**City of Salem**

**Traffic and Parking Commission**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, August 8, 2019**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held on Thursday, July 25, 2019 at 6:30pm at 98 Washington Street, Salem. **Present:** Commission Chair Tanya Stepasiuk, Commission Vice-Chair Eric Papetti, Commissioner Todd Waller, Commission Lt. David Tucker, Director of Traffic and Parking David Kucharsky, and Assistant Director Nick Downing. **Absent:** Commissioner Robin Seidel.

**CALL OF MEETING**

The meeting was called to order at 6:36pm.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

*Joan Sienkiewicz* expressed concern about enforcement of reserved parking at the Museum Place Garage and some confusion as to who from the City is responsible for the enforcement. Lt. Tucker confirmed that calls should be made first to the Salem PD non-emergency number to have a car towed from a reserved space.

**NEW/OLD BUSINESS**

* **October Orders**

Assistant Director Downing gave an overview of the five (5) orders before the Commission tonight, all of which have come before the Commission in previous years in some capacity.

**October Only Resident Permit Parking:** In addition to year round resident permit parking, there are two levels of temporary resident permit parking in the month of October. Some streets are designated as temporary resident permit streets by ordinance, and others are designated as such by order. The list of streets that receive this designation via order has grown over the years. The Department realized in recent years that the system has created problems for some residents that live on streets that don’t get designated as resident permit parking but all the surrounding streets do get the designation. The order recommendation before the Commission would address this issue and also expand the temporary resident permit parking designation to most of the streets in the Point neighborhood.

Chair Stepasiuk expressed her general support, and asked about cleaning up the confusion between ordinance and order going forward. Assistant Director Downing indicated that yes, the goal is to make that ordinance recommendation over the winter or early next year. Director Kucharsky added that we also found some streets that have both year round resident permit parking and the temporary designation, so we would clean that up in a future ordinance recommendation as well.

*Ward 5 Councillor Turiel* expressed general support for the expansion, but noted that designating all of Salem Street as resident permit parking would be a hardship for Saltonstall and Pioneer Terrace, and that Gardner Street and Cabot Street serve some local businesses for parking so we may not want to make them resident permit parking as well.

There was a general discussion about potentially using the Passport App to designate some main corridors as paid parking temporarily for the month of October, and that discussion is, in part, driving the recommendation to expand temporary resident permit parking to the Point. There was consensus among the Commission that regardless of whether that moves forward, expanding the temporary resident permit parking to the Point makes sense.

There was a general discussion about enforcement. Lt. Tucker indicated the PD has limited resources in October, and enforcing the expanded zone would be difficult. Director Kucharsky noted that the Department is actively working to hire more enforcement staff and expand our temporary hiring for October enforcement staff as well.

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Waller and seconded by Vice Chair Papetti, the Commission unanimously recommended the October Only Resident Permit Parking Order as presented to them, with the amendment related to Salem Street.

**Emergency Parking Passes Issued by the Traffic and Parking Department:** This order would authorize the Director to issue up to 50 emergency parking passes to residents that demonstrate a need for resident permit parking in October but do not live on a street that receives the designation. This could include someone who is pregnant and their due date is October or a home health aide that comes to the same home frequently. This process was done informally in past years, but was formalized last year.

Chair Stepasiuk proposed a change to the recommended language, giving the Director more leeway in issuing a pass if needed.

On a motion duly made by Vice Chair Papetti and seconded by Commissioner Waller, the Commission unanimously recommended the Emergency Parking passes order, as amended.

**Use of the Universal Steel Lot for Fundraising:** This order authorizes the use of the Universal Steel lot to be used as a fundraiser by local youth groups and staffed by them on weekends in October and Halloween Day. Chair Stepasiuk asked about the process to determine which groups get which dates. Last year, we tried to accommodate dates requested by the various groups, while also acknowledging that dates later in the month are also more sought after. Chair Stepasiuk asked that language be added that dates will be selected via a process set up by the Director of Traffic and Parking.

On a motion duly made by Lt. Tucker and seconded by Commissioner Waller, the Commission unanimously recommended use of the Universal Steel Lot for Fundraising Order, as amended to include language directing the Director of Traffic and Parking to create a process for fairly selecting dates for the groups.

**Free Parking for Residents at MBTA Depot Lot and Church Street West:** These two lots are designated as free parking for Salem residents on weekends.

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Waller and seconded by Lt. Tucker, the Commission recommended the Free Parking at the MBTA Depot Lot and Church Street West Lot order, with Vice Chair Papetti abstaining.

**October Resident Parking for Downtown Residents:** Last year the Commission discussed options to provide parking relief for downtown residents required to purchase a monthly garage pass in either of the garages. The Commission recommended these residents be given passes that would allow them to park on any of the temporary resident permit parking streets. The Council did not pass that recommendation, and instead created a program that made the rooftop spaces on the garage available as reserved spaces just for the month of October for an additional fee of $125. We made up to 176 spaces available, but only sold around 20 passes.

Vice Chair Papetti commented that with such low utilization, we should just let residents get on-street spaces. Assistant Director Downing commented that we would expect to see much higher utilization if we offered a free resident pass as opposed to charging $125 for the month.

*Ward 5 Councillor Turiel* suggested a potentially lower price point for the monthly pass, but also agreed that a free on-street pass would likely see much higher utilization.

*Joan Sienkiewicz* indicated this was discussed at the last Downtown Neighborhood Association meeting, and that she expects with more notice and a lower price, we would see much higher utilization.

*Ward 2 Councillor Madore* expressed support for the program and thought it worked well last year, and also pitched the idea of using the Crombie Street lot as an overnight resident parking lot.

There was a general discussion about pricing and if the program itself is equitable or not, and whether it should cost the same as a year round reserved space or if the price should be lowered to acknowledge the fact that these residents already pay for a parking space but in October have difficulty accessing that space.

On a motion duly made by Vice Chair Papetti and seconded by Commissioner Waller, the Commission voted 2-2 to recommend the October Resident Parking for Downtown Residents, with Chair Stepasiuk and Lt. Tucker voting against.

Chair Stepasiuk asked if there was another motion from the Commission to amend the order to reflect the price of $100 for the month. The motion was duly made by Lt. Tucker, but was not seconded.

There was further discussion about how to reach a compromise on the price, given that time is important for this order to be sent to the Council.

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Waller and seconded by Lt. Tucker, the Commission voted to recommend the October Resident Parking for Downtown Residents Order as amended to a price of $115. Vice Chair Papetti voted against.

* **Request for Traffic Ordinance Recommendations**

**Valet Parking at Stella’s:** Director Kucharsky gave an overview of the proposal. It is different than the ongoing pilot on Washington Street. In that pilot, the City is subsidizing the service. In this case, the business owner will cover the cost of the valet service, but are asking for the 2 spaces in front of their property for pick up and drop off and the ability to store vehicles in the southern end of Riley Plaza.

There was a general discussion among the Commissioners and staff about the similarities and differences between this proposal and the current pilot. The main topic was how the current pilot is intended to serve any and all downtown business, whereas this proposal would be limited to patrons of this one business. There was concern expressed about how and when the City will allow other businesses that seek valet services like these will be evaluated, and whether or not some amount should be paid from the business to the City for the use of the spaces.

*Ward 5 Councillor Turiel* noted the Council was supportive of this, and that this is an area of Lafayette the City is trying to see more business activity in, and Stella’s is really the only full service sit down restaurant in the area with many other businesses closed at this time, so the 2 spaces for pick up and drop off wouldn’t impact those other businesses.

*Jeff Cohen* commented that he is generally supportive, but had concerns about setting a precedent for other businesses, and that the issue with Riley Plaza being underutilized as mostly to do with inadequate signage.

*Ward 2 Councillor Madore* commented that the Commission can reject this if they don’t support it, and wished that it had come to the Commission first for this type of discussion rather than originating in the Council.

*Peter Mikedis*, owner of Stella’s, explained that he had looked into the parking issues beforehand, but wasn’t fully aware of some of the restrictions or private lots nearby. He is committed to making the business successful, and is open to the valet being open to other businesses if they are interested in sharing the cost burden. Mr. Mikedis expressed openness to individuals using the service if they weren’t patrons if they were willing to pay the fee, whereas his patrons will not have to pay the fee.

There was discussion about the program operating in October, and whether the authority to suspend it lives with the PD of Traffic and Parking Department. Lt. Tucker and Director Kucharsky indicated they would work with the owner to stay in touch, especially as we near October to monitor utilization of the service overall and availability of the spaces at Riley Plaza.

On a motion duly made by Vice Chair Papetti and seconded by Lt. Tucker, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the City Council order for a valet parking pilot at Stella’s on Lafayette Street.

**Charter Street Parking Changes:** Director Kucharsky explained that a few weeks ago at a Downtown Neighborhood Association meeting, they asked about enforcement on Charter Street, and this echoed calls and emails he received about this same street. In looking at the ordinance, there is a parking restriction on both sides. Amending the existing ordinance, to allow some parking on the eastern end of the street near Hawthorne Boulevard will provide clarity to enforcement staff and residents. This will also be an opportunity to fix some signage issues on the street. For now, the recommendation is to leave the few parking spaces on Charter as unregulated while we continue to look into issues nearby on Hawthorne Boulevard.

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Waller and seconded by Vice Chair Papetti, the Commission voted unanimously to recommend the ordinance change as written.

**UPCOMING MEETINGS SCHEDULE**

The next meeting scheduled is for August 22 with Jay Carroll and Dave Knowlton from Engineering. After that, the meetings are September 19, October 17, November 21, and December 19.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

Vice Chair Papetti requested an electronic copy of the Walker Report on the Museum Place Garage, and a future meeting agenda item about the MBTA Better Bus project.

**MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL**

There were no meeting minutes to approve.

**ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Waller and seconded by Vice Chair Papetti, the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 8:22PM.

The following documents were used at the meeting and can be viewed by making a request to the Traffic & Parking Department:

* 94 Lafayette Street Valet Parking Order
* Charter Street Ordinance Change
* October Downtown Resident Parking Order
* October Emergency Passes Order
* October Free Resident Parking Order – MBTA Depot Lot and Church Street West
* October Fundraising Parking Order
* October Resident Street Parking Order
* October Resident Parking Map 2019