

City of Salem
Traffic and Parking Commission
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, September 14, 2017

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held on Thursday, September 14, 2017 at 6:30pm at 120 Washington Street, Salem, MA. Present were Commission Chair, Tanya Stepasiuk, Vice Chair Nicholas Downing, and Commissioners Eric Papetti and Lt. Robert Preczewski. Commissioner Jamie Metsch was absent.

CALL OF MEETING

Meeting called to order at 6:32pm.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Christopher Knight of Ward Street asked if Ward Street could be added to list of streets eligible for resident parking for October.

Donna Moynihan, 14 Moynihan Street, has been waiting for a handicap parking. Have 3 handicap people in the house. Asked what they can do in the interim. Lt. Preczewski stated that it would require an official request for an ordinance change.

NEW / OLD BUSINESS

REQUEST FOR TRAFFIC ORDINANCE RECOMMENDATIONS: FAIRVIEW ROAD PARKING AMENDMENTS.

Mr. Smith explained that there are several parking restrictions for Fairview Avenue that confuse when and where parking is allowed. Some also appear to be incorrectly recorded for Fairview Avenue. The request from Councilor Turiel is to make the roadway Resident Only in its entirety with the exception of the inner loop area, which would prohibit parking at all times. Given the lack of clarity in the current ordinances, the recommendation is needed should changes be necessary.

Commission questions focused on whether or not the entire inner loop was included, or just a portion, and why the request. Mr. Smith said it was the entire inner loop area due to safety vehicle access due to roadway width at turns.

Recommendation: Mr. Downing moved to remove resident parking on inner loop area of Fairview, and to establish a No Parking zone on the inner loop area. Mr. Papetti seconded. Recommended 4 in favor, 0 opposed.

REQUEST FOR TRAFFIC ORDINANCE RECOMMENDATION: TIME RESTRICTED PARKING: LORING AVENUE (JEFFERSON AVE TO LINCOLN RD)

Mr. Smith reported that Salem State University (SSU) students are parking for days or longer along Loring Avenue. Residents are looking for a way to prevent the multiday parking. A residential only designation is desired; however, the State controls this section of Loring Avenue (Route 1A) and will not allow a residential designation. They will consider time restriction when a municipality requests it.

Parking has been allowed on this stretch since 1980s, with a few exceptions, according to Lt. Preczewski. Parking is prohibited on the curve towards Leggs Hill Road, and a section on the westerly side nearest Jefferson Avenue. Only a few houses on this road do not have off-street parking.

The Commission felt that parking turnover is needed. A reasonable compromise would be 4-hour parking, although some felt students might still risk getting tickets if the total sum is lower than the semester parking fee through SSU.

Recommendation:

Commission recommended 4-hour parking restriction, 8am-6pm, on Loring Avenue between Jefferson Avenue and Lincoln Road be requested from MassDOT. (Per City Solicitor, City Council vote is not required as this is a State controlled roadway. However, the recommendation to place it into Ordinance would be beneficial.)

DAVID KNOWLTON, CITY ENGINEER AND DPS DIRECTOR

David Knowlton was joined by Gary Herbert of Stantec Consulting. Mr. Herbert is working on many of the City's traffic studies and design projects.

The Commission requested that Mr. Knowlton attend to discuss and provide a list of ongoing projects, given that one of their charges is overseeing and implementing Complete Streets, and the ways in which information has been disseminated has felt somewhat disjointed. Mr. Knowlton provided a list and overview of current projects.

Swampscott Road and First Street

The City and Stantec are designing a roundabout at the Swampscott Road and First Street intersection. The intersection is highlighted in MassDOT's Route 107 Study; however, given traffic conditions, the intersection needs immediate attention. As a result, the City is leading the design and construction.

Through analysis, Stantec determined roundabout would be best solution. At the public meeting in February 2017, the neighborhood overwhelmingly supported the roundabout as the preferred alternative. The concept plan is now complete and the City is in permitting. Some environmental issues with wetlands still need to be addressed, and the design team is working with the adjacent property owner to add the entry/exit as part of the roundabout.

The Commission discussed project cost estimates with Stantec - between \$350K to \$400K - which has already allocated through the FY18 CIP. The roundabout alternative is significantly lower than the estimated \$700K for a signalized intersection alternative. Construction was hoped for this fall, but will now bid in winter with construction this spring.

Commission asked for detail on design - how would it accommodate cars and trucks? Stantec stated that a truck apron would allow for truck movement, but cars would travel wider circle. Crosswalks would be included using continental style, but no signals are included due to low pedestrian traffic. Bicycle accommodations would be minor, with agreement during discussion that Swampscott Road is not a natural bike route.

Lafayette / Loring / West Intersection

The City received a \$400K Complete Streets grant from the State for its construction, with the remaining \$150K already allocated through FY18 CIP. Construction underway. In addition to improved signals, and bicycle accommodations and sidewalks within existing right-of-way, the developer at West Ave is providing room for a right turn from West Street that will greatly improve traffic flow. Mr. Smith stated that the striping plans will be revised to further improve bicycle accommodations, and that he will work with engineering.

Brown Street/Hawthorne West (Conant Statue Intersection)

City is repaving the area and will create a new traffic pattern. Currently, roadway on both sides of statue on Brown are two ways. Mr. Hebert of Stantec stated that the existing condition creates a “wild west” pattern. The new pattern will allow one-way traffic heading west from Hawthorne to Brown on the Witch Museum side, and easterly traffic from Brown to Hawthorne Blvd on the PEM property side.

Comments from the Commission focused on two options. The first would provide one wide lane at the end of Brown heading onto Hawthorne, the second would provide a two lane (right turn and left turn). Plans will also create improved pedestrian buffer between statue and cars traveling on Hawthorne.

(Commissioner Nick Downing excused himself from the remainder of the meeting.)

Commission inquired about possibility of closing the side nearest the Witch Museum permanently for a larger plaza. Lt. Preczewski informed the other Commissioners that he had met with David Knowlton and Gary Hebert about the intersection, and didn't want to increase traffic by removing one side. He stated that during construction of new bump out at Witch Museum, this pattern was implemented temporarily and was effective. No complaints were received.

Commission suggested moving forward with a “temporary” test plan using basic paint – not thermoplastic – to make sure the new pattern works. Mr. Hebert felt it was a good compromise. Some concern was expressed about pedestrian safety with the two-lane option from Brown to Hawthorne. Mr. Hebert stated sightlines would be best with single lane option.

Recommendation: Mr. Papetti moved to recommend Option A (single lane both sides of statue) with paint rather than thermoplastic so that there is time to study the other alternative. Lt. Preczewski seconded. 3 in Favor, 0 opposed, 2 absent.

Winter Street / Bridge Street / Northey Street Intersection

Prior to the reconstruction about 8 years ago, intersection had a median and a pedestrian activated stop light. The MassDOT project removed the median and signal creating problematic pedestrian crossings and increased speeding. The City recently added RRFBs for pedestrian crossings on Bridge Street only, but issues persist. Stantec will now study potential changes to intersection design to improve pedestrian conditions, slow cars, and more. Concepts to be developed and then reviewed with neighborhood.

Bridge Street / Sgt. Ayube Memorial Bypass Intersection

Stantec studying traffic patterns. Making the right lane approaching Bridge Street a right turn only lane to be studied. Most cars appear to take a right here, and backups occur when cars going forward do not take right on red. Commission also asked that Stantec look at patterns turning onto Sgt. Ayube from Bridge Street. Very confusing when cars exit Bell at Salem Station apartments.

Chestnut / Norman / Summer Intersection

Mr. Knowlton states that this is among the most problematic intersections in the City. Mr. Hebert added that Stantec is studying potential for a micro roundabout to better move traffic through the intersection. Biggest challenge is to come up with a design that allows for truck traffic given the intersection width. Stantec thinks it can be done and will present some alternatives in a few months.

Ending Comments from Commission

Commission suggested that an updated list be maintained so that they were aware of current project status, but also so that it could be shared publicly. Mr. Smith will keep the list updated and will include stage of project, funding sources, timing, etc.

Mr. Papetti would like to see a 5-year transportation capital plan developed that would serve the City as a local version of the TIP (Statewide Transportation Improvement Program). This would allow the City to come up with a transparent, equitable process about when and how decisions are made to move projects forward.

ADA PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION

Mr. Knowlton explained that engineering and the City's ADA Commission are engaged in infrastructure planning and ADA compliance. Currently, the City has most of the street and ramps inventories.

The City is applying for a Mass Office of Disabilities grant for an update to our ADA Plan – our current plan is from 2008. Mr. Papetti suggested the city look at the plan consultant FST completed for Somerville – it's "excellent." Mr. Knowlton stated that Salem is aims to get to that level. The Commission suggested that the City obtain or allocsate necessary funding for a comprehensive plan. Mr. Smith and Mr. Knowlton would be attending the Disabilities Commission in November to discuss further.

Pavement Strategies

Mr. Knowlton provided an overview of the City's paving program. The City uses the following funding sources for paving: Chapter 90 – about 800K-900K, CIP, and General Fund. Monies from Community Benefit Agreements (e.g. Northshore Medical Center, Footprint Power, National Grid Cable Project) are also used.

The Pavement Management System begins from engineering perspective, rates the roadway surface condition, and prioritizes what will be done. The road condition rating process is visual and done every 3 years using Street Scan system to take the human error out of it. The machine is helpful, but maybe takes the detail out. The City

then looks at the utilities, and coordinates with utility companies (gas, electric, etc.). There's a lot of give and take.

Mr. Papetti requested more info about the subsurface and historic conditions. Mr. Knowlton explained it varies. We know some, but given the age of our roads, we often don't know until we dig it up.

Mr. Papetti asked Mr. Knowlton to provide a date when the full road network would be in a state of good repair. Mr. Knowlton could not provide that, but that the City looks at the work done and the ratings annually to see how we've improved. Commission recommended to provided more money to get our entire network in a state of good repair.

Mr. Knowlton displayed a map of the handicap ramp assessment. It showed a lot of non-compliant areas. The City is starting with sidewalks in the worst condition, including ramps. Mr. Papetti stated that ADA requires that we do ADA ramps with any repaving. We aren't doing that. Mr. Knowlton stated that the City strives to do that, but funding is a factor. The City is doing a lot of sidewalk and ramps this year including in the Point, the Derby Street neighborhood and others. Mr. Papetti inquired if the City will fix or add all ramps on all roadways it will repave? Mr. Knowlton stated that for reconstruction projects, yes. Derby Street was again mentioned (including the side streets) and for Jefferson Ave the City is paving this year, then sidewalks next year.

Mr. Papetti stated that ADA does not leave any wiggle room. Not doing all ramps when improving the roads leads to complaints (to FTA and others) which can lead to bigger issues for the City. Mr. Knowlton stated that the City is striving to do just that. Mr. Knowlton was then asked if he had talked to the City Solicitor about the ADA requirement. He and Mr. Smith said they will discuss with her, but added that the City is making a considerable effort to address ADA, including designating more money this year to address sidewalks and accessibility. Mr. Hebert added that it's \$5-\$6K per corner, so every project becomes higher cost. Mr. Papetti understands the issue of funding, but cities like Somerville, Cambridge and Beverly make sure all projects are compliant. Salem is a small city, with big city visibility and needs to do better.

Work Order System

Ms. Stepasiuk inquired about the City's work order system. Mr. Knowlton stated that the City has a formal process, relying primarily on SeeClickFix, but also on phone calls, and information from Ward Councilors. Engineering and DPS takes all of it in, then creates work flow from that. Work orders are printed, go to the foreman, and then plan out several weeks. All is added into the City's database.

Street Sweeping

The Commission inquired about street sweeping frequency and equipment. Mr. Knowlton stated that the City has two sweepers that are out almost every day doing individual areas that need it most. In addition, the City does two citywide sweeps – one in Spring and ne in Fall. Additionally, the City has a small sweeper for parking lots and other areas.

The Commission thanked Mr. Knowlton and Mr. Hebert for providing the overview. It was very helpful to understand all that is underway.

Ms. Stepasiuk moved to take a 5-minute recess. All agreed.

9:37pm. Ms. Stepasiuk called the meeting back to order.

Commission decided to move the Garage Utilization and Rates and Resident Parking topics to a future meeting, as the meeting was going late and both would require considerable time and discussion.

Mr. Smith discussed the remaining topics which were updates, and did not require formal recommendation from the Commission, with the exception of the Essex Street Pedestrian pilot.

Concurrent Signal Timing

Mr. Smith provided an overview of concurrent pedestrian crossings/signals (pedestrians cross intersection with traffic flowing in the same direction) compared to exclusive pedestrian crossings (all car traffic is stopped for the pedestrian cycle). Most states and cities use concurrent crossings so drivers are accustomed to it, including nearby in Cambridge and Boston. By eliminating the exclusive pedestrian cycle, traffic flows more frequently through intersections – including pedestrian traffic. The City will run a pilot in conjunction with the smart signal upgrades to test this. Pedestrians will be given a lead time before cars, which increases visibility.

The Commission was highly supportive of this pilot project.

Downtown Parking Drop-Off and Pick-Up Pilot Locations

Mr. Smith explained that the Traffic and Parking Department is looking to identify locations in the downtown for short-term drop-off and pick-up pilot locations. Given the increasing number of restaurants and services downtown that rely on delivery or pickup, identifying a series of locations that would assist both customers and workers. A more detailed proposal would be forthcoming.

Essex Street Pedestrian Pilot

Mr. Smith provided an over view of the pilot proposal. The stretch of Essex Street from Hawthorne Blvd. to the PEM is a heavy pedestrian corridor with narrow sidewalks and a wide roadway. Currently, many pedestrians use the southerly portion of the roadway as a pedestrian route, as the current sidewalk does not provide adequate space. Pictures of pedestrians walking in the street were provided. Because auto traffic is light along this stretch, and there is considerable room for an expanded sidewalk, a tactical project using paint is proposed to increase the pedestrian space. If successful, a more permanent sidewalk widening may be required.

The Commission was highly supportive of the pilot, and recommended to move forward.

Commission Meetings

The Commission discussed meeting moving forward. Meeting have been running long, and the need to spend more time on larger projects and policies was needed. The members present concluded that holding two meetings per month would be more effective, similar to the Planning Board. This would allow them to address fewer issues per meeting. All present agreed. In addition to the first Thursday of every month, a second meeting on the third Thursday when needed, was recommended. The second meeting would be help primarily to discuss larger policy initiatives and projects.

ADJOURNEMENT

Meeting adjourned at 9:57pm.

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