

**City of Salem**  
**Traffic and Parking Commission**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, January 21, 2021**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held remotely on Thursday, January 21, 2021 at 6:00pm, pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §20, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place.

**Present:** Commission Vice-Chair Eric Papetti (acting Chair), Commissioner Robin Seidel, Commission Lt. David Tucker, Director of Traffic and Parking David Kucharsky, and Assistant Director Nick Downing **Absent:** Commission Chair Tanya Shallop (arrived late) and Commissioner Todd Waller (arrived late)

**CALL OF MEETING**

The meeting was called to order at 6:02pm by Commission Vice Chair Papetti. Mr. Kucharsky explains how members of the public may participate during the remote meeting.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Commission acting Chair Papetti opens the floor to public comment.

*Lori Hart of 114 Federal Street* introduces herself and indicates she has been complaining about the Essex/North/Summer Street intersection and how unsafe the new signal/light pattern has been for seven months. Ms. Hart contends the intersection is dangerous and confusing for both pedestrians and motorists. Ms. Hart explains that the original configuration worked well as pedestrians could call the walk light with no cars passing through, but that with the new signal pattern implemented in June of last year cars turning left toward Route 114 from Essex Street are an issue, as they have a left turn light while pedestrians have a walk light. Ms. Hart notes that cars regularly beep, swerve, and stop abruptly in front of walkers trying to cross the street, and that the current situation has pedestrians and drivers competing for the road. Ms. Hart indicates she attended the Commission meetings in October and December, and that 63 residents have signed a letter raising concerns, and still nothing has changed. Ms. Hart contends that no prior objective evaluation had been completed prior to changing the signal patten, and that only after concerns were raised did the City agree to conduct a traffic study of the intersection. Ms. Hart notes that the Commission for an update on the situation at the December meeting, and that she is here to hear of any updates on the study. She suggests returning to the old signal configuration if nothing has been done, and only changing it if the evaluation determines a change is needed.

Acting Chair Papetti asks if Mr. Kucharsky has any update, and Mr. Kucharsky states he can provide more details during the other business portion of the agenda, or now after public comment.

*Constance Arlander of 91 Federal Street* introduces herself and states she has also been involved in trying to change the Essex/North/Summer intersection to make it safer for residents to cross the street at the Witch House. Ms. Arlander explains that she and Ms. Hart have been working on the issue and voicing concerns since summer, and that it is very frustrating and dangerous to cross the intersection when cars refuse to wait or slow down. Ms. Arlander maintains she has seen many people with children struggling to cross the street, and asks what the City is doing to remedy the situation. Ms. Arlander echoes Ms. Hart's suggestion to return to the old, safer configuration while any traffic study is conducted, as it is dangerous for all pedestrians, but particularly children and the elderly.

Chair Tonya Shallop arrives at 6:12PM, and she and Vice Chair Papetti conclude Mr. Papetti shall proceed with the meeting as acting Chair.

Acting Chair Pappeti asks Mr. Kucharsky to provide his update. Mr. Kucharsky explains that after meeting with Lt. Tucker, John Giardi, and Councilor Madore at the intersection, he reached out to traffic engineering firms to provide a scope of work to perform the study. The study will evaluate whether the concurrent phase should have been adopted, and if so what other mitigating measures could be taken to improve safety. The study will also examine the effects on other intersections if the signal were to go back to the previous configuration. Mr. Kucharsky indicates staff are proceeding with a task order to bring the firm on board for the study. Some initial data has been provided to the firm.

Ms. Shallop asks about the current configuration, noting that residents seem to want it returned to the old setting. She asks about the practicality of studying the intersection with the old versus current settings.

Mr. Kucharsky states he will look into the matter further, as he was not involved in all aspects of the signal changes in Salem, noting it was a lengthy process where the changes were implemented in several intersections, some of which have had tweaks since. He indicates he will speak with other departments and the consultants to see what can be done regarding resetting the configuration while the study is conducted.

Chair Shallop indicates she would prefer to revert to the original configuration if it is possible as residents feel it was safer and that the current setup is dangerous.

Commissioner Seidel asks if there is an estimate for when the study will be complete and Mr. Kucharsky indicates a few weeks or sooner, depending on whether the consultants require supplemental data.

Acting Chair Papetti asks when it would be appropriate to have the next update on the matter. Mr. Kucharsky indicates he could potentially have an update at the next meeting, and that the goal is to get this issue resolved as soon as possible.

Acting Chair Papetti agrees with Chair Shallop and public commenters regarding the request to revert to the old signal pattern if possible. Mr. Papetti also echoes requests for a

comprehensive explanation regarding the adaptive signals that were installed. Mr. Kucharsky states he will get as much information as possible from the department that oversaw the change.

## **NEW/OLD BUSINESS**

### **Salem Willows Proposed Parking Regulations, Fees, and Enforcement Hour Recommendations**

Mr. Kucharsky explains that in Summer of 2019 Capital Projects and the Parks Department began working on restoring the hill area in the Willows. He indicates staff coordinated traffic counts and parking utilization counts and subsequently supplied the data to an engineering firm to provide analysis and develop recommendations. Mr. Kucharsky adds that he worked with Mr. Findlay to create a street diagnostic of the various regulations and ordinances and existing signage, which demonstrates some mismatches. Mr. Kucharsky presents the diagnostic map.

Mr. Kucharsky indicates the Parks and Recreation Commission was shown the diagnostic to obtain feedback, and staff are hoping to get further feedback from the Commissioners. The goal is to then have a Commissioner and representative from Parks and Recreation to work out the final details with staff. Mr. Kucharsky notes that some of the areas under consideration are on City rights of way and others are under Parks and Recreation jurisdiction. Staff are working with the City Solicitor to see what should be done about Restaurant Row.

Regarding the metered lot adjacent to the restaurants and arcade, Mr. Kucharsky indicates it is well utilized but rarely at capacity on weekday evenings, with high utilization on weekends. The Most utilized spaces are in the informal parking area which will be converted into a more formal lot in the section by Restaurant Row. Mr. Kucharsky also notes medium utilization areas on Restaurant Row, and states the least utilized parking is along Fort Avenue and Memorial Drive. Mr. Kucharsky presents the existing ordinance and parking prohibitions, noting that Fort Avenue is resident permit parking on both sides, but only has signage on one.

Mr. Kucharsky explains the proposal, which would designate two-hour parking in the metered lot, while maintaining some spots for 15 minute parking. Accessible spaces and a loading zone would be formally designated as part of the changes. Mr. Kucharsky indicates the cost is currently 50 cents an hour, and the recommendation is to increase the cost to a dollar, with a two hour limit. Along one stretch of Restaurant Row the proposal is a combination of some motorcycle parking, a drop off area, metered parking, and some no parking areas at the very end. On the other side of Restaurant Row, Mr. Kucharsky explains a formal parking lot will be constructed with four-hour parking costing 50 cents an hour. He also states there will be no parking on the side of the hill. Along memorial drive there are currently no restrictions, and due to low utilization levels the proposal is to leave it unregulated. Regarding hours of enforcement, Mr. Kucharsky states staff patrol Monday through Saturday from 8:00AM to 6:00PM, and Sunday from 12:00PM to 6:00PM, so those

would be the hours for payments. Given the seasonal nature of visitors and traffic, the recommendation is to only charge between April and October. Mr. Kucharsky indicates individuals can pay with the Passport app, but City police do not have the handheld devices identify those that have paid, and therefore enforcement would be limited to parking staff availability.

Chair Shallop thanks Mr. Kucharsky and staff for the presentation. Chair Shallop indicates she is generally in favor of the recommendations, and likes the mix of parking as it is similar to what we are trying to achieve downtown. Chair Shallop asks about a lot that the marina uses, and Mr. Kucharsky clarifies it is used by the yacht club, and that there is an intent to close it off at some point due to erosion issues.

Commissioner Seidel states she is in favor of keeping some of the motorcycle parking, as they get utilized and take up less space than a whole car space. Ms. Seidel also notes she would be in favor of maintaining the cost to park of 50 cents per hour as it is not downtown, and states she thinks of it as a place for families and everyone.

Lt. Tucker indicates he is in favor improvements as the area has been messy in the past. He asks Mr. Kucharsky about the parking lot construction, and Mr. Kucharsky explains the proposed layout.

Chair Shallop asks if the four hour paid lot will have designated motorcycle spaces as well, suggesting it might make sense to have a some as it is a population that utilizes the Willows.

Commissioner Todd Waller joins the meeting at 6:38PM.

Commissioner Seidel states she has been walking to the Willows frequently during the pandemic, and notes there is not a consistent path that is easy for pedestrians. Due to the lack of sidewalks in areas, walkers need to cross back and forth often. She suggests in the future examining consistent connections and modes of getting from downtown to the Willows for pedestrians and bikers.

Mr. Papetti agrees with Ms. Seidel, and suggests having adequate space somewhere for a bus stop, or a designated spot for the new Salem Skipper or Trolley. He also speaks in favor of the picnic/drop off area being proposed. Regarding the four hour parking limit, Vice Chair Papetti suggests there may be individuals who require more than four hours, whether it be for paddle boarding and kayaking or enjoying an event such as Jazz Fest. Mr. Kucharsky responds that those individuals can utilize the unregulated spaces for longer activities, and that for festivals and events short term changes could occur. Mr. Kucharsky highlights that the Passport app for payment allows for flexibility with respect to any changes (compared to kiosks), and also notes that enforcement would not extend past 6:00PM.

Commissioner Waller agrees with the suggestion that many individuals may need to park for longer than four hours. He suggests accommodating longer parker could be something to focus on.

Acting Chair Papetti adds that another category of long term parkers would be employees of businesses in the Willows, and asks if they will need to seek unrestricted spots and walk. Mr. Kucharsky states that staff had not considered that yet, but suggests a Commissioner volunteer to work with Parks and Recreation to discuss these issues and narrow down the details. Commissioner Seidel suggests using seasonal passes for employees so they can park anywhere as a solution, noting that she understands there is a need for revenue but that there should be parking available to them. Mr. Kucharsky explains that the revenues generated go back into the park, and that while the Willows has been busy, revenue has been down, perhaps due to low prices and lack of enforcement. Mr. Kucharsky also touches on fees for residents, noting that there is a sticker program that allows residents to park at Forest River Park, Winter Island, and the Marina, and that there was a suggestion to add the Willows to that.

Acting Chair Papetti opens the floor to public comment.

*Paul Lazinski of 2 Victory Road* introduces himself, and states he is glad the topic of stickers for Winter Island came up, as he thinks it is a great idea since people can purchase the passes and have unlimited parking. Mr. Lazinski suggests a similar model could work for the Willows. Regarding the Parks and Recreation parking study for the park improvement project, Mr. Lazinski opines it was a bad sample as it was done in May at the beginning of the season, rather than during peak utilization. He also suggests the survey was not comprehensive. Mr. Lazinski also notes that the redesign of the parking lot could be improved as it appears some spaces are being lost. Mr. Lazinski also comments on the need for parking that lasts longer than four hours, noting that the pier may eventually be rebuilt, which could eventually have charter points taking people out as in the past. He also notes that many families come to the Willows for day-long cookouts and picnics.

Commissioner Seidel volunteers to work with staff and Parks and Recreation to further refine the proposal.

Chair Shallop asks about the timeline, and Mr. Kucharsky indicates the hope is to have construction in Spring. He will meet with Parks and Recreation and Commissioner Seidel to flesh out details, determine jurisdictions, and come up with final recommendations and signage.

## **Request for Traffic Ordinance Recommendation**

### **Arbella Street Time Restricted Parking**

Mr. Drew Patel, owner of New Market at 109 Bridge Street, is requesting time restricted parking spaces on Arbella Street, adjacent to 109 Bridge Street.

Mr. Kucharsky explains that Mr. Patel approached him with the request for short-term parking for his customers, and that he spoke to Councilor Madore, as well as abutting neighbors, none of which had objections. Currently Arbella Street is resident permit parking, but there is a portion that is unsigned, but designated as a service zone in the ordinance. The proposal would be to change the service zone to two or three 15-minute parking spots right at the corner. Mr. Kucharsky notes that outside of enforcement hours the spots would be regular parking. Mr. Kucharsky indicates there is ordinance language drafted to rescind the service zone and designate the new spots that the Commission could recommend tonight.

Commissioner Seidel asks for a map of the area. Ms. Seidel comments on the available parking in the area and narrowness of the street, and Chair Shallop notes that she recently parked in the spots in question on Arbella to pick up takeout, suggesting the proposal makes sense. Mr. Papetti asks to see the ordinance language, and Mr. Kucharsky presents it to the Commission.

Acting Chair Papetti opens the floor to public comment.

*Drew Patel of 7 Thomas Circle* introduces himself and explains that he and his father purchased the store from the previous owner. Mr. Patel explains the history of the traffic ordinance regarding Bridge and Arbella and parking for the store. Mr. Patel indicates he made his request because he was concerned there was not parking available in the area. With respect to Arbella being a narrow street, Mr. Patel contends he measured it, and that three cars could fit with plenty of space for turning cars to pass through.

*Henry (no last name or address given)* introduces himself as the former owner of New Market for 20 years. He explains the discrepancy between available parking and signage and how it has changed over these years, initially having parking that was available for the store, which does not currently exist. He had requested to remove the 15 minute parking that existed in 2000 because he needed space for deliveries, which did not occur at a concrete time. The 15 minute parking was replaced with the service zone, and the store has never had dedicated parking.

Commissioner Seidel asks to see the proposed ordinance language again. Ms. Seidel asks if the current owner has any concerns about not having a service zone. Chair Shallop echoes Ms. Seidel's comment, and asks if the two or three 15 minute spots would be sufficient to double as an unofficial loading zone. She notes that if the owner is happy with proposal she is fine go forward with a motion.

Mr. Patel indicates his main concern is having parking available for customers, noting that Bridge Street is very busy. He suggests if the City were to allow the spots, it could be sufficient for three cars and to also be used for deliveries as needed. Mr. Patel asks if the signage can indicate that it is both 15 minute parking and a service zone. There is a brief discussion amongst Mr. Patel and the Commissioners regarding types of delivery vehicles and whether they would fit on Arbella or utilize Bridge Street. Mr. Kucharsky notes that Arbella Street is residential and that Bridge would be a better option.

Acting Chair Papetti suggests recommending the ordinance language, with the understanding that it will still go to Council, so that staff and Mr. Patel have a few days to confer about any needed changes. Chair Shallop indicates she would be open to discussions of a service zone in the area at a future meeting, as other businesses might be able to benefit from one.

Mr. Drew asks if the spaces will be both a service zone and 15 minute parking. Mr. Papetti notes the Commission will be voting on a recommendation to Council for 15 minute parking. Mr. Papetti explains the process in more detail. Mr. Patel now expresses concern about losing the service zone, and indicates he would like to keep it if possible. Acting Chair Papetti states if that is the case, the Commission would not vote on the matter. Chair Shallop informs Mr. Patel that 15 minute parking spaces are not prohibited from being used as a service zone, and that the request for 15 minute parking would provide more flexibility. Mr. Kucharsky agrees with Chair Shallop. The Commissioners discuss the proposal a bit more and Mr. Patel explains where deliveries come into the building.

**Motion and Vote:** *On a motion duly made by Commissioner Shallop and seconded by Commissioner Waller the Traffic and Parking Commission moves to recommend the proposed ordinance language regarding Arbella Street to City Council. The vote is five (5) in favor, and none (0) opposed. The motion passes.*

### **Route 107 (Highland Ave) Resurfacing Project**

Mr. Kucharsky explains that MassDOT is seeking comment on the planned resurfacing of Route 107. Mr. Findley presents the project plans, and Mr. Kucharsky indicates there will be resurfacing and restriping north through Colby Street. The project will be advertised this Spring, with a notice to proceed sometime late Summer. This is a MassDOT maintenance project and not the long term design plan for the corridor related to the study that took place a few years ago. Mr. Kucharsky states the road is in bad condition and needs to be addressed now with interim maintenance. For the long term design plan, an engineering firm is being hired and the process will take a number of years.

Mr. Kucharsky indicates there will be curb to curb mill and overlay with the existing roadway with asphalt repair up to driveways. Additionally, there will be some sidewalk repairs and some modifications to existing guardrails and end treatments. Mr. Kucharsky also notes there will be new pavement markings and some buffered bike lanes, as well as signage related to bike lanes.

Acting Chair Papetti recalls the MassDOT planning study of 2016 led by McMahon Consultants, and notes that the scope as presented at the time was a study for a quick mill and overlay with striping, as well as some bike lanes and crosswalks. Mr. Papetti states that while this is presented as a short term interim fix, he is disappointed that it took MassDOT five years for a striping and overlay project. Regarding the complete reconstruction, Mr. Papetti claims he was under the impression an engineering firm had

already been hired, and is confused with the current status if the consultant has not yet been procured.

Mr. Kucharsky indicates he was told an engineering firm was selected, but that he is unsure which firm. He notes that any delays may have had to do with some staffing issues at the state level. While he is not sure when the work will be completed, Mr. Kucharsky confirms a bid was put out and awarded.

Commissioner Seidel asks if the project has been coordinated with the MBTA, as it is one of the more travelled bus routes in Salem. Mr. Kucharsky explains that staff are compiling comments from various commissions, and that he will enquire about coordinating with MBTA with respect to bus stops. Mr. Kucharsky adds that staff have noticed there are still some gaps in the sidewalk networks that should be filled, and that there should be more transitions for bike lanes. Ms. Seidel and Mr. Kucharsky discuss the benefits of improving Highland Avenue and encouraging less car use.

Mr. Kucharsky discusses the striping plans in more detail. Lt. Tucker asks if anyone else has seen the plans, and Mr. Kucharsky indicates engineering, planning and Ward Councilor have been provided with the plans. Lt. Tucker states he is curious if there are plans to revisit the speed limits, and expresses concerns about bikes sharing the road safely if cars are driving too fast. Mr. Kucharsky indicates he will ask about that and obtain more information. He explains he will compile all comments, feedback, and requests regarding the project.

Acting Chair Papetti opens the floor to public comment.

*Ward 3 Councilor Morsillo of 53 Broad Street* introduces herself, and states she would like more details regarding the pedestrian over-path at Highland Avenue, noting it was a problem even in the 2016 plan. Councilor Morsillo also notes there is currently no way to turn around on Highland Avenue, and hopes that can be addressed in the redesign.

### **Bus Shelter Removal**

Mr. Kucharsky provides an update on the recent removal of MBTA bus shelters and explains that he met with Captain Ryan from the Salem Police to discuss the matter. Two bus shelters were removed on Lafayette Street due to ongoing issues with the homeless population and drug use after it was deemed a safety issue.

Acting Chair Papetti asks if the shelters were MBTA owned or City owned, and who requested they be removed. Mr. Kucharsky explains they are MBTA owned bus shelters, and they were removed at the City's request. Mr. Papetti expresses concern that now two months have gone by where these stops have no shelters, noting that the weather has not been great and that many of those who ride the bus are low income and minority residents. Mr. Papetti states he wanted to draw attention to the matter and urges everyone involved to consider other options going forward. Chair Shallop and Commissioner Waller agree.

Commissioner Seidel asks which department at the MBTA oversees such decisions, and Mr. Kucharsky states he will find out, and that he can also investigate applying for a grant through the shared streets program.

Acting Chair Papetti opens the floor to public comment.

*Jeff Cohen of 12 Hancock Street* introduces himself, noting that he lives close to Lafayette Park. Mr. Cohen contends that as the City encourages less usage and ownership, it needs to enhance the attractiveness of people taking the bus and train. He notes that many people in his neighborhood do not have cars and if the weather is miserable a shelter is important, and he hopes it will improve. Mr. Cohen notes there are many areas in town where the homeless population tend to congregate and we do not just get rid of those areas.

### **OTHER BUSINESS THAT MAY LEGALLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION**

Commissioner Waller states he regrets to inform that he will be stepping down from the Traffic and Parking Commission, as the City has asked him to join the Planning Board. He notes he has enjoyed his time on the Commission. The other Commissioners thank Commissioner Waller and wish him luck.

Commissioner Seidel notes that residents have the ability to apply for resident passes online now. She also notes that she recently purchased an electric car and while she has been impressed with the infrastructure in the City, two charging stations in the garage are down. Mr. Kucharsky states they will hopefully be fixed and running soon.

### **UPCOMING MEETINGS SCHEDULE**

The next meeting is scheduled for February 25, 2021 at 6:00PM, and will include a discussion on the North Street Corridor recommendations.

### **MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL**

November 19, 2020 and December 17, 2020 meeting minutes are discussed.

**Motion and Vote:** *On a motion duly made by Commissioner Shallop and seconded by Commissioner Seidel the Traffic and Parking Commission moves to approve the November 19, 2020 and December 17, 2020 meeting minutes. The vote is five (5) in favor, and none (0) opposed. The motion passes.*

### **ADJOURNMENT**

*On a motion duly made by Waller and seconded by Shallop, the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 8:11 PM.*