

City of Salem
Traffic and Parking Commission
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, May 10, 2023

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held remotely on Wednesday, May 10, 2023, at 6:30pm, in accordance with Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023.

Present: Traffic and Parking: Commission Chair Tanya Shallop, Commissioner Jeff Swartz, Commissioner Jaime Garmendia, Commissioner Lt. David Tucker, Director of Traffic and Parking David Kucharsky, and Assistant Director of Traffic and Parking Christina Hodge. **Absent:** None

CALL OF MEETING

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

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Commission Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Ward 5 City Councilor Jeff Cohen, of 12 Hancock Street, introduces himself and apologizes for having to speak about an agenda item during the general public comment period, but he explains that he has another City meeting to attend. Councilor Cohen states he would like to address the Saltonstall petition, which started as an eighth-grade Civic Action project. Councilor Cohen explains he was invited to talk to their class, who expressed concerns about safety on Lafayette Street. He indicates the students put together a petition which will go in front of City Council on May 11, 2023. Two or three students and a teacher will be present to speak. Councilor Cohen adds that the students took a field trip to North Street and were impressed with the bike lanes and improvements.

NEW/OLD BUSINESS

Director's Update

Mr. Kucharsky provides updates on the traffic calming projects, noting speed humps installed on Columbus Avenue and Chestnut Street. Mr. Kucharsky indicates the next location for cushions and sign installation is Proctor Street. Surveys are pending for other locations, including Raymond Road. Mr. Kucharsky explains that contractors are lined up for permanent speed hump installation on Cedar Street and Fairfield Street. The same contractors are conducting the work on the bump outs on Derby Street, and they will move over to Cedar Street and Fairfield Street once the Derby Street work is complete.

Traffic & Parking Commission Election for Chair and Vice Chair

Chair Shallop explains that there is no Vice Chair currently, and she asks fellow Commissioners for input or if anyone is interested. Commissioner Swartz states he has more to learn before being comfortable in such a role. Commissioner Garmendia states he would be willing to be Vice Chair, and that he would love to see Chair Shallop continue in her role.

Motion and Vote: Commission Lt. Tucker motions to nominate Tanya Shallop as Chair and Jamie Garmendia as Vice Chair. Commissioner Swartz seconds the motion. **The vote is four (4) in favor, and none (0) opposed, the motion passes.**

Fort Avenue/Winter Island Road/Columbus Avenue Update

Mr. Kucharsky introduces Paul Furgal of Bowman (formerly McMahon Associates), who is present to provide updates on the intersection redesign for the area. Mr. Furgal will present updates and enhanced designs that have occurred since 2021 based on public feedback.

Mr. Furgal presents the project area and existing conditions for the intersections of Fort Avenue and Memorial Drive, Winter Island Road, Columbus Square, and Columbus Avenue. Mr. Furgal discusses the scope of work and the future planned path connection on the north side of Fort Avenue. Mr. Furgal provides background information, noting a review of the City master plan and complete streets policies. He also notes that staff reviewed the short-term improvements and traffic calming program as well. Mr. Furgal details the public outreach process, noting meetings with the Commission and neighborhood beginning in June 2021. Additional meetings with abutters and ward councilors were followed by field test pits in July 2022 related to excavation and drainage. Mr. Furgal discusses plan updates, including two raised crosswalks on the eastern limit near Memorial Drive and near Winter Island Road, respectively. He also notes “T-ing up” intersections at Winter Island Road and Fort Avenue, which means changing the alignment of vehicular approach to meet in a T formation or at a 90-degree angle. This would improve sightlines and safety. Mr. Furgal also notes there will be curb line modifications on Columbus Avenue and Columbus Square. Delineated parking spaces on both sides of Fort Avenue are proposed, along with better definition for driveway entrances. Mr. Furgal next discusses proposed landscaping to enhance the corner near Columbus Avenue and Fort Avenue, and he presents a rendering of the improvements.

Mr. Kucharsky indicates the next steps are to work on a notice of intent with Mr. Furgal and to go before the Conservation Commission to discuss impacts and any mitigation. Mr. Kucharsky adds that a MassDOT Complete Streets grant for \$500,000 was submitted, along with capital requests to the Mayor’s Office and Finance Department. The goal is to continue with the design and move forward with the necessary steps.

Chair Shallop asks for more information on the raised crosswalks. Mr. Furgal explains the benefits of a raised crosswalk table, noting a smooth transition for vehicles at 20MPH or

less while making pedestrians more visible. He also states that there is insignificant impact on emergency vehicles. He provides the exact elevation and points out the two locations on the map.

Chair Shallop asks about the area where Winter Island Road meets Fort Avenue and asks if the narrowed area is just paint. Mr. Furgal describes the area as a curb apron, made of a textured material and slanted at a 45-degree angle. He states it is similar to materials and construction used in a roundabout.

Commissioner Swartz asks if “T-ing up” means getting the intersections to be at right angles, and Mr. Furgal confirms that is correct. Mr. Swartz speaks favorably of the design plan.

Commissioner Garmendia asks what percent design the project is at currently, and Mr. Furgal indicates it is past 50 percent. Mr. Garmendia asks when the project will likely go before the Conservation Commission, and Mr. Kucharsky states it will be in June. Mr. Garmendia speaks in favor of the raised crosswalks.

Commission Lt. Tucker indicates he likes the T-ing up of the Winter Island Road intersection, as well as the plans overall.

Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Jill Murray, of 13 Columbus Avenue, introduces herself and asks a clarifying question regarding parking, and if it is necessary to have the bump outs where they are, noting that parking is essential for nearby residents. Mr. Kucharsky explains the layout of the proposal and the conflicting constraints of the requests. After some discussion and a review of a map of the area, Mr. Kucharsky states he can look into ways to mitigate any potential loss of parking spaces.

Armand Blanchette Jr., of 14 Essex Street, introduces himself and asks if the plans and proposal will be up on the City website. Mr. Kucharsky indicates they will be posted to the City of Salem website after the meeting.

Eric Nowak, of 19 Columbus Avenue, thanks staff and the Commission for putting this together and listening to neighborhood feedback. Mr. Nowak asks about an existing guard rail and whether it will be removed, noting it was installed when a car went through a shed at Columbus Avenue and the property at 19 Columbus Avenue and then a neighboring yard. He acknowledges the attempts to slow down traffic and notes that occasionally he still sees people speeding.

Chair Shallop asks when the installation will begin if all goes well with funding, and Mr. Kucharsky states it would be in the fall.

Commissioner Swartz asks if there are no flex posts in the design, and Mr. Kucharsky states that is correct, as this is a long-term capital project rather than a tactical project.

Saltonstall School Safe Cycling Coalition Petition

Mr. Kucharsky explains that students from the Saltonstall School created a petition as part of their Civil Action assignment, and the petition was signed by 102 people to request parking-protected bike lanes on Lafayette street. The proposal will go before the City Council, introduced by Councilor Cohen on May 11, 2023. The petition has been shared with the Commission.

Chair Shallop states she is proud of the students and teachers for taking on this project, particularly their observation on North Street and subsequent interest in the issue. Ms. Shallop states she hopes students walk and bike to school and that this project is relevant to them.

Mr. Kucharsky notes there have been lessons learned from the North Street project, which should be helpful if the proposal ends up coming to fruition.

Chair Shallop asks if this would fit under the traffic calming program in the future, and Mr. Kucharsky says he would have to think more on the budget and staff constraints but can provide an update in the future.

Commissioner Swartz suggests there is definitely a need for more bike lanes so riders can feel safe.

The Commission discusses the safe streets for all grant and keeping children and residences safe while encouraging more biking and walking.

Commissioner Garmendia expresses a desire to bike more in Salem and speaks highly of the Canal Street bike path nearby. He suggests that anything we can do to support additional bicyclist protection on major corridors like Lafayette Street where cars speed is important.

Commissioner Lt. Tucker states he wants to protect cyclists, but that he also wants to conduct outreach to parents and families to make sure the lanes would be utilized. Lt. Tucker indicates there was a learning curve for people with North Street.

Chair Shallop says a great group to ask would be those responsible for the 102 signatures as there seem to be people who have thought about it with some opinions.

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

OTHER BUSINESS THAT MAY LEGALLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

None.

UPCOMING MEETINGS SCHEDULE

The next meeting is scheduled for June 14, 2023, at 6:00PM.

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL

April 26, 2023

Motion and Vote: Commissioner Garmendia motions to approve the minutes from the April 26, 2023, meeting as drafted. Commissioner Swartz seconds the motion. **The vote is all in favor, the motion passes.**

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Lt. Tucker and seconded by Commissioner Garmendia, the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 7:10 PM.