

**City of Salem
Traffic and Parking Commission
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, May 27, 2021**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held remotely on Thursday, March 15, 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 Chair Tanya Shallop, Commission Vice-Chair Eric Papetti, Commissioner Robin Seidel, Commissioner Jeff Swartz, Commission Lt. David Tucker, Director of Traffic and Parking David Kucharsky, Assistant Director Nick Downing, and Traffic and Parking Staff Russell Findley **Absent:** None

CALL OF MEETING

The meeting was called to order at 6:01pm by Chair Shallop. Chair Shallop explains how members of the public may participate during the remote meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ward 6 Councilor Meg Riccardi of 23 Orchard Street introduces herself. Councilor Riccardi states she is excited that there will be follow-up to last year's Neighborhood Traffic Calming Pilots, and that it is based on data and feedback. Councilor Riccardi praises the community engagement process, and states that these pilots are great ways to test concepts at a low cost. Regarding Ward 6 and North Salem specifically, Ms. Riccardi states some feedback she received was referred to the deflection of cut-through traffic to the parallel streets in the neighborhood, and this year's plan appears to address that. Councilor Riccardi suggests the timing of follow up is a bit unfortunate and suggests these items should have been ready to go April 1 as soon as the snow is gone. Ms. Riccardi states the corridor is busy, and that safety measures need to be implemented as soon as spring arrives. Councilor Riccardi also notes the corner of Buffum, Symonds, and North Street is highlighted on the plan map, but while there are items planned for Buffum there is nothing planned for Symonds Street, which she suggests is a huge miss. She adds that this area has recently seen two very serious accidents that could have been prevented with better visibility for drivers and cyclists. Councilor Riccardi also notes there is a speed hump planned for the Barr St. Extension, which she suggests may not be needed as it is a very small and narrow street. Ms. Riccardi also references five speed humps planned on two of the parallel streets and opines five may be excessive. She suggests relocating one or two to Symonds Street. Finally, Councilor Riccardi references the North Street Safety Enhancement Project and notes while it is not on the agenda for tonight, she requests that some elements of the plan be implemented as soon as possible since the project has been delayed to 2022.

Chris Patzke of 224 Lafayette Street introduces himself and states he has serious concerns regarding the traffic calming program. Mr. Patzke states the meetings to discuss the issues

are taking place in what he calls “street resident only echo chambers,” and that the larger Salem community has not been involved. Mr. Patzke suggests that arguments for the traffic calming projects are based on hyperbole, as well as national statistics that have zero relationship to the specific streets in question. Mr. Patzke refers to Chestnut Street as an example, and states it is a four-car wide one-way street with sidewalks in excess of eight feet in width. As such, he contends there is no hardship regarding access to open space, no hinderance to using the street, and no issues of visibility. Mr. Patzke argues the average speed before the traffic calming measures was only one mile per hour above the speed limit. Mr. Patzke indicates he lived on Chestnut Street for six years, and suggests there is no problem with speeding on Chestnut Street, and no significant record of accidents or speeding violations issued by the City. Mr. Patzke maintains that last year’s pilot essentially privatized a public street for the privileged, which has no place in our community. Mr. Patzke states he is a licensed landscape architect, and that he has concerns regarding designs. According to Mr. Patzke, shutting down a street to traffic should have been a non-starter from the moment it was suggested, and that any design should have accounted for emergency vehicle access issues, which was not the case last year. Mr. Patzke also suggests there is no need to reduce the speed limit on Chestnut Street or any other street to 20 miles per hour. Mr. Patzke notes that the Commonwealth’s speed law states that the prima facie speed limit for thickly settled areas is 30 miles per hour, and that the 20 miles per hour being suggested is for established school zones. Mr. Patzke maintains that 25 miles per hour is appropriate and sufficient for these public streets, and that the streets should be for all residents, not a private playground for those living on the specific streets in question. Mr. Patzke suggests the issue requires much more input from a broader base of residents, as it affects people who do not live on the streets as well.

Polly Wilbert of 7 Cedar Street introduces herself as president of the South Salem Neighborhood Association. Ms. Wilbert echoes some of Mr. Patzke’s concerns, and adds that she was saddened by the lack of outreach to the neighborhoods being impacted. Ms. Wilbert states the outreach was mostly signs on telephone poles, and that the neighborhood association never received any notice. Ms. Wilbert suggests this is proof of how little neighborhood engagement there was, and that very few residents from the streets were able to provide input. Ms. Wilbert states the amount of input was insufficient for the level of changes proposed. Ms. Wilbert also notes that last year, much of the traffic got diverted to other streets, with Cedar Street being greatly impacted. Ms. Wilbert states that while there will be no road closure signs this year, she questions whether the speed humps being proposed are needed. Ms. Wilbert suggests the proposal are not based on sufficient data, but rather anecdotes from a few residents and guesses. Finally, Ms. Wilbert asks the City to enforce the 4-10-20 parking restriction, which is four feet from a driveway, ten feet from a crosswalk or hydrant, and twenty feet from a corner. She notes this is a serious problem and that there has been little to no enforcement, other than reactions to residents calling. Ms. Wilbert contends the enforcement should be proactive, not reactive, so that people begin to park correctly. Ms. Wilbert states there are many concerns in the neighborhood, but that these measures do not address any of them. She notes that there have been many accidents in the area of the Prime Gas Station because it has no clear entry or exit, and also notes the right turn on red off of Washington onto Lafayette at the park has a pedestrian crosswalk with limited visibility due to current parking conditions. Ms.

Wilbert suggests the proposed changes not be implemented, and adds that there is no bike enforcement currently, noting there are many riders at night without proper reflectors or lights, and that nothing has been done to enforce helmet wearing of children.

Jeff Cohen of 12 Hancock Street introduces himself. Mr. Cohen agrees with Ms. Wilbert's comments concerning the crosswalk with limited visibility, noting that at times he has driven down that street and witnessed pedestrians being obscured. Mr. Cohen suggests Fairfield Street is appropriate for the program, and that people that attempt to circumvent Canal Street during traffic and go up Lime or Cypress almost always go through Fairfield. Mr. Cohen next states that Gardner Street is a narrow street with cars parked on both sides, and is not used as a pass-through as much as Hancock Street, which he describes as a fairly wide street even with cars parked on both sides. Mr. Cohen indicates it is common to see cars on Hancock Street traveling 40 or 50 miles per hour. Mr. Cohen also notes the intersection of Cabot and Hancock Street can be problematic, as many people do not stop at the stop sign. Mr. Cohen suggests examining Hancock Street and Forest Street in the future, and notes that people often park their boats on Forest Street despite it not being allowed. Mr. Cohen states he is generally in favor of the traffic calming program.

Andrew Lipman of 28 Chestnut Street introduces himself as the president of the Chestnut Street Associates. Mr. Lipman echoes Councilor Riccardi's comments regarding the pilot, and suggests the process and use of feedback to expand the program was well done. Mr. Lipman also states there is no intention of closing any of the streets associated with the program, and that the goal is to share the streets rather than have them be dominated by cars. Mr. Lipman suggests the point of the program is to have drivers drive more carefully, and have them be cognizant of other uses by other people on the street. Regarding Chestnut Street, Mr. Lipman suggests there is excessive speeding and that there have been parked cars hit. Mr. Lipman indicates the number of incidents decreased, while the number of people using the street increased. Mr. Lipman states the program should continue and be expanded throughout the City.

Matt Johnson of 5 Symonds Street introduces himself. Mr. Johnson offers support for Councilor Riccardi's suggestion to extend some of the traffic easements to begin at the corner of North Street and Symonds Street. Mr. Johnson indicates he saw both of the recent accidents at the corner and that he was very concerned being a parent of two children.

NEW/OLD BUSINESS

Neighborhood Traffic Calming Pilots

Mr. Kucharsky provides background information on the traffic calming program.

Jessica Mortell of Neighborways Design introduces herself and explains that the whole point of the program is enhancing safety for everyone. Ms. Mortell presents nationwide statistics and notes that despite less road travel in the last year, there was an increase in road fatalities across the U.S.. Ms. Mortell explains Vision Zero, a policy started in Sweden

that seeks to eliminate traffic fatalities and severe injuries. She adds that the focus should be on design to improve safety, and craft what we would like to see on the road.

Ms. Mortell discusses how reducing speeds and conflicts can reduce crashes and injuries. She notes that traveling at 30 MPH results in a 50 percent chance of surviving a crash, whereas a 10 MPH reduction increases the chance of survival to 80 percent. Ms. Mortell discusses data from last year's pilots, which indicates speeds were reduced based on the measures taken. She also notes that many cities in the Boston area have reduced speeds on certain roads with many pedestrians and bikers to 20 MPH, and can do so legislatively. Ms. Mortell stresses that slower speeds help everyone and save lives, and that this year there are no proposals to close any streets, just to slow speeds. Last year included five pilot streets, which Ms. Mortell states reduced speeds, however feedback from residents indicated many did not like the road closures. Regarding feedback, Ms. Mortell notes the survey related to the pilots received over 1,000 responses. She also notes how many local volunteers were involved in the pilots, and various resources such as MassDOT grants. Speed data was collected on the five impacted streets last year as well as some surrounding streets, and the calming measures reduced the max speeds on all of the five streets, as well as the percentage of drivers going above 25 MPH and 30 MPH.

Mr. Kucharsky discusses some lessons learned, including the limits of staff capacity and the need to get signs moved quickly. Going forward, Mr. Kucharsky states there would be a more detailed focus on signage. Mr. Kucharsky notes there was a good amount of communication and feedback last year, but that there will be a push to do even more this time around. He adds that there will be robust data collection before and after the measures are put into place. Mr. Kucharsky adds that the approach this year will be zone based to see how whole neighborhoods are affected. Mr. Kucharsky presents the overall program vision and approaches such as tactical striping, flex posts, and other design elements. He notes there is and will continue to be coordination with DPS, engineering, and other departments. Where projects are successful there can be more permanent capital projects, such as the new roundabouts, and ordinance changes based on additional studies. Mr. Kucharsky explains the goals for this year are to improve safety, limit speeds to 20 MPH, maintain access for vehicles, pedestrians, and bikes, and obtain data and feedback.

Ms. Mortell indicates this year they will implement gateway treatments and mid-block treatments, establishing 20 MPH safety zones with signs, as well as painted curb extensions to help daylight intersections. There are also speed humps proposed, as well as speed cushions, which have different dimensions and slots for emergency vehicles. Ms. Mortell also notes there may be the option to have planters for residents who volunteer to maintain them. Ms. Mortell next presents renderings of gateway treatments, including hatched out areas that mark the curb extensions to prevent parking within 20 feet of an intersection to help with visibility. The 20 MPH signs would be located within the curb extensions. Midblock speed bumps and cushions are proposed for the streets. Ms. Mortell indicates the temporary traffic calming measures proposed at the following residential streets:

Buffum St – Symonds to Mason
Barr St. Ext. – Buffum to School
Barr St. – School to Mason
Barstow St. – School to Mason
Dunlap St. – School to Mason
Chestnut St. – Flint to Cambridge
Fairfield St. – Cabot to Lafayette
Cedar St. – Cabot to Lafayette
Gardner St. – Cabot to Lafayette

Mr. Kucharsky presents examples of the flyers utilized last year in English and Spanish, as well as other examples of public engagement such as the public website. Mr. Kucharsky explains there has been high demand for traffic calming, and that staff have put together a project prioritization tool as a way to objectively evaluate the requests that come in using demographic, speed, and volume data. He adds that there may be radar feedback signs utilized this year as well. Mr. Kucharsky indicates that the next item on tonight's agenda is related, which is asking the Commission to recommend temporary 20 MPH safety zones to City Council.

Commissioner Swartz asks if procedurally the individual measures would be voted for separately, or as a whole. Chair Shallop clarifies that this agenda item is primarily an update with opportunities for comments, feedback, and questions. Mr. Kucharsky further clarifies that the next item on the agenda is seeking a recommendation from the Commission, and that it would all be submitted as one order under Section 20A of the Traffic Ordinance, which allows for experimental signage and other measures that the Council can put in place for 60 days.

Vice Chair Papetti thanks staff, and states that these are much needed improvements throughout the City. Mr. Papetti expresses support for the work done thus far, and attests as a resident of one of the streets that the safety issues are real. Vice Chair Papetti confirms that Buffum Street is often used as a cut-through when North Street is congested, and suggests looking at North Street as the zone of intervention. Vice Chair Papetti echoes Councilor Riccardi's comments regarding pushing these types of interventions forward at a quicker pace. Mr. Papetti acknowledges that staff are stretched and have limits regarding budget and staffing, but states these are in the short term, and suggests that in the long run these things are under the City's own control. He adds that the amount of capital and staff funding dedicated to this program is very small, and suggests it could be quadrupled or quintupled next year with limited effect on overall City budget. Vice Chair Papetti references the recent crash near Symonds and North Street, and asks that staff keep that in mind and remind the Mayor and others when they advocate for additional funding.

Chair Shallop echoes Vice Chair Papetti's comments and states it is great that feedback has been considered to refine and consider new interventions. Chair Shallop states the growth of the program would be welcome, particularly with the equity lens that has previously been discussed by the Commission. Ms. Shallop suggests going forward keeping an eye not only on submissions and requests for these programs, but also where staff think

intervention is needed, with consideration for areas or populations that might not have the resources to submit requests. Regarding the next agenda item, Chair Shallop states she will likely vote in support of the recommendation, but asks that staff collect more data with respect to warnings or ticketing, because dropping speed limits can sometimes be a pretense for pulling over or ticketing minorities. Chair Shallop states she is not suggesting Salem Police do this, but that it may be important to collect this data anytime a speed limit is dropped.

Commissioner Seidel thanks staff for the presentation and states she agrees with the comments made by Chair Shallop and Vice Chair Papetti. Commissioner Seidel acknowledges there are traffic problems in Salem, and states that it is a unique city as it is very walkable, has tourists, and lots of traffic. Ms. Shallop expresses appreciation that staff and the Commission are open to trying new things and seeing if they work rather than throwing up their hands and not attempting to fix the issues.

Vice Chair Papetti suggests that as these measures are implemented, it is a great opportunity to conduct more education, outreach, and enforcement regarding sidewalk parking in many of these neighborhoods as we try to reorient people to think of these streets as areas for people too. Mr. Papetti acknowledges some may have concerns about their cars getting side swiped or hit, but perhaps as people drive slower and cautiously people can rethink their parking practices. Vice Chair Papetti states it can be a real issue for all pedestrians, including those with mobility issues or disabilities.

Commission Lt. Tucker states the safety zone can work both ways, and suggests tempering the expectations of residents with respect to lowering the speed limit from 25MPH to 20MPH, noting their expectation may be that thousands of tickets will be issued to people going 30MPH. He states the Police Department will need to evaluate and see what the best approach is. Chair Shallop agrees that the right approach will need to be worked out, and suggests that staff make sure any enforcement is done equitably and with acknowledgment of any implicit biases that may exist.

Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Chris Patzke of 224 Lafayette Street states that when looking at all of the streets, the data shows that the average speed on those streets was at or close to the speed limit, which he indicates is five miles per hour below the Commonwealth's recommended speed limit for an urban environment, and only five miles per hour over a school zone limit. Mr. Patzke maintains that if there are issues with people speeding, it seems like an appropriate responses is enforcement. Mr. Patzke references Chestnut Street, and suggests there is no point if there are rules and ordinances for streets that residents do not adhere to. Mr. Patzke adds that resident on Chestnut Street often have contractors and service vehicles parking for longer than allowed on the street, and many park in resident permit parking areas without permits. Chair Shallop asks that Mr. Patzke keep his comments germane to the agenda item. Mr. Patzke states these are a group of people already in a privileged position who are not following rules and asking for special treatment for a road where the average speed limit is consistent with the speed limits in the City. Mr. Patzke suggests this

is a distasteful example of privilege that is inappropriate for Salem. He adds that it would be disastrous to add more one-way streets in Salem as there are already enough problems with traffic. Mr. Patzke states he is not in support of any of this, and suggests it was rolled out poorly. He adds that it is not neighborly.

Andrew Lipman of 28 Chestnut Street states that he understands that all of the people in Salem cut through all the local streets to get to all of the local destinations, and that no one would ever stand in the way of that. Mr. Lipman states all he and the association are asking for and endorsing is that people use the streets respectfully and allow them to be used for things other than cars. Mr. Lipman indicates there is an international trend in urban development of streets being used and owned by the people rather than the cars that drive through them. He adds that the shared streets program is about sharing the streets and allowing them to be used safely by all.

Polly Wilbert of 7 Cedar Street states that what drives this, is that the core of Salem is not functioning well with the traffic that it is required to handle. Ms. Wilbert suggests that until we figure out how to make the core of Salem function, we are going to be fighting traffic like a game of whack-a-mole. Ms. Wilbert indicates people are time-stressed for a variety of reasons, and that we all see the back-ups of traffic, particularly on North Street as Google Maps directs all visitors to use Route 114.

Request for Traffic Ordinance Recommendation

20MPH Safety Zones

Mr. Kucharsky explains that Section 20A of the City Traffic Ordinance allows for experimental regulations for the purpose of trial, and as these are temporary measures staff put together an Order that would take the streets in question and establish temporary 20MPH safety zones. The recommendation would also include Columbus Avenue from Fort Avenue to Dustin Street. Staff is suggesting implementation for 60 days, with evaluations during that time. Mr. Kucharsky indicates that if City Council agrees, signs can be installed and traffic would be monitored and studied. Depending on results, staff may come back and ask that it be extended. Mr. Kucharsky notes the City has previously passed 20MPH safety zones on Derby Street in 2016, and so there is precedent for such measures.

Chair Shallop notes this would require two passages from Council, and asks when this could be put in place. Mr. Kucharsky clarifies it is an order, and requires one passage. Once Council votes, signage production can begin. Chair Shallop references Councilor Riccardi's comments and suggestions, and asks if there are opportunities for those types of modifications as we go. Mr. Kucharsky indicates he would need to discuss further with Ms. Mortell, as the design and location of the speedhumps is intended to maintain a certain speed while vehicles are traveling. Mr. Kucharsky also notes limitations in resources including time, as well as procurement processes.

Vice Chair Papetti asks if there is anything stopping the City from ordering all the materials the Department would need for the following year. Mr. Papetti suggests if anything there

should be spare materials because there may be a need to swap out anything that gets destroyed. Mr. Papetti suggests ordering \$100,000 of flex posts and speed bumps and maintaining an inventory above and beyond what is needed. He adds that if there is not adequate funding, to put it in the CIP. Vice Chair Papetti suggests that the need to stop and order materials is a hinderance to timely implementation. Mr. Kucharsky and Mr. Papetti discuss ways to have materials available and on hand going forward. Mr. Kucharsky adds that DPS also has limitations, and that as such sometimes contractors are relied upon to install things. Vice Chair Papetti asks if Symonds Street is already 20MPH or not, and Mr. Kucharsky and Mr. Findley state it is 25MPH. Mr. Papetti asks if Symonds Street should be included. Commissioner Swartz suggests if so, it may be worth looking at Symonds Street Extension as well. There is a brief discussion of the streets in the area, and Ms. Mortell presents a map of the area for clarification. Ms. Mortell suggests that they can look at the additional streets and measures as part of the next roll out. Mr. Papetti discusses the difficulty with the corner of Symonds of Buffum, as people coming off North Street take the apex of the corner rather quickly, and it can be scary for bikers and pedestrians. Mr. Papetti asks if there can be anything done for the turn to have more visibility for all, or a speed hump right before it to force drivers to slow down. Lt. Tucker suggests it would be a good spot for a curb extension as there is no right turn allowed off of Buffum. Chair Shallop asks if this would be a potential plan for a couple of months from now, and Mr. Kucharsky states it is possible but that they are also looking at other locations at this time. Mr. Kucharsky and Ms. Mortell indicate they can look at the potential curb extension and solution for the Buffum Street area.

Mr. Kucharsky presents the proposed order language.

Chair Shallop indicates she is in favor of going forward with the language as proposed, and coming back to add more when time and resources allow.

Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Matt Johnson of 5 Symonds Street indicates he is on the corner that was discussed, and states he hopes that Councilor Riccardi's suggestions can be looked at in the future because the corner is extremely dangerous. Mr. Johnson states he is in favor of the curb extension idea as well.

Commissioner Swartz asks what metrics will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the changes. Mr. Kucharsky indicates they will gather speed data to compare with existing conditions. Commissioner Swartz next asks how long similar measures took to get moving in 2020, and Mr. Kucharsky indicates last year there was no order to change speeds, and so Council approval was not required, so the process was a bit different. Mr. Kucharsky does note that it took a month or two to obtain the materials, but that currently all the materials have been ordered and are just waiting to be delivered. Once DPS and contractors can mobilize, the hope is it can begin sometime in June. Commissioner Swartz suggests a quicker implementation would help the data not get skewed by early October traffic.

Chris Patzke of 224 Lafayette Street reiterates that General Laws of Massachusetts, Part I Title 14, Chapter 90, Section 17 states that the reasonable and proper speed limit for a thickly settled or business district is 30MPH, and that the City of Salem is already at 25MPH which is five below what the Commonwealth has determined is reasonable and proper. He adds that 20MPH is for a school zone, and that this should be kept in mind. Mr. Patzke suggests there is no evidence of speeding tickets or accidents to support such proposed changes.

Jeff Cohen of 12 Hancock Street indicates he has driven every street in Salem several times, and that he questions why Barr Street Extension is included when coming up Bryant, stating it is an incline and generally is very slow.

Motion and Vote: Vice Chair Papetti motions to recommend the proposed order language regarding 20MPH safety zones as drafted. Commissioner Seidel seconds the motion. The vote is five (5) in favor and none (0) opposed. **The motion passes.**

OTHER BUSINESS THAT MAY LEGALLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

None.

UPCOMING MEETINGS SCHEDULE

The next meeting is scheduled for June 17, 2021 at 6:00PM.

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL

April 15, 2021

Motion and Vote: Commissioner Swartz motions to approve the April 15, 2021 meeting minutes of the Traffic and Parking Commission. Commissioner Seidel seconds the motion. The vote is all in favor. **The motion passes.**

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Swartz and seconded by Commissioner Seidel the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 7:33 PM.