

**City of Salem
Traffic and Parking Commission
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, November 18, 2021**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held remotely on Thursday, November 18, 2021 at 6:00pm, in accordance with Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021.

Present: Commission Chair Tonya Shallop, Commission Vice Chair Eric Papetti, Commissioner Jeff Swartz, Commission Lt. David Tucker, Director of Traffic and Parking David Kucharsky, Assistant Transportation Director Christina Hodges, and Traffic and Parking Staff Russell Findley **Absent:** None

CALL OF MEETING

The meeting was called to order at 6:04 pm by Chair Shallop. Ms. Shallop explains how members of the public may participate during the remote meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Felipe Zamborlini of 62 Birkin Street introduces himself, and states that having resident permit parking in the Point was great during October. Mr. Zamborlini expresses that it would be great as a year-round thing, as the rest of the year the Point neighborhood becomes Salem's overflow parking, particularly in the Summer. Mr. Zamborlini states it is disrespectful to not have permanent resident permit parking in Salem's most dense and diverse neighborhood, while the widest streets in town like Chestnut Street have resident permit parking. Mr. Zamborlini suggests the working class is being discriminated against and asks that the Commission look into it.

Chair Shallop indicates this is an issue the Commission has touched on in the past, and that it can be put on a future agenda. Ms. Shallop states there are some issues with resident permit parking in the Point, but that it could be revisited.

Gabe Ciociola of 11 Winter Street introduces himself as the Vice President of the Salem Common Neighborhood Association. Mr. Ciociola thanks Traffic and Parking for being responsive and helpful, and for providing an online presentation about pedestrian safety measures on the Common during the pandemic. Mr. Ciociola states he requested vertical signage on crosswalks, which was honored and looked great. He regretfully notes, however, that hit and run drivers have wrecked all the signs. In consultation with the neighborhood association, Mr. Ciociola suggests using rubberized speed bumps like those found in some areas of North Salem, which can be removed for winter plowing and replaced.

NEW/OLD BUSINESS

On-Street Parking Evaluation: Leavitt Street

Mr. Kucharsky explains that there have been complaints from residents, as well as calls from Councilors expressing frustration with the ongoing issue of cars parking on the sidewalk on Leavitt Street, as well as cars parking too close to intersections. Mr. Kucharsky notes that this is an MBTA bus route, and that there is a new development going in at the corner of Congress Street and Leavitt. An on-call contractor was asked to survey the road to evaluate the conditions, width, and other information related to the issue. Mr. Kucharsky presents the Commission with a proposed plan including parking lines/markings, which maintains most of the parking, and keeps cars four feet from driveways and 20 feet from intersections.

Chair Shallop asks if the markings exist now, and Mr. Kucharsky says they do not. He states it has been done in other places, but not on this street. Mr. Kucharsky adds that the plan is meant to show what is feasible with the parking dimensions.

Mr. Kucharsky also indicates parking would be restricted at the intersection with Salem Street, as the Saltonstall school is nearby, and this would make it safer for students crossing the street. The plans include striping crosswalks, which currently do not exist. Mr. Kucharsky indicates there is a fire hydrant and driveway nearby, where cars currently park illegally. Past Salem Street, Mr. Kucharsky notes there is a choke point in the roadway, and that there is lots of parking occurring at the intersection with Prince Street where, if parking lines were implemented, there would only be eight feet of space in the road. The proposed plans therefore eliminate parking on the north side and maintain parking spaces on the south side. Past Prince Street the road is wide enough to maintain parking on both sides, but the proposal suggests introducing striping for clarity. Mr. Kucharsky states the parking spaces are 20 by eight feet, but if additional width is needed for the roadway they could be seven by 20 feet. Mr. Kucharsky explains that the only change requiring a Council ordinance would be the removal of parking on one side.

Commissioner Swartz thanks Mr. Kucharsky and asks if the MBTA drop off zone for the 455 bus will remain and not be turned into a parking spot. Mr. Kucharsky confirms it will remain. Commissioner Swartz suggests a crosswalk at the intersection of Congress and Leavitt where the basketball court is located. The nearest crosswalk is about 200 feet away at Salem Street according to Mr. Swartz, and the area has lots of pedestrian traffic. Mr. Swartz also suggests a crosswalk at Prince and Leavitt, as it is the narrowest point and could facilitate access to the Mary Jane Lee Park. He also suggests there could be a possibility of an extra parking space at Naumkeag and Leavitt on the east side.

Vice Chair Papetti states the infrastructure and paint plan look great, as do the improvements to crosswalks and intersection daylighting. Mr. Papetti asks how many citations have been issued for sidewalk parking on this street in the last year. Mr. Kucharsky indicates he is unsure, but that staff has been sent out in the mornings recently once the issue was brought to the Department's attention. Vice Chair Papetti suggests that while this plan is good, it would be beneficial if staff and police proactively and

systematically issued citations to cars parked on sidewalks and even tow them immediately, as this is an issue of basic safety and civil rights.

Chair Shallop states that the issue of sidewalk parking is frustrating, and unfortunately present in other areas of the City as well. Chair Shallop indicates she loves the suggestions for more crosswalks.

Commissioner Swartz suggests that the new lines could help address some traffic calming issues as well.

Commissioner Lt. Tucker states he would be happy to see some order to the parking in the area. He notes that this street and some others are pretty bad. Lt. Tucker states that while he does not condone sidewalk parking, he acknowledges that some people think of it as a way to help drivers by providing more space and a way to not get their mirror taken off.

Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Felipe Zamborlini of 62 Birkin Street introduces himself and states that Congress Street currently has a crosswalk which is very useful and visible, and that getting to the park is not an issue. The larger issue is the sidewalk parking, and Mr. Zamborlini states he is constantly competing with cars trying to walk with his one year old in a stroller. Mr. Zamborlini indicates he has given up on calling the police for enforcement as they do not provide assistance. He contends the entire sidewalk on the south side toward Shetland Park was covered with cars this whole week.

Regarding the removal of parking discussed at the narrower part of the street, Mr. Zamborlini suggests keeping parking on the north side, and removing parking on the south side of the street. One of the issues according to Mr. Zamborlini is that the sidewalk curb differential is very low, making it easy for cars to park on the sidewalk. He suggests better enforcement and sidewalk improvements in addition to the proposed plans. Mr. Zamborlini explains that he has lived here three years and has almost never been able to walk on the sidewalks and suggests towing violators.

Jace Leblanc of 28 Leavitt Street introduces himself and confirms Mr. Zamborlini's comments regarding the removal of parking on the south side. Mr. Leblanc states that the north side, which has been proposed for no parking, has telephone/power line poles that act as a natural block from sidewalk parking, and that the issue is entirely on the south side of the street. He supports restricting parking on the south side as opposed to the north side of the street

Mr. Kucharsky explains that the City was recently awarded a MassWorks grant to look at redesigning some intersections along Congress Street, this includes the intersection with Leavitt St. He states he will come back to the Commission with updated plans and refined recommendations.

October Planning RECAP

Mr. Kucharsky provides an overview of October planning and how the month went. He provides information regarding the October shuttle, which operated two busses from Salem High School and one from the O'Keefe Center at Salem State. The shuttles also stopped at the Salem Hospital lot on Jefferson Ave before dropping riders at Riley Plaza. Mr. Kucharsky explains the shuttle ran the last three weekends in October from 10AM to 8PM, and on Halloween until 10:30PM. In total, there were approximately 18,000 users, with the biggest use being the weekend before Halloween with 10,000 users. Mr. Kucharsky states that moving forward, those three weekends will be maintained, and if funds can be identified, perhaps more shuttles can be provided during high demand hours. Overall, the program was successful.

Regarding paid parking zones, Mr. Kucharsky explains there were temporary metered zones on Canal Street with a rate of \$1 an hour to park. There were no negative comments or pushback, and the passport app brought in \$3,069 in revenue from 812 transactions, and there were \$950 in citations. Mr. Kucharsky indicates there may be considerations for additional temporary paid parking on Margin and Commercial Streets, perhaps others.

With respect to October resident parking, Mr. Kucharsky states there were a total of 4,572 passes issued, 2,849 by mail and 723 via walk-ins. Approximately 120 hours of staff time were spent processing walk-in requests. The total number of year-round residential passes is 5,488. Mr. Kucharsky presents a map showing the year-round streets as well as the additional streets added for the month of October. He notes there have been some requests for additional streets. Mr. Kucharsky also discusses signage related to permit parking. He adds that staff are trying to figure out ways to make signage and the program clearer and more equitable.

For overall October resident parking enforcement, Mr. Kucharsky informs there were a total of 2,390 parking tickets, 1,330 issued by staff and 1,060 issued by Salem Police. Of those violations, 1,394 were associated with Massachusetts plates, and 996 were from out of state. There were a total of 201 cars towed during the month. Mr. Findley presents a heat map to show where most of the enforcement was taking place, with the highest volume of violations being on Peabody, Derby, and Essex Streets.

Chair Shallop thanks Mr. Kucharsky and staff for all the good work and presentation.

Commissioner Swartz suggests there could be a case made for the shuttle to run the whole month considering the difficulty and negative experience visitors had getting into town. Commissioner Swartz states that usage on Halloween weekend was down due to the rainy weather, but that if not for the whole month, at least including Indigenous People's Day weekend would be good. Mr. Swartz also suggests thinking about the possibility of adding a satellite shuttle lot somewhere near the Peabody line, as most of the shuttle parking locations are south of Salem. Regarding the temporary metered parking, Mr. Swartz states he did not hear any complaints, but that he would like to follow up further with local business employees in the area. He also states that improved signage and enforcement will be helpful.

Vice Chair Papetti thanks staff for the presentation, and suggests adding datapoints of rail and bus ridership from the MBTA may be helpful, as well as numbers from the Salem Skipper and BlueBikes. Mr. Kucharsky states he can look into pulling some of those numbers and reach out to the MBTA. Mr. Papetti also suggests working with key Ward Councilors over the winter to strategize for next season, and develop goals, as demand for tourists is infinite and traffic will always be an issue that needs management. Vice Chair Papetti stresses that it is important that residents and businesses can still go about their lives in the midst of the season. Mr. Pappeti notes that traffic restrictions seem to help, and states it was interesting that when Washington Street was closed to cars, traffic just outside of Salem was almost nonexistent. He opines that expanding such measures may be solutions worth discussing.

Commissioner Swartz provides additional comments, noting that the negative experiences in traffic were a major issue and heavily discussed this year. Mr. Swartz suggests finding ways to bolster what Destination Salem is accomplishing on the marketing front, and perhaps raising ticketing fees in core busy areas. He also suggests a balance in the pricing for October garages between being too affordable and prohibitively expensive. At one extreme, Commissioner Swartz states the MBTA's parking was too inexpensive, while at the other end some private lots were charging as high as \$60. The goal would be to set rates that push people to use non-driving options as much as possible.

Lt. Tucker acknowledges it was a busy month, and states that while the train was well utilized, it could have been more so. Lt. Tucker notes that most traffic comes from I-95 and Route 128 and agrees that another satellite lot may be helpful.

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

Discussion: Traffic and Parking Commission Regulations

Chair Shallop states the Commission will review the ordinance that governs the Commission and discuss previously proposed regulations. Mr. Kucharsky provides a brief background, noting that in April 2020 he and staff were working on updating regulations regarding accessible parking, and Councilor Hapworth submitted additional language in order to authorize the Commission to create and change regulations, with stopgaps for Councilors if they had an issue and disagreed, whereby they could challenge a Commission decision within a certain window of time. When discussions went to OLLA, they discussed the portion regarding accessible parking but not the language proffered by Councilor Hapworth.

Chair Shallop states she wanted this item on the agenda because a new Council will be coming in in a few months, and she hopes they will be more receptive to this type of change. Chair Shallop states that the ordinance that discusses the Commission indicates there may be situations where Council can authorize the Commission to make rules internally and deal with certain issues that would otherwise go through Council. Ms. Shallop discusses the benefits, such as a more streamlined process and decisions being

made by expert residents and police, with a stopgap measure still in place. Chair Shallop also notes it would free up Council agenda and allow for quicker implementation.

Commissioner Swartz notes that one of the new at large Councilors, Councilor Merkl, seems to be in favor of the sentiments expressed by Councilor Hapworth. Mr. Swartz asks for the specific proposal language, and Mr. Kucharsky indicates he can provide it.

Vice Chair Papetti states he is encouraged to see a new City Council is likely to be more receptive to working with the Traffic and Parking Commission. Mr. Papetti suggests going big and seeking the transfer of all traffic regulations to the Commission. He contends it would not be an overreach, as other boards and commissions have significant responsibilities and can issue decisions that Council cannot take back. He also notes such an approach would be simpler. Vice Chair Papetti suggests demonstrating to Council the many discrepancies between existing ordinances and signage discovered, as an example of the overwhelming amount of work that Council simply does not have the bandwidth to tackle. Vice Chair Papetti suggests educating Council on the scale of the issues and problems related to traffic and parking.

Chair Shallop asks that staff and Commissioners continue to think about the issue.

OTHER BUSINESS THAT MAY LEGALLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

Mr. Kucharsky introduces new staff member Christina Hodge, who started last Monday. Mr. Kucharsky states she has a great background in civil and traffic engineering, and that he is looking forward to working with her on traffic calming and with engineering projects.

Christina Hodge introduces herself and discusses her background working at VHB in Boston and conducting traffic impact studies. She states she is a lifelong Beverly resident and is looking forward to working with her neighbor city.

Chair Shallop and the other Commissioners welcome Ms. Hodge.

Commissioner Swartz brings up the state of the Museum Place Garage, noting it was not a great experience for many visitors. He states it is an old building with many concerns and structural issues, as well as aesthetic ones. Chair Shallop notes it has been a periodic topic for the Commission, and that it has not been discussed in six to eight months. Chair Shallop suggests adding it to a future agenda.

Vice Chair Papetti asks Mr. Kucharsky if he is preparing for the new bipartisan infrastructure bill funds coming our way over the next year. He suggests getting planning and design work done as quickly as possible as time is of the essence. Mr. Kucharsky states he is having discussions with Engineering and Planning about this topic, and that he will have more information to put on a future agenda.

UPCOMING MEETINGS SCHEDULE

The next meeting is scheduled for December 16, 2021 at 6:00PM.

Mr. Kucharsky informs that at the next meeting, there will be a discussion regarding whether the Board will meet in person, hybrid, or remotely at the start of the new year.

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL

October 21, 2021

Motion and Vote: Commissioner Swartz motions to approve the October 21, 2021, meeting minutes of the Traffic and Parking Commission. Vice Chair Papetti seconds the motion. The vote is all in favor. **The motion passes.**

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Vice Chair Papetti and seconded by Commission Swartz the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 7:25 PM.