**City of Salem**

**Traffic and Parking Commission**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, November 1, 2018**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held on Thursday, November 1, 2018 at 6:30pm at 98 Washington Street, Salem, MA. Present were Commission Chair Tanya Stepasiuk, Commission Vice-Chair Eric Papetti, and Commissioner Robin Seidel. Officer Michael Levesque was absent. Acting Director Nicholas Downing was also present.

**CALL OF MEETING**

The meeting was called to order at 6:32pm. Acting Director Downing noted audio of the meeting was being recorded to assist with notes.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

The Commission agreed to reserve public comment for after the Chestnut/ Summer/Norman Rotary concept had been discussed by the Commission.

**TRAFFIC AND PARKING DIRECTOR UPDATE**

* October Weekend Shuttle Review

Acting Director Downing gave his update. The City offered a free park and ride shuttle the last 2 weekends in October again this year, and despite bad weather for the last Saturday, the shuttle was very successful. We ran one route the 2nd to last weekend and 2 routes the final weekend, with stops at the high school, 108 Jefferson Avenue, and the SSU O’Keefe Center. All told, we had 4,300 riders or 8,600 total round trips. With an assumed average of 3 people per car, we estimate that the shuttle diverted 1,432 cars from downtown, which if lined up end to end would be a line of traffic more than 3.6 miles long. There is a lot of interest in seeing a shuttle on more weekends and on Halloween and looking at more routes/stops as well.

Vice-Chair Papetti asked what vehicles were used for the shuttle. Acting Director Downing answered that we partnered with the school district and used school buses, and always made sure to have at least one wheelchair accessible bus running at all times. Vice-Chair Papetti commented further that if we do expand service, we should make sure to have all vehicles be wheelchair accessible, because the shuttle is becoming more akin to transit and there are requirements that any transit service have 100% ADA compliant vehicles.

* Parking Capacity/Revenue (Halloween)

Acting Director Downing continued his update. In terms of revenue the garages brought in more than $240,000 just on weekends not including Halloween, whereas last year for all weekends and Halloween they brought in $153,000. Even with the new rates taken into account, we saw higher numbers. There were some other new parking related initiatives as well – new event parking rates at the Riley Plaza meters and new zones on Fort Ave, Canal Street, and Jefferson Ave. With more preparation for next year, we think both of these initiatives could be very helpful, but they were a bit rushed this year.

There were also some problems this year with temporary resident parking. Going forward, we are going to submit to the City Council an ordinance recommendation to add streets that get temporary resident parking by order to the ordinance. We also need to consider signage. Residents feel the orange signs we use are the best deterrent to visitors parking on their streets, but technically those orange signs are just for the temporary resident parking streets. However, in some cases, the signs were also hung on year round resident streets. The problem arises from the fact that we tell residents on the temporary streets they can park where they see orange signs, so if we hang those signs on the year round streets, we have caused a parking issue for those residents. This means we need better year round signage and this will be included in the after action report.

Chair Stepasiuk asked about resident reactions/complaints to particular issues. Acting Director Downing responded that he didn’t hear many complaints about any particular issue. We had some issues with people parking in the reserved garage spaces and still need to work more closely with the police department about processes and procedures for towing from these spaces.

Chair Stepasiuk asked about staffing. Acting Director Downing responded that our 2 new full-time enforcement staff have begun and we brought on some part-time help on weekends from enforcement staff in Beverly.

* Local Transportation Improvement Program (LTIP)

Acting Director Downing updated the Commission on the LTIP.

**Canal Street Phase 1**: Paving is done but the final striping is still being completed.

**Bike Master Plan:** Acting Director Downing informed the Commission thatthe final document is in hand. Tom Devine from the Planning Department is heading up the project. He explained that it would be helpful for the Commission and the Bike Committee to use it as a guide, as every time changes are made to a street there is potential for other changes too and this document would help in determining the type of improvements needed.

**HSIP Downtown Bike Upgrades:** The works has been delayed further and will now not begin until Spring 2019. Vice-Chair Papetti commented that in advance of this work being done, there are some locations on these streets that we should make some improvements to in advance of the striping – pavement to fix, grates to replace, etc. Vice Chair Papetti also asked to track the MassDOT project on the North Street Bridge.

Acting Director Downing ended his LTIP update by noting that he still has not received word from Engineering on what specific elements from the Commission and BAC have been incorporated into the striping plan for Lafayette/Loring/West.

* General Departmental Updates

Acting Director Downing continued his update. Our enforcement staff is back up to full strength, but we have a retirement coming up in November on the maintenance side, as well as a staffer moving to DPS, so we have some roles to fill there. An offer has been made and accepted for the full time director position, and are looking at a start date in early December. Acting Director Downing will be in touch with the new hire between now and then to get them up to date on the work of the department. With that start date, Acting Director Downing recommends that we cancel the second November meeting of the Commission but keep the first December meeting on December 6.

Commissioner Seidel asked about the Smart Signaling Program and the status of the traffic light sequencing this month. She said it seemed off, especially with backups on Bridge Street. Acting Director Downing noted that he hadn’t heard any issues, but will look into it and see what the status is for the smart signal project.

**NEW / OLD BUSINESS**

* Traffic Calming – Chestnut/Summer/Norman Rotary Concept

Acting Director Downing gave a brief overview of the conceptual design for a rotary at the intersection of Chestnut, Norman, and Summer. It was included in an engineering study a year ago, and that study indicated a rotary could work here given the traffic flow and geometry. We have heard from residents and the Ward Councillor routinely about the need for improvements to this intersection. The plan before the Commission tonight is one we pushed for that could be done with as little physical construction as possible. This concept tries to use as many existing curb cuts as possible and is primarily paint and flex posts for the project. If it works, down the line we would see more permanent changes. If the Commission supports it, along with residents and the Ward Councillor, we would then identify resources for implementation going forward.

Vice Chair Papetti noted that with fewer traffic calming program projects submitted, we should move this forward and be sure we set up performance measures and documentation so we can build it as a library of projects going forward. We should look at the project in Manchester because they had great materials for a similar project.

*David Leach, Federal Street*, indicated he walks and drives through the intersection regularly. Other countries use roundabouts everywhere, and this approach makes sense here. Anything we can do for calming this intersection makes sense, and we should also calm Winthrop and Broad Street.

*Nina Cohen, Chestnut Street*, agreed with Mr. Leach’s comments, and noted that the roundabout won’t be the cause of the backup – the backup is caused by the lights at North/Essex and Norman/Derby/Washington. The Commission should make sure to consider bicycle and pedestrian traffic as well, especially at this intersection. The crosswalks need to be placed where they will be used. The City should consider use of materials that can be installed and removed easily but is still a physical barrier to traffic.

*Ward 2 Councillor Christine Madore:* The Councillor agreed with the previous comments, and added that the signage and striping needs to strike the right balance between safety and aesthetics. Councillor Madore asked about the impact on traffic from the rotary, and if it can be designed in such a way to be easily removed if it is found to cause major problems. Acting Director Downing responded that this version is paint based so that if we find it doesn’t work, it can be removed more easily, but that we should also be prepared to maintain the pilot through the initial growing pains and hiccups because it will take time for people to get used to the new pattern.

Chair Stepasiuk commented that we need to think about this in conjunction with the other major intersections nearby. Vice-Chair Papetti commented that this seems to be in between the 2 tiers outlined in the Traffic Calming Program, so what is the timeframe and what should the messaging be to residents? Acting Director Downing responded that we are pursuing this level of project that is somewhat in between the 2 tiers, there was concern from other departments about something very temporary at this intersection. Vice Chair Papetti commented that the messaging to the neighborhood and businesses needs to be clear and identify the congestion before and after. We should have as much data as possible beforehand so we can measure against it after. A great metric would be the yield rate to pedestrians before and after implementation.

There was a general agreement among the Commissioners in support of this project as outlined in the conceptual plan. The next steps would be for Traffic and Parking Department to work with the Mayor’s office and Engineering Department to get a cost estimate and identify resources to pay for it. The Commission felt that with staff changes in the department, a spring implementation is more realistic and the City should spend the next few weeks and months gathering data, refining the design, and meeting with residents and businesses about the project.

* Stop Sign at Beckford Street and River Street

Acting Director Downing presented a recommendation for a stop sign at the intersection of Beckford Street and River Street. Given the street geometry and issues in the neighborhood identified by residents, he feels a stop sign is warranted at this location. With how residents use the street, despite low volume, there are still concerns about vehicles coming around the corner too fast with children and other residents in the roadway.

There followed a general conversation amongst Commission members and a consensus that no action should be taken on this recommendation tonight before the Police Department has had a chance to review. Vice Chair Papetti commented further that he thinks given the low volume and the existing geometry, this is the type of street where we should really use different and interesting traffic calming techniques such as murals or raised speed tables rather than a stop sign.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

No other business was discussed.

**MEETING MINUTES**

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Seidel and seconded by Vice-Chair Papetti, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes from the meeting on October 18.

**ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion duly made by Vice-Chair Papetti and seconded by Commissioner Seidel, the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn at 7:49pm.