permit Parking Only
- Gedney Street, on the southerly side beginning 20 feet east of Gedney Street Court and continuing for a distance of 56 feet in an easterly direction, 2 hour metered parking, 8:00am to 6:00pm, Monday through Saturday
- Gedney Street, on the northerly side, beginning 20 feet east of Summer Street and ending 20 feet west of Holyoke Square, 2 hour metered parking, 8:00am to 6:00pm, Monday through Saturday
- Gedney Street, on the northerly side beginning 20 feet east of Holyoke Square and ending 20 feet west of Margin Street, 2 hour metered parking, 8:00am to 6:00pm, Monday through Saturday
- Holyoke Square, on the easterly side beginning 20 feet south of Norman Street and ending 20 feet north of Gedney Street, 2 hour metered parking, 8:00am to 6:00pm, Monday through Saturday

TRAFFIC AND PARKING DIRECTOR MONTHLY UPDATE

Director Smith gave the Commission his monthly update. In terms of revenue, January and February have both seen substantial increase year-over-year. Revenue from the municipal lots was up 220% YOY in January and 121% YOY in February. We've also seen a continued shift in utilization and revenue at South Harbor as more businesses have brought more activity to that area of downtown. Vice-Chair Papetti asked how these numbers compared to other peak months, October notwithstanding. Director Smith answered that this revenue is about two thirds of a peak month revenue. This shows the shift in our "season" shifting more and more to year-round.

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Staff had scheduled meetings with the City Solicitor twice in the last 2 weeks to discuss the valet parking pilot, but both had to be rescheduled due to snow days. There is a meeting scheduled for tomorrow that should go as planned. As part of this effort, we've done a lot of work looking into the ordinances that govern Riley Plaza and the issue of parking passes there that Councillor Sargent mentioned at the OLLA meeting. As we understand it, the parking passes here function like those for Museum Place garage where residents of a building can purchase the passes, but they are NOT guaranteed a spot.

On the Local Transportation Improvement Program (LTIP), we still need to meet with Dave Knowlton to discuss this in detail. One project we have added to it is the extension of Gedney Street to Washington. That was generally well-received at the GESNA meeting, and we want to keep looking at it in terms of feasibility. Our strategy with the LTIP is to have projects on it as early as possible so people know early on and we avoid the sense of projects happening out of nowhere with no notice.

Vice-Chair Papetti asked about the Bridge Street project and the Conservation Commission and DEP. Director Smith answered that the ConComm filed the project as coastal flooding, and DEP has 11 days to challenge the ruling. Final design would commence after that and those designs would come to the Commission in April for comment.

Chair Setpasiuk asked if we would have an updated LTIP document at the next meeting. Director Smith answered yes.

Vice Chair Papetti asked if we had been successful in applying for grant funding for an ADA transition plan/ Director Smith answered no, we did not get the grant, but we did put in a request for CIP funding to complete the plan. We have already begun compiling information internally, so we can start this process. Vice-Chair Papetti asked if we could issue an RFP before the CIP money has been finalized, so that we can act quickly once we have the money, and Director Smith answered yes.

Director Smith concluded his report with an update on the Bike Master Plan. There was a great open house meeting a few weeks ago. We will be going through a transition in staff from Toole, but we still have a great team in place. We will probably see a final product closer to summer, which will allow us to conduct some more rides in better weather. Vice Chair Papetti added that he thought it was a great meeting format that he hopes we can use more, as it was dynamic and engaging with lots of discussions and involvement from residents.

NEW / OLD BUSINESS

- Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program

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Assistant Director Downing gave a brief overview on the two documents related to the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program (NTCP). The first is a program summary, intended to be used as the public-facing document that would go up on the Department website once the program goes live. The second outlines the internal procedures and processes for the program, detailing when other municipal departments are involved, especially the Police Department through the Traffic Unit.

Chair Stepasiuk expressed her support for the documents, and thinks they address the comments brought to the Commission by Lt. Preczewski last week. Given those comments, it is important we get the Police involvement correct and make it obvious. The first mention of the Police in the phases of the program reads somewhat awkwardly, and should be tweaked to reflect their direct involvement in the data collection phase that would include putting tubes in the road for traffic counts. Director Smith agreed the language is important, and we should be sure to cross our t's and dot our I's. Part of the concern the Lieutenant brought last meeting seemed to be based on the assumption the Traffic and Parking Department was trying to go around the Police, and that was never the intention, but we assumed they already knew that and we should spell it out more clearly as we are doing in this document.

Vice-Chair Papetti suggested staff work on a presentation with graphics, etc. that is easy to read and more visually interested than just the plain program summary document. Vice-Chair Papetti also asked about the difference between testing and piloting, because for some projects testing may be sufficient. The testing phase could and should serve as the public comment phase. Add some information to that phase about Traffic and Parking Department staff being out at the project site during testing to solicit feedback and comments. Embrace the idea of "the pilot is the process" that was used in Everett to test a BRT pilot that proved to be wildly successful. Both Director Smith and Assistant Director Downing agreed that this would be a strong addition to the program and a great way to build awareness and support for it.

Commissioner Seidel asked how projects would be solicited? Assistant Director Downing answered that the City would go through the normal procedures of adding this info to the Traffic and Parking Department website, likely a press release, shared on social media, etc. and that we are trying to get in front of all of the neighborhood groups soon to talk about this and other programs, so we would bring this info with us to those meetings. Commissioner Seidel added that maybe some type of open house would be worthwhile as well. Director Smith offered the option to use some portion of the time for a monthly meeting as an open house for the Commission and staff, either for residents to ask about a specific program or project or just for general inquiries. We will likely have an influx of requests at the beginning, which is a good problem to have, but still a problem we need to be ready to solve. Chair Stepasiuk commented that liming project submissions and review to 4 times per year instead of rolling may help, and that making sure projects are

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spread out across the City is helped in large part by Traffic and Parking Department staff being able to initiate projects if they see a concentration in one area.

Kevin Brunswick, a resident from Winthrop Street, expressed one concern: If a resident or neighborhood submits a project requests for a relatively small project, that may not be addressing the entire issue on a given street, but a project for a whole street may be too big for this program, so what is the right balance? Chair Stepasiuk suggested adding language about Traffic and Parking Department staff working with residents when requests are submitted or before to try and identify appropriate scope of project. Director Smith agreed, and suggested adding language about reviewing projects to see potential connections to other projects.

Ward 3 Councillor Peterson and Ward 2 Councillor Madore both offered comments re: the need to balance projects being as comprehensive as possible with cost, and also determining project scopes and boundaries that are manageable for the program budget. Vice-Chair Papetti commented that in other cities with programs like this, this exact issue always comes up. Boston's criteria are maybe overly complicated, but staff may find some useful info there. Chair Stepasiuk agreed and added this is also staff's role – they are charged with looking at these issues holistically so will be constantly working to ensure projects complement other working being done.

Vice-Chair Papetti commented that programs like this are newer generally, as is the more participatory element. These projects will likely also be iterative, with one project leading to another to another, which is another strong case for the Traffic and Parking Department being able to initiate their own projects to make connections between projects initiated by residents. It's also important that we have substantial time as proposed before a project is hardened to really gather data and see if it worked as intended.

Mr. Brunswick added a comment. Given the data collection going on, is there any way to make this data accessible to the public? It would be a great resource. Director Smith added we want to and are looking into it. We are still just finding out some of the data resources we have, but we want to find a way to host it all and make it accessible. Vice-Chair Papetti asked if the speed limit signs that indicate speed collect data? Chair Stepasiuk answered yes they do, but someone needs to go and physically collect it. Vice-Chair Papetti asked staff to do so.

Commissioner Metsch commented that for now, these documents, with the additions we've discussed, have what we need to get this program off the ground. Staff shouldn't wait to work out the hierarchy of scoring, etc. and should work on that as project requests come in. We should trust in the process that if an application comes in with an opportunity to expand the scope in a way that makes sense, staff will ID it and pursue it. But make sure this program remains true to its intention of solving aggressive driving behavior and avoiding crashes by being quick and nimble.

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Commissioner Seidel commented that she agreed with what has been said so far. In her experience working on these programs, they work best when done comprehensively. These projects will feed into the circulation plan down the line, and what we can't get to with this program we can look at again as part of that process. The toolkit applicability matrix is a great piece as well, and should be included in the public program summary document or other materials.

Vice-Chair Papetti asked about funding, because elsewhere it has been described as "in addition to" rather than "instead of" but the funding piece in the procedures document mentions potentially using existing resources for this program. Assistant Director Downing answered that this section is based on an outline of this program from long before Matt or I looked at it, and that version was not written by Traffic and Parking Department staff. Director Smith answered that the year to year funding is still being worked at, and we will work with engineering about what money gets allocated to this, but the goal is to find new money to fund this rather than take from existing sources.

Commissioner Metsch commented that it may make sense to include some language about steps to take if a project doesn't work in the long term – no matter best planning and intentions and implementation, some projects may just need to be changed or removed later and the program should maintain the flexibility to do so if needed down the line. Director Smith agreed, saying many places use materials that look more permanent than they are like paint that matches the sidewalk color to make changes easier in the future. It's something we will keep in mind.

The Commission did not take a vote on this matter, as it is a department program. Staff will incorporate these comments into the two documents and begin the process of getting the program up and running in the coming weeks.

- Traffic and Parking Department Procedures and Protocols

Chair Stepasiuk began the conversation, commenting that this discussion is especially important given what happened with the agenda items for tonight re: Jefferson Avenue and Bridge Street. Chair Stepasiuk added she felt there was clarity among Commissioners in terms of the process and that all ordinance requests changes would come to the Commission for a recommendation.

Commissioner Metsch asked if, right now, the Commission has the authority to make these decisions? Chair Stepasiuk added that, no, we do not – we can only make a recommendation that accompanies the form for the request and is sent to the Council. But it's difficult to have this full conversation without Lt. Preczewski present. Vice-Chair Papetti suggested we may want to invite Chief Butler as well, as she provided the comments to Lt. Preczewski on neighborhood traffic calming and should also have a clear understanding of what our process is. Director Smith agreed with all these comments, and this topic will be kept as an agenda item for our next meeting.

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Director Smith continued that procedures and protocols is also about improving communication with residents and the Council. We've started to do this somewhat with the form we created to accompany Commission recommendations, but it needs to be to inform residents about action as well.

Chair Stepasiuk agreed, and added that more communication and as open a process as possible will make the decisions we reach better and more likely to be long lasting. Also, these procedural questions would be easier to decide if the Council acted on our regulations. Chair Stepasiuk indicated she has made multiple attempts to be in touch with OLLA Chair Ward 1 Councillor Robert McCarthy, but has not been able to get a meeting with him yet, so we all need to make an effort to get that meeting soon.

Commissioner Metsch commented that as we discuss procedures, we should keep the conversation open to some items being staff level review to not bog down the Commission in smaller items. Vice-Chair Papetti agreed, but also stressed the importance of the process being clear and being followed. Vice-Chair Papetti added for future requests or topics of discussion, he thinks it is valuable to have staff present the Commission with a strong recommendation backed by research and data.

Director Smith agreed on all points. Given how new the department is, we are still finding our way on some of these issues. But the department isn't going to be able to do everything, so whenever we can we should try and focus on moving the big policy ideas forward. It may also help to set a deadline for agenda items for future meetings so staff has time to gather the info it needs. Councillor Peterson commented that she agrees the Commission has an important role to play, and on the issue of the 15-minute space on Jefferson Avenue, it would have been good for that to come before the Commission before it was submitted because there are larger parking issues in that neighborhood.

This conversation will be continued at future meetings of the Commission.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Vice-Chair Papetti and seconded by Commissioner Seidel, the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 8:33pm.

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