

City of Salem
Traffic and Parking Commission
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, November 9, 2022

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held remotely on Wednesday, November 9, 2022 at 6:00pm, 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, Commissioner Jaime Garmendia, Commissioner Jeff Swartz, Commission Lt. David Tucker, and Assistant Director of Traffic and Parking Christina Hodge. Also present was Brendan Linard, Transportation Planner in the Traffic & Parking Department. **Absent:** Commission Vice Chair Eric Papetti

CALL OF MEETING

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm 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.

Scott Chien of 39 Harbor Street introduces himself. Mr. Chien states that Harbor Street is the main street to exit Congress and Shetland Park, and that residents have worked with their Ward Councilor for years to get resident only parking. Mr. Chien explains that his Ward Councilor indicated signatures were required by 90 percent of the residents in agreement, and that because of the number of renters and absent landlords, that can be difficult. He states he is here to observe the request from the Ward 6 Councilor similarly seeking resident only parking to see what information he can share with neighbors.

NEW/OLD BUSINESS

Director's Update

Ms. Hodge explains that work has continued on the South Harbor garage with cameras installed and signage complete or nearly complete. Ms. Hodge also notes the Destination Salem space work has finished for now, and next steps for garage work are being identified. Regarding the Museum Place garage, Ms. Hodge notes that security cameras and signage will be going up this month, and scope for the second and third floors will be determined sometime soon. Ms. Hodge next explains that the North Street project has come a long way but that work still needs to be completed, including some paint and flex posts. She recommends checking out the area, preferably by bike to enjoy the new bike lanes. Staff are also working with DPS on finalizing signage work. Parking regulations have not been enforced yet, but will begin. Ms. Hodge states that the new BlueBikes station went in on

Friday at Liberty Hill Ave and is part of the expanding program in Salem. There is information on the department website, as well as on flyers to inform residents of changes and where to place trash bins. With respect to traffic calming, Ms. Hodge notes most elements are in place and that devices are also out to collect speed and volume data for remaining locations. Ms. Hodge also indicates staff have been working on the prioritization tool and incorporating newer and more detailed demographic data. She adds that there is a Route 107 road safety audit (“RSA”) happening later in the month, to be run by MassDOT and consulting engineering firms.

Commissioner Garmendia asks if at a following meeting staff can provide ridership statistics for the BlueBikes program. He also asks which sections of the Route 107 RSA will be completed which day over the two-day audit. Ms. Hodge states she can reach out with additional details as she gets them, and that ridership data regarding BlueBikes can be presented at the next meeting. There will also be a debrief regarding October at the next meeting.

Resident Parking Request

Ms. Hodge explains that the Ward 6 Councilor Riccardi requested year-round resident parking for Osborne Street be considered. She notes these are not staff recommendations, and that this and the next agenda item are meant to hear from the councilor and residents.

Chair Shallop notes that she does not believe there is a formal policy for requirements for this kind of request, as alluded to during public comment, but that any suggestions or benchmarks have been informal. A map of the area in question is shown.

Councilor Riccardi introduces herself and explains she spoke to Mr. Kucharsky, who informed her that there is no official petition or process, but that the Department asks for signatures and names of residents associated with the request, noting that staff and commission usually seek a high percentage of support. She acknowledges the magnitude of such changes and agrees that residents should be in agreement. Councilor Riccardi states she is interested in hearing from the public, and describes Osborne Street as a narrow, two-way street with parking on one side. A street view is shown on the screen, and she explains that two traveling cars cannot fit, requiring those traveling in opposite directions to pull over. She also notes that the area closest to North Street is quite congested.

Chair Shallop notes that she lives nearby and assumes that because the commuter rail is so close some people may be parking there for the train in addition to residences. Councilor Riccardi notes the street is mostly empty during the day and worse at night, anecdotally, but would be interested in more information. Chair Shallop explains that the next agenda item is related and perhaps should be discussed in tandem. As a resident in the area, she states she understands the one-way request for Osborne Street and Upham Street, but that she would like to hear from residents. She notes that part of Upham Street is currently one-way. Chair Shallops there will be no voting tonight, just discussion and input.

Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Bob Arabian of 51 Lafayette Street introduces himself. Mr. Arabian states his comments are about Haunted Happenings in the downtown area. Chair Shallop states the Commission is only taking comment related to this agenda item.

Kurt Rothmich of 120 North Street introduces himself, on the corner of Osborne and North Street. Mr. Rothmich states that cars parking closely to the intersection is often a problem for turning cars. He also states he is in favor of resident permit parking and suggests it is necessary with all the nearby development and lost parking on North Street. He asks that because his house is on the corner but technically on North Street, he requests any homes like his on a cross street be able to apply for resident parking. Regarding the one-way request, Mr. Rothmich suggests that would be very limiting, noting nearby streets are one-way and also difficult to travel down at times, making issues accessing North Street. Mr. Linard from the City notes that "No Parking Here to Corner" signs for along North Street intersections have been ordered and will be installed.

Alex Myer of 8 Osborne Street introduces himself and agrees with the prior comment that the one-way request would be too limiting, and that he is not in favor. Regarding the request for resident parking, he states he is generally in favor. He notes that the narrowness of the street can often act as a natural traffic calming measure as is. With respect to resident permits, he asks if residents would have guest passes. Ms. Hodge explains resident permit parking, noting there is a small fee for guest passes and for a resident pass. She notes this is why a large percentage of resident buy-in is required.

John Klein of 118 North Street introduces himself and asks about the radius these changes would apply to. Mr. Klein indicates they have service providers that often require parking on Osborne Street as North Street has gotten so full. Mr. Klein asks if his home is close enough to obtain a visitor pass. Chair Shallop states it would be yet to be determined, and it would depend on the regulations and ordinances. Ms. Hodge adds that some areas take a zone approach rather than a street specific approach, and that that could be examined further.

Councilor Riccardi echos the comments about close parking to corners and thanks staff for ordering signage. Councilor Riccardi acknowledges the challenges with making Osborne Street a one-way street, noting there may not be enough resident support. Regarding resident permit parking, she notes there is not a zonal approach in the neighborhood currently. She suggests the area may benefit from October parking restrictions as well. Councilor Riccardi states she would like to hear more input from residents.

Deborah Foley of 30 Upham Street introduces herself and states she does not see how the one-way suggestion would help for Upham Street. She suggests the problem is with parking on both sides on the street rather than two-way traffic.

Chair Shallop agrees with Councilor Riccardi that more input from residents would be helpful. She acknowledges challenges related to parking in the area, but questions whether

the proposed suggestions will provide the desired results. She explains why Upham Street being way could be beneficial due to the narrowness but states she would like to hear from more of the public about the matter. Ms. Shallop indicates she is not in favor of Osborne Street being one-way.

Commissioner Swartz agrees with Commissioner Shallop, and he suggests looking at safety numbers in the area as the discussion continues in addition to parking utilization and volume data. He notes the limited number of comments received tonight regarding the proposals, and he suggests it would be good to get more feedback due to the number of residents that would be affected.

Commission Lt. Tucker states that parking utilization should be examined with respect to the request for resident permit parking. He provides additional comments regarding the narrowness of the streets, but he will defer to resident concerns.

Commissioner Garmendia states based on Google images the streets seem to be in not great shape and could benefit from being repaved. He asks if this is in the calendar anytime soon, and if any improvements are planned it could be good to look into what would make sense. He notes that many of the curbs are at street level, and that certainly contributes to parking on the sidewalks, which commenters have raised concerns about. Mr. Garmendia speaks to the narrowness of the streets and states sometimes one-way traffic is a reasonable solution for streets that are so narrow they create safety or logistic concerns.

Commissioner Swartz states that if parking utilization is examined, we should look at a slightly larger scope to the end of Franklin Street and Foster Street, to see the whole neighborhood. The Commissioners and staff discuss study methods and what kind of data could be expected.

Councilor Riccardi states that if there is a way to determine who is parking it would be beneficial, as we would not want to create parking issues for people who are residents and have lost parking from changes on North Street. She is unsure if resident only parking will fix the frustrations residents have without knowing who is parking. She suggests looking at the timing of parking utilization to help determine as best as possible how the parking is used. Councilor Riccardi speaks to resident permit parking generally, noting that at a 2019 Traffic and Parking Commission meeting there were discussions about looking at resident parking overall and reconsidering policies and processes. Lt. Tucker notes the system is antiquated for sure, and that staff have worked to modernize the process a bit, but acknowledges more needs to be done, including with zoning. Chair Shallop notes there are legacy issues, as well as issues of authority and how to address these topics overall.

Chair Shallop notes there will be car counts and other data collected, and she asks residents and councilors to chat with neighbors if they are interested in further pursuing these proposals. Ms. Hodge states that the Traffic & Parking Department will not move forward with parking utilization studies until further discussions are had with the residents and neighborhood.

One-way Request

Ms. Hodge indicates that the Ward 6 Councilor Riccardi requested the Commission consider making Osborne Street and Upham Street one-way. The topic was discussed as part of the prior agenda item.

OTHER BUSINESS THAT MAY LEGALLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

None.

UPCOMING MEETINGS SCHEDULE

The next meeting is scheduled for November 30, 2022 at 6:00PM.

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL

None.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Swartz and seconded by Commissioner Garmendia, the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 7:08 PM.