

**City of Salem
Traffic and Parking Commission
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 8, 2023**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held remotely on Wednesday, February 8, 2023, at 6:30pm, in accordance with Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, and as amended by Chapter 22 of the Acts of 2022, and a Special Act extending remote participation meetings until March 31, 2023.

Present: Traffic and Parking: Commission Chair Tanya Shallop, Commission Vice Chair Eric Papetti, Commissioner Jeff Swartz, Commissioner Jaime Garmendia, Director of Traffic and Parking David Kucharsky, and Assistant Director of Traffic and Parking Christina Hodge. **Absent:** Commissioner Lt. David Tucker

CALL OF MEETING

The meeting was called to order at 6:48pm by Chair Shallop. Ms. Shallop explains how members of the public may participate during the remote meeting and explains the meeting start has been delayed because of participation in an SRA meeting that went a bit late.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Commission Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment, but there is none.

Commission Vice Chair Papetti states tonight will be his last meeting. After being on the Commission since its inception, along with the Bicycling and Shared Path Advisory Committee, he states he has decided to step down for the time being.

NEW/OLD BUSINESS

Director's Update

Mr. Kucharsky explains that the city was awarded a \$200,000 Safe Streets for All grant, which will help develop an integrated action plan modeled after Vision Zero. Mr. Kucharsky also notes the Traffic Calming Program survey on the Public Input website closes February 15th. He indicates staff are working with the Sustainability Department on some green streets and Grid grants relating to charging stations at various parking lots.

Broad Street Interim Striping Plan

Mr. Kucharsky explains that in May of last year, staff presented existing conditions for the Broad Street corridor from Dalton Parkway to Winthrop Street, and received approximately 50 comments from the Public Input website. He indicates there has been additional data collection and traffic counts and that staff will present the interim striping

plan that was developed. Mr. Kucharsky reminds that the intent of the traffic calming program is to implement quick-build projects. He acknowledges that Broad Street requires a larger effort, but he hopes this interim measure will help to test out and develop a more final solution. Mr. Kucharsky presents an overhead map of the area with the proposed striping plan. A striped median will create 11-foot travel lanes and 8-foot parking stalls throughout most of the corridor. Mr. Kucharsky explains that flex posts will be introduced to delineate the roadway with intersecting streets. Currently, there is some perpendicular parking that occurs in the public right of way, which will hopefully be eliminated by the striping plan and introduction of parallel parking for those spots as well, as it currently creates a sightline issue for pedestrians. Some spaces will be lost, but it is part of the overall design to calm traffic. Mr. Kucharsky indicates thermoplastic paint will be used for the striping, as it has a longer shelf-life, and will go the length of the roadway. Additional signage will be installed to prevent parking too close to driveways. Mr. Kucharsky notes the counts show the corridor sees between 4,200 and 5,800 vehicles a day (on average), which is a high volume. He also discusses the visibility enhancements and crosswalk at Hathorne Street. Mr. Kucharsky states that the improvements will also attempt to slow down movement of vehicles coming down Pickering Street and force cars to make turns in a safer manner. He also notes there is the opportunity to reset the existing diagonal crosswalk at Pickering, and that staff are working with engineering on realigning the crosswalk. While the plans show flex posts, Mr. Kucharsky states that like in some neighborhoods, individuals have the opportunity to work with staff to have planters instead if there is any interest.

Chair Shallop acknowledges that this is just the beginning step of improving the corridor, noting there are many great features of the plan. She asks about timing, and Mr. Kucharsky indicates implementation is planned for spring.

Commissioner Swartz states he sits on the board of the Pickering House abutting the intersection, and states he likes the parking solution toward Dalton Parkway as it will match the rest of the neighborhood. Mr. Swartz expresses concern regarding having flex posts in a historic district, noting that they are an okay short-term solution, but not appropriate for long term solutions in historic areas.

Commissioner Garmendia indicates he is a former resident of Phelps Street, and that he is looking forward to the treatment plan for Broad. He echoes Commissioner Swartz' comments about the transitory nature of flex posts, suggesting that long term solutions like concrete or granite will be better. Mr. Garmendia states he loves the crosswalk plans and improvements.

Vice Chair Papetti thanks staff and states he does not feel as strongly about flex posts in the area, as some sort of treatment is needed to get the traffic safety effects desired. Mr. Papetti asks that the City think differently about planters and plantings, and perhaps consider budgeting for them in the normal course of business as part of the traffic calming program. Vice Chair Papetti suggests they are part of the beautification component of traffic calming, giving the impression that this is a neighborhood and not a highway. Mr. Papetti states that when left up to volunteers and homeowners, only the wealthy areas will

get planters, and thinks they should be provided from an equity standpoint. Chair Shallop agrees.

Assistant Director of Parking Christina Hodge echoes Mr. Kucharsky, stating that this is an interim measure, and that they are looking to alternative options for delineating center lines and enforcing the desired changes in behavior. She states the point of many of the interventions is to make people take conscious turns. Regarding planters, Ms. Hodge explains that from an engineering and crash safety perspective, any roadway items must be reflected or illuminated. Concrete barriers are not crash tested and could be problematic, but staff are exploring options.

Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Paul Viccica of 35 Broad Street introduces himself and asks about the timeline for a permanent solution, given that this is temporary. Mr. Viccica states his suspicion is it will be a five to six year range but would like further information.

Mr. Kucharsky explains that once the measures are implemented, there will be an observation and data collection period. The intersections will be examined, as well as the overall conditions of the sidewalks and accessibility. Mr. Kucharsky also notes that this is a significant corridor project, which the Traffic and Parking Department does not normally do, and so they will need to work with the Engineering Department. There is no concrete timeline at the moment.

Chair Shallop reminds the public that there are many competing priorities across the City, and that it can be difficult to put precise timelines on anything, particularly when much of the work is weather and labor dependent.

Mr. Viccica provides additional comments on the plan, and states he has some possible alternative solutions. With respect to the Dalton Parkway and Flint Street area, he states staff are correct about the current parking impeding sight for pedestrians, but he suggests the proposed configuration and 8-foot parking strip will still have the same issues, as pedestrians will need to walk far out before seeing any vehicle. He reminds the Commission that this intersection is used by Collins Middle School all the time, and that he does not understand why people do not slow down there. Mr. Viccica states that Phelps Street has no stop sign at the T intersection with Broad Street, and that while neighbors are respectful driving through, visitors are not. He also notes there was a serious pedestrian accident recently at the Pickering/Winthrop/Broad Street connection, and suggests the crosswalk there is very dangerous. Mr. Viccica discusses the nature of the streets as a cut through and the associated dangers. Regarding flex posts, Mr. Viccica states this is a historic district, and suggests that if they were suggested for Federal Street or Chestnut Street there would be an uprising. Mr. Viccica suggests that a better and perhaps more cost-effective solution could be to have a "No Trucks" sign at the Highland and Broad Street intersection visible from the entrance to Broad Street near CVS. He states there is currently one on the other side, but that it is not visible if coming up Highland Avenue. He notes there has been an increase in truck traffic recently. Mr. Viccica also suggests that the traffic light at

Dalton/Flint/Broad should be returned to an operating light cycle, or flash red, as opposed to now only flashing green, which encourages cars to speed down the street. Mr. Viccica suggests a three-way stop at the Pickering Street and Winthrop Street intersection, stating it is currently unsafe. Regarding flex posts, Mr. Viccica contends they do not work and are unaesthetic to the quality of the street, which is a historic district. While he acknowledges cost concerns, Mr. Viccica suggests his proposed solutions are likely to be less expensive and perhaps more effective.

Tim Jenkins of 18 Broad Street introduces himself, and echoes Mr. Viccica's comments and concerns, suggesting the different options be viewed under a cost and benefit framework. Mr. Jenkins states that one of the problems in the corridor is that while there are signs indicating the speed limit, there is never any enforcement by the Salem Police Department. Mr. Jenkins suggests more enforcement and visibility, as people respond quickly to speed traps and argues it could pay for itself in tickets issued. Regarding the crosswalk at Pickering and Winthrop, Mr. Jenkins states he sees people making crazy turns as they cut through in all directions. He suggests stop signs would help in addition to having a shorter linear crosswalk. Mr. Jenkins also states there is no maintenance on the brick sidewalks, which he contends is shortsighted and dangerous. By making the sidewalks safer, he states more pedestrians will use them instead of feeling forced into the street.

Luigi Lake of 47 Broad Street introduces himself and states he agrees with Mr. Viccica and Mr. Jenkins, but also notes he is desperate for any change to improve the area and calm traffic. Mr. Lake states he did not see any protected bike lanes in the plans. Mr. Kucharsky indicates that the introduction of protected bike lanes would have removed the ability to have parking, and that these are the first iteration of plans for the area. Chair Shallop asks about the bike master plan, and Mr. Kucharsky confirms that it calls for bike accommodations, but that this current measure is temporary and that the next iteration will hopefully have bike lanes as well.

City Councilor Morsillo introduces herself and states she appreciates the comments from neighbors. Councilor Morsillo suggests most people realize this is a temporary plan to slow down traffic. Regarding flex posts, she asks if they have been put in the middle of the road anywhere else, as opposed to along the intersections. Mr. Kucharsky explains it was done on Proctor Street, Winter Street, Bridge Street, and perhaps others. Councilor Morsillo questions how effective flex posts will be if people know they can run over them. She states she would love to see more options for the median.

Commissioner Swartz notes there is currently no striping on Pickering, and wonders if adding striping might enhance the need for drivers to stop.

Chair Shallop and Mr. Kucharsky confirm the next steps will be small revisions and a roll out in spring.

Regarding stop signs on Broad Street, Mr. Kucharsky notes they cannot just be placed anywhere, and that there are guidelines that must be followed. He also explains that stop signs are traffic control devices, not traffic calming measures. Mr. Kucharsky indicates

there are areas where they were requested, but additional safety issues arose when there was no compliance with the new stops.

Dale Gephart of 29 Broad Street introduces himself and states the crosswalk at Hathorne Street is dangerous as drivers do not seem to know it is there. Mr. Gephart suggests better visibility, and that the median strip should be raised, as opposed to just painted. He also contends that parked cars do not slow people down, and that the diagonal crosswalk at Pickering has never made any sense.

Paul Viccica states he serves on the Salem Zoning Board of Appeals and that he is familiar with the frustration on both sides, as well as the need to make a decision in the best interest of the City. He acknowledges this will move forward but suggests this is an abomination of the street. Mr. Viccica states he will host a meeting at his house with neighbors so that Councilor Morsillo can get more input. He asks that the commission continue to work on a better plan.

Chair Shallop reminds the public that the Traffic Calming Project consists of low-cost interventions in various neighborhoods identified as high priority. Measures are temporary, and then evaluated through an iterative process, where some changes are made permanent and some are not.

Riley Plaza

Mr. Kucharsky explains that in December the Commission was presented with the idea of potentially expanding the number of permits issued to park at Riley Plaza. Staff also reviewed the ordinances and signage in the area. Based on observations and additional analysis, staff have recommendations. He discusses the revenue from the metered spaces, which has been minimal, and states the proposal is to remove the 11 metered spaces to create additional permitted ones. The area will be evaluated, and it will provide the flexibility to increase the number of permits issued, if appropriate. Mr. Kucharsky next discusses the ordinance amendments required and shows a map of existing ordinances and conditions. Ordinances related to Section 50A, 56, and 57 C will need to be repealed, or repealed and replaced. He also discusses the history of the area and existing ordinances. Mr. Kucharsky also states the fines are being evaluated via Section 17A of the ordinance, and that the suggestion is a \$25 fine that increases to \$75 for illegal parking in October. The parking restrictions are currently Monday through Saturday, but will be changed to Monday through Sunday, 8AM to 6PM. With respect to permit pricing, currently the cost is \$35, but Mr. Kucharsky explains the proposal is to increase it to \$50. He notes that most downtown parking is more expensive, and that the new price is still reasonable. None of the spaces are guaranteed.

Commissioner Swartz states that based on the previous meeting and discussion, it sounds like this is a solution that people and businesses in the neighborhoods are in favor of. He also states that the price change seems fair and in-line with parking costs across the City.

Chair Shallop asks if there are nearby metered spaces. Mr. Kucharsky indicates there are ones along Gedney, Holyoke, and Norman Streets, as well as 30 and 15-minute parking in front of Steve's Market and the post office.

Commissioner Garmendia states he is in favor of the plan.

Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Ward 5 City Councilor Jeff Cohen of 12 Hancock Street introduces himself and expresses his support for the proposal.

Mr. Kucharsky presents the draft of ordinance changes to the Commission.

Motion and Vote: Commissioner Swartz motions to recommend the ordinance changes related to Riley Plaza as drafted to City Council. Commissioner Papetti seconds the motion. **The vote is four (4) in favor, and none (0) opposed, one (1) absent, the motion passes.**

OTHER BUSINESS THAT MAY LEGALLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

None.

UPCOMING MEETINGS SCHEDULE

The next meeting is scheduled for March 8, 2023, at 6:00PM.

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL

January 18, 2023

Motion and Vote: Commissioner Garmendia motions to approve the minutes from the January 18, 2023, meeting as drafted. Commissioner Swartz seconds the motion. **The vote is all in favor, one (1) absent, the motion passes.**

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Swartz and seconded by Commissioner Papetti, the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 8:15 PM.