

**City of Salem
Traffic and Parking Commission
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, October 5, 2017**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held on Thursday, October 5, 2017 at 6:30pm at 120 Washington Street, Salem, MA. Present were Commission Chair, Tanya Stepasiuk, and Commissioners Eric Papetti and Jamie Metsch. Lt. Robert Preczewski was absent due to the Haunted Happenings Grand Parade.

CALL OF MEETING

Meeting called to order at 6:30pm.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Joyce Kenney of 285 Lafayette Street reported that cars continue to park in the bus zone on both sides of the street. She has seen tickets issued, but the problem persists. Signage is needed to prevent more effectively.

NEW / OLD BUSINESS

Commission Chair recommended taking the topic of MPS Parking Meter Trial out of order and start.

MPS PARKING METER TRIAL

Mr. Smith provided short introduction. Rob Matthews of Municipal Parking Systems (MPS) was present to provide an overview of their parking meter system, and proposal to run a pilot in the City of Salem. Mr. Matthews had discussed the trial with Mr. Smith, but input from the Commission was sought.

Mr. Matthews provided a presentation about the system. MPS uses a smart meter system that incorporates video, motion detection, and other devices to provide a fully automated parking system that collects parking fees, monitors use/time, issues violations automatically, provides option to pay parking ticket on the spot, and provides live parking availability to mobile users, and more. The system is also capable of providing price variation – resident vs. visitor rates (using plate info), extended stay rates (e.g. over 4 hrs, rates increase), etc. The company provides and installs the system at no cost to the municipality and in return takes a portion of the parking revenues (which is determined based on a trial). In other cities where implemented, the systems resulted in higher parking compliance (some more than 80% improvement), enforcement rates, increased meter collection, and better utilization.

The equipment is larger than an average meter, and includes a video display on each meter. This can be dimmed or triggered by movement. In addition to providing parking rate and time info, the display can provide video and audio notices (e.g.

snow emergencies, special event no parking), and can include advertising (city takes a percentage of the ad revenue).

MPS proposed a 30-day trial on Washington Street (4 to 6 meters) at no cost to the City. After the trial, they would present the results and proposal for a full system.

Comments from Commissioners

The Commission members were impressed by the technology and system capability. Ms. Stepasiuk expressed some concern about undertaking a pilot before a more comprehensive strategy or philosophy about parking in the downtown was determined. Mr. Papetti felt more research was required before entering into a pilot and suggested doing a pilot RFQ. Mr. Metsch expressed the need for a more extensive discussion about technology and how we intend to use it. It should be most about data and improving conditions, not just increasing revenue. Mr. Smith stated the data analysis was the most attractive aspect.

Questions focused on how the MPS system differs from the current smart meter technology. Mr. Smith explained it's far more advanced and offers more options, particularly around enforcement and messaging – snow emergencies, special events, etc. that if successful, could be helpful.

The fee and payment structure was discussed, in particular, how much of the revenue would the city give up? Mr. Matthews explained that the pilot would determine that based on compliance and fees likely to be collected. Existing client fees/revenues range system by system. MPS guarantees that the City will never receive less than they currently make, and will almost certainly receive more revenue. He provided Lowell, MA as an example. During the trial there, revenue per space went from an estimated \$150 per space to \$223 per space. Ms. Stepasiuk again stated that more discussion around parking philosophy was needed. Revenue shouldn't be the driving factor.

The appearance of the meters was of concern to some members. The meters are large and the screens could be overwhelming to our smaller downtown. Mr. Matthews explained that the screens can be dimmed, and that they will soon launch a multispace option where one meter controls several spaces (much like a kiosk).

Public Comment

Fuzzy Abusharkh of 4 Harrison Road stated that the aim of the technology appears solely to increase revenue, and it is not community friendly. He also felt several systems, like video monitoring would need to be shut off.

Recommendation

Commission recommended that Mr. Smith and the incoming assistant continue to research and explore what other communities are doing, look at technologies that exist and see what's coming down the pike, etc. All felt the MPS technology was interesting, but given the scale of the change, more info was needed before discussion of a pilot with any one meter vendor.

REQUEST FOR TRAFFIC ORDINANCE RECOMMENDATIONS:

1) Handicap Parking: 26 Chandler Road:

Mr. Smith explained that a handicap space was requested at 26 Chandler Street in Ward 7. Lt. Preczewski provided the documentation with the request prior to the meeting and recommended the change.

Commission Recommendation

Mr. Papetti moved to recommend that 26 Chandler be provided with a handicap parking space. Mr. Metsch seconded. Recommendation approved 3-0.

2) Parking Changes: Harrison Road

Repeal Existing: General Prohibition Towing Zones, both sides 8:00am to 8:00pm Monday through Friday. (dated 5/6/82)

Replace Existing Ordinance With:

- *Harrison Road, southerly side No Parking, Tow Zone. Harrison Road northerly side No Parking, Tow Zone, 8am to 6pm, Monday through Friday 8am to 6pm.*
- *Resident Parking Zone B Red, Sticker Parking. Harrison Road northerly side resident sticker parking only 6pm to 8am, Zone B, Color Red, Monday through Friday and weekends. Residents of 238 Loring Avenue to 258 Loring Avenue to be included and eligible.*

Mr. Smith provided an overview. The current parking ordinance restricting daytime parking on both sides, but allowing evening parking, is not working. The neighborhood, and the Ward 7 Councilor, requested that the current ordinance be repealed and replaced with the above. Lt. Preczewski provided documentation to repeal and replace parking ordinances for Harrison Road. Based on Mr. Smith's understanding of the issues the request was made due to safety and access concerns, and increases in overnight parking by Salem State students.

Public Comment

Fuzzy Abusharkh of 4 Harrison Road, stated that the main concern is the student parking. The student parking at night has increased, particularly around 10pm when the C lots (SSU Commuter Parking) close to students and restrict overnight parking. The students move to the streets to park. The \$450 cost may also be an issue.

Snow removal is also an issue given the width of the road.

Commission Comments and Questions

Mr. Metsch stated that this is a location where resident parking appears to be a real issue. He hoped that a resident only sign will keep spaces clear better than the current 8am-8pm tow zone.

Ms. Stepasiuk inquired if it was an enforcement issue.

(Public Comment) Mr. Abusharkh stated that after 8pm, anyone can park on either side.

Mr. Stepasiuk and Mr. Metsch questioned if the no parking on the southerly side was a safety/access issue? Mr. Smith stated that based on the wording of the documentation provided, it was somewhat unclear if the time restriction of 8am to 6pm is just for the northerly side or the southerly side as well. He could confirm. This could be incorporated into any recommendation.

Commission Recommendation

Mr. Metsch motioned to recommend implementing the proposed changes as follows. Resident Sticker Parking, Zone B, Red, northerly side 6pm to 8am, Monday-Friday and weekends. No Parking, northerly and southerly side, 8am to 6pm, and if safety/access is an issue, southerly side No Parking Tow Zone 24/7. Mr. Papetti seconded. Recommendation approved 3-0.

BRIDGE STREET COMPLETE STREETS

Mr. Smith provided an overview. The project entails a complete reconstruction of Bridge Street from Boston Street to Flint Street, using a \$3.5 million MassWorks Grant. The Planning Department's Andrew Shapiro is managing the grant and process for the City. In September, Stantec, the City's design consultant presented the most recent design at a public meeting. The Bicycling Advisory Committee was also updated.

The current design reflects changes comments received by the Traffic and Parking Commission and the Bicycling Committee during their joint meeting in June. This is the Traffic and Parking Commission's opportunity to provide comments.

Mr. Papetti, also a member of the Bicycling Advisory Committee, added that the committee had requested some basic revisions based on best practices from the MassDOT Separated Bike Facilities guide, but had been met with resistance. The key issues discussed centered on the intersection of Bridge Street and Boston Street. Bicycle signaling and other alignment/design issues would vastly improve bicycle safety (design shown on p. 115 of MassDOT guide was mentioned).

Commission members suggested that the recommendations by the Bicycle Committee be taken seriously, and that a better process be devised. Future projects should incorporate a more transparent process from the start, with overviews and task status, etc. Other comments suggested improving the pedestrian conditions at Boston and Bridge – needs closer study. All felt the intersection design was more or less the same as current conditions, and that was not acceptable. Safety needs to be paramount. Suggestions included recessed crosswalks to improve pedestrian visibility, moving crosswalks, squaring off the intersection more to slow traffic and ensuring VHB (consultant working on the Boston Street Complete Streets design) reviews the intersection as well. In addition, installing more advanced signals that include bicycles was recommended, even if it takes time to activate/program. It would be more cost effective to do now, rather than retrofit later.

Mr. Smith agreed to communicate the Commission's comments to the project manager and consultant.

RESIDENT AND VISITOR PARKING ORDINANCE DISCUSSION

Mr. Smith provided an overview. Based on analysis of the current ordinance, the many public concerns and complaints, and recent requests for the Commission to recommend additional streets, an analysis of the City's Resident and Visitor parking is needed. This is suggested to create a process that is understandable, that is predictable, that is based on data, and that doesn't simply move existing problems onto neighboring streets.

Mr. Smith proposed a public process to learn about the issues through neighborhood meetings, reviewing current policies, researching best practices, and then make recommendations to City Council.

Many issues and concerns have been brought to his attention. Concerns identified to date include:

- 1) *Lack of fairness*
 - a. *Zones/streets feel arbitrary* - Some streets are resident, others aren't. Many in non-resident areas complain that while they are prevented from parking on resident-only streets (even if it's the next street), resident-only people can park anywhere.
 - b. One size fits all approach doesn't work. What about property owners (e.g. landlords), sort term residents, visitors.
- 2) *Lack of predictability.* (see above, but also...) Zones should include all streets in an area, not just some and should be by neighborhood, not by Council District. (Zone C in particular is odd.)
- 3) *Pass allocation/number of passes:* Are we issuing the right number of passes. In some areas, passes issued far exceeds on-street capacity. Need to review.
- 4) *Visitor Passes – General Issues*
 - a. People selling the passes – need to enforce, but how? Very time consuming.
 - b. Visitor passes can be used anywhere in Zone. This isn't the intent.
 - c. People abusing use – using for way more than 14 day maximum per vehicle.
- 5) *Pricing.* Resident passes are \$10 for 2 years. Visitor passes are only \$1 for 2 years. (Lower cost and longer periods than in other communities)

Commissioners present were in agreement that current procedures and policies need to be reviewed to create a fairer, more predictable process and system.

Ms. Stepasiuk suggested starting with a survey of best practices in other communities and looking for strategies applicable to a small city like Salem. Mr. Smith confirmed this would be among the first tasks. It would be followed by meetings with neighborhoods.

Mr. Metsch stated that he would like to see some short-term, low hanging fruit recommendations in addition to longer-term strategies, given this could take a long time to figure out. Mr. Papetti stressed the need to understand the various needs

within the community. How does the overall system help us to achieve parking and transportation goals, including how parking affects mode choice?

ADJOURNEMENT

Meeting adjourned at 8:41pm.