

**City of Salem
Traffic and Parking Commission
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, June 17, 2021**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held remotely on Thursday, June 17, 2021 at 6:00pm, in accordance with Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, and pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §20, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place.

Present: Commission Chair Tanya Shallop, Commission Vice-Chair Eric Papetti, Commissioner Jeff Swartz, Commission Lt. David Tucker, Director of Traffic and Parking David Kucharsky, and Traffic and Parking Staff Russell Findley **Absent:** Commissioner Robin Seidel

CALL OF MEETING

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm by Chair Shallop. Chair Shallop explains how members of the public may participate during the remote meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Linda Stark of 11 Church Street asks if the work on the Museum Place Garage will be starting in the next week. Mr. Kucharsky asks if she is referring to the striping, and she confirms. Mr. Kucharsky indicates it will indeed start next week, and that he will check on specific dates. Ms. Stark also states the holes on the ramps are bad and keep getting worse.

NEW/OLD BUSINESS

Fort Ave/Winter Island Rd/Columbus Ave/Columbus Sq Intersection

Mr. Kucharsky introduces Alex Bulhoes and Christi Apicelli from McMahon Associates, and explains that they will be presenting in order to get feedback from the Commission and public to begin development of a preliminary design for the intersection.

Ms. Apicelli introduces herself and explains that she will be providing an overview of the project and listening to feedback. Ms. Apicelli discusses the study area and scope of work, noting the plan is to evaluate crosswalk locations, safety improvements, and engineered designs.

Mr. Kucharsky explains the background a bit, noting this will be the first of several discussions with the consultants. He explains that the current striping on the roadway was implemented in October 2019 with the help of Toole Design consultants as a way to address traffic calming, while also introducing elements from the bike master plan and complete streets policy. Following this, additional work is proceeding with the goal of

continuing the multi-use path and tying it into the Willows area. Mr. Kucharsky indicates, that in the Spring of 2020, he along with the consultants from Toole Design met on site with Police, DPS, and the Ward Councilor to discuss additional improvements and clarify where pedestrians, drivers, and cyclists should be. In Summer 2020 the following additional improvements were made: the yellow centerline was refreshed; the dotted line was converted to a solid white line to clarify the edge of the travel way; curb parking stops were installed to delineate the edge of parking areas; hatched areas were expanded with posts to clarify lanes and corners; a new dashed yellow center line was installed to clarify lanes in certain areas; green conflict zone markings were installed to improve awareness at driveways; posts were installed to slow right-turning vehicles; a rumble strip and armadillos were installed in the buffer zone separating the travel ways with the multi-use path. Mr. Kucharsky explains that during this time there was a traffic calming request submitted to address speeding on Columbus Avenue. A few options were presented to the Commission and public back in December 2020. Given the ongoing concerns from residents and feedback received, Mr. Kucharsky indicates he and staff wanted to take a holistic approach to the intersection, and therefore approached McMahon Associates. To date a survey of the area has been conducted, identifying grades, drainage, and utilities. Consultants are here this evening to hear from the public and Commission in order to begin developing a preliminary design that will seek additional input.

Ms. Apicelli discusses the existing conditions on Fort Avenue a bit more, and shows the base plan resulting from the survey. Ms. Apicelli asks the Board to consider what they would like to see, such as more safety, green spaces, or parking retention. She also asks them to consider who the project should primarily benefit between pedestrians, drivers, and cyclists. Finally, Ms. Apicelli asks the Board to consider what the biggest challenges might be in achieving the project goals.

Commissioner Swartz asks about the public safety and accident data, and whether it is parsed out by season or accident type. Mr. Kucharsky explains the crash data is reported by the police and that it has not been that high. Mr. Kucharsky also discusses volume and speed data collected.

Vice Chair Papetti asks if the earlier Toole Design concepts will be a starting point going forward, or if staff and consultants are considering a blank slate approach. Mr. Kucharsky indicates it was presented to the consultants as a background, and that the plan was to hear from the Commission and members of the public to determine if any elements work and are worth continuing.

Ms. Apicelli further explains that the work to date was meant to be a quick build and address concerns immediately, whereas going forward the scope would be something more permanent. She suggests that the best designs will be self-enforcing and facilitate good behavior by all.

Vice Chair Papetti recommends expanding the study area to consider the entrance to Salem State. Mr. Papetti acknowledges there is confusion currently for all road users, and notes that the entrance to Salem State is a driveway that is used much less frequently than

Winter Island Road, but it is striped in an unclear way. Vice Chair Papetti suggests the dashed line across Winter Island Road makes it seem like a secondary crossing where bikers and pedestrians can let their guard down, when the reality is the opposite. Vice Chair Papetti also suggests considering extending the two-way bike lane up to Memorial Drive before it crosses the street, and making that the bike path that gets you into the Willows. Mr. Papetti contends it might be a more intuitive location to cross as it feels like you are in the park, and there is more room with which to cross without affecting parking.

Commissioner Swartz agrees with Vice Chair Papetti's recommendations. Mr. Swartz also states that while he has not seen the speeding data, he imagines a major complaint is people speeding while turning right onto Winter Island Road. Commissioner Swartz suggests the existing conditions do not help, as drivers will still go over the cross hatched area at high speeds. He notes this area has limited visibility, particularly if cars are parked nearby. Commissioner Swartz adds that this is a wide point in the road, compared to where Vice Chair Papetti recommended moving the crossing, which appears to be narrower.

Vice Chair Papetti indicates pedestrians and joggers are heavy users of the two-way bike lane currently and expects that would continue; he suggests the consultants take that into consideration, and consider 12 or 14 foot wide pathways.

Commissioner Lt. Tucker indicates he conducted a quick search on MassDOT, and that there is only one reported accident in the last five years. The accident involved a car pulling out of Columbus turning left onto Fort Avenue that was hit by another vehicle. Lt. Tucker states that whatever designs are implemented, they should consider resident concerns regarding speeding. Lt. Tucker offers additional observations, including issues with vehicles exiting Winter Island and turning left onto Fort Avenue. Leaving the Willows, Lt. Tucker notes that while it is properly striped, there have been apparent sightline issues where drivers find themselves to the left of the double yellow line before realizing they have made a mistake. He notes he has received many calls for what he would characterize as near misses. In response, some of the lines were brightened and extended and some of the calls decreased. Lt. Tucker states he likes that Winter Island comes out a little more perpendicular to Fort Avenue, and suggests that could be attempted on Columbus. Regarding the idea of the bike lane continuing on the East side of Fort Avenue, he suggests being cognizant of how it will affect the intersections. Lt. Tucker suggests a goal of having cars turn left or right in and out of Columbus rather than flying down Fort Avenue, and states there is not enough braking going on. In terms of parking, Lt. Tucker indicates it does not seem to be an issue in the area.

Chair Shalloo agrees with all the comments thus far, and adds that of the three issues safety is the top concern. Chair Shalloo indicates green space is great but that the area has a good amount, and that with respect to parking retention she echoes Lt. Tucker's claim that there appears to be a sufficient amount. Chair Shalloo says she would like the design to consider all users, but suggests a bit more focus on making sure pedestrian and cyclist needs are met as cars have historically been prioritized.

Commissioner Swartz asks Lt. Tucker if the accident data included any reported pedestrian accidents, and he responds that the MassDOT data should encompass all accidents. Lt. Tucker also notes that close calls and near misses do not get captured in the data.

Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Ward 1 Councilor Robert McCarthy introduces himself and states he appreciates the new consultants coming on board to approach the issues with a fresh set of eyes. Councilor McCarthy asks that Mr. Kucharsky forward the emails regarding this roadway to the consultants, and states the area has been problematic. Councilor McCarthy explains he is here because residents of upper Columbus have petitioned for traffic calming, as it is almost a straight shot onto the street with cars going 30 or 40 mph, sometimes more. He adds that a big issue is also the intersection of Winter Island Road and Fort Avenue, as there is too much going on there. Councilor McCarthy notes that turning left onto Fort Avenue from Winter Island Road can be an issue as the white line is just six inches from the curb, and any bikers that have not crossed are in danger from vehicles. Councilor McCarthy states that the road has been narrowed and travel has been forced over to the curb so there is no room left. Councilor McCarthy states the Commission is highlighting protection for pedestrians and bikers, while asking cars to drive within six inches of the curb with telephone poles on the curb line. He again states that if a biker decides not to cross, then there is an issue. Councilor McCarthy also notes that leaving the Willows, the parking ends and the road suddenly shifts right, which causes some additional confusion at the intersection. Mr. McCarthy suggests moving the multi-use path before the parking starts. Mr. McCarthy expresses frustration that there are currently bike sharrows all over the place and that there is too much going on. He adds that he has seen many near misses, and that while they do not get reported in the data they get posted about on Facebook or neighborhood pages. Councilor McCarthy also contends someone hit an armadillo today.

Belle Steadman of 6 Lowell Street introduces herself and echoes the frustration of her neighbors. Ms. Steadman states the changing configuration of the street has put all lives in danger, and indicates she encounters near misses daily, including near head-on collisions. She contends there are too many lines in the intersections, resulting in motorist and pedestrian confusion. Ms. Steadman asks that this be rectified before it is too late. Ms. Steadman adds that there is no emergency breakdown lane where the armadillos are, stating that if emergency vehicles are approaching there is no place to pull over. Ms. Steadman asks that the area be made as safe and simple as can be.

Cindy Jerzylo of 17 Bayview Avenue introduces herself as the Co-Chair of the Willows Neighborhood Association. Ms. Jerzylo asks if the crosswalk at Winter Island Road and Fort Avenue will be kept or raised. Mr. Kucharsky states that currently staff and consultants are taking in feedback and will be evaluating whether the crosswalk remains or is relocated. He notes that some of the Commissioners have suggested relocating it farther North, while Councilor McCarthy has suggested it move farther South. Ms. Jerzylo states she is in favor of Councilor McCarthy and Ms. Steadman's suggestions. She adds that she is very concerned with the speeding issue on Fort Avenue, as it seems to be used like a race track

all night long. Ms. Jerzylo suggests nice speedbumps, similar to those on Chestnut Street to cut down on speeding.

Mr. Kucharsky mentions the traffic calming program and application process, and notes that once submitted the streets in the Willows can be evaluated. Ms. Jerzylo states many people have asked for it and that it has not yet seemed to help. She asks if the speed limit can be reduced to 20 mph. Mr. Kucharsky indicates City Council should soon approve reducing the speed on a trial basis for Columbus Avenue, and that signage will be installed. Ms. Jerzylo suggests that while signs are great, more enforcement is needed at all hours.

Eric Nowak of 19 Columbus Avenue introduces himself and states he had submitted an application for traffic calming. Mr. Nowak states we are waiting too long to make decisions on what to do here and that it is getting worse. He states if something is not done soon there will be an accident. Mr. Nowak says he sees near misses three or four times a week, as well as cars going over armadillos and incorrect lane travel. Mr. Nowak expresses frustration that it feels like the concerns of residents are not being heard. Mr. Nowak suggests a wider bike path is a terrible risk with the traffic and parking in the area, particularly with no break down lane on either side. Mr. Nowak contends the bike lane was wider previously and had to be reduced. He adds that speeding is constantly an issue, and that while Lt. Tucker and others are not concerned about parking, he states it is definitely an issue for the neighborhood, with tourists taking up resident sticker parking spaces and lots of visitors on the weekends.

Linda Stark of Church Street introduces herself and states she frequents the Willows. Ms. Stark suggests installing a blinking yellow light at difficult intersections coming down Fort Avenue as a way to indicate drivers need to slow down.

Vice Chair Papetti states he appreciates hearing from the public and acknowledges there are disagreements regarding how things have turned out thus far, but reminds everyone to keep their focus on the big picture. Vice Chair Papetti suggests people think of nearby streets like Webb, Essex, South Washington Square, all of which are narrower than Fort Avenue and have no breakdown lanes, but get no complaints because they are thought of as different types of streets. Mr. Papetti states he hopes this discussion leads us to look at Fort Avenue as a different kind of street, as it has been treated like a drag strip for a long time. Vice Chair Papetti says he hopes it will transform into a low speed local road just like others in Salem that do not have similar concerns.

Chair Shallop agrees with Vice Chair Papetti's remarks, and states that you cannot have a wide street and also expect people to slow down. She suggests there may be other interventions to think about as well.

Commissioner Swartz thanks the public for their comments and suggests that many vehicles existing Winter Island may be RVs or towing boats, and that improving that left turn safety seems like a good idea.

Ms. Jerzylo reiterates her and her neighbors' concerns, and asks that the Commission take what the residents are saying to heart, as while some solutions may look good on paper, these are the people that use the street daily regardless of whether there is traffic. Ms. Jerzylo states that while some may come down on their bike or walk once or twice a week, local drivers are having safety issues constantly.

Mr. Kucharsky explains the next steps are for the consultants to take the information and feedback from tonight, as well as further discussions and input from residents to come up with preliminary ideas. More feedback will be sought from residents and the Commission.

Chair Shallop suggests it is important to talk to residents but also people living all over the City, as the Willows is a big area and one of the crown jewels of Salem utilized by many. She states she would like all perspectives, those of local residents and other users as well.

Neighborhood Traffic Calming Request: Mason Street from Tremont to North

Mr. Findley brings up a map of the area.

Mr. Kucharsky explains that a request was submitted in December from residents on Mason Street for traffic calming from Tremont Street to North Street. He adds that an image was provided by Ms. Landgreen with recommendations. At the time staff were in the process of collecting speed and volume data in the area, and once they were able to they walked the corridor and looked at the recommendations to see if they could identify the issues themselves. Mr. Kucharsky states he appreciates when residents come together and take the time to look at the neighborhood and identify issues as well as potential solutions. The request included a petition signed by 19 households in the area. Staff looked at signage, observed traffic, and examined potential solutions. Mr. Kucharsky shows the location of proposed radar and speed sign locations on the map.

Mr. Findley discusses the speed and volume data, noting the volume per day was 4,536. The 85th percentile speed was 32 mph, with a high of 69 mph and 21% of drivers going faster than the speed limit. Farther down the street 91% of drivers were over the speed limit. Mr. Findley also notes that the volume is almost one and a half times more traveling westbound. Mr. Findley explains there have been 46 crashes in the area since 2016 but that none were fatal. Nine of the accidents involved non-fatal injuries, and 36 involved property damage. Mr. Findley next reviews the traffic calming priority tool, which uses demographic data and 20 different metrics to prioritize projects.

Mr. Kucharsky discusses some initial recommendations, including working with DPW to improve and add new signage and improve crosswalks. Mr. Kucharsky also notes they are investigating locations for radar feedback signs. Additionally, staff feel the speed is too high given the density, and would like to petition the state to lower the speed limit to 25 mph after investigating potential implications. Mr. Kucharsky notes that National Grid will be completing utility work in late Summer and Fall, and so once that is complete restriping can be done to delineate parking and traffic lines better. He also notes he is getting a quote

to survey the intersection of Mason and Buffum to examine the feasibility of a raised intersection or crosswalk.

Chair Shallop asks how effective radar feedback signs are. Mr. Kucharsky states it depends on the location, but that they can be effective in some places such as on First Street, which saw 3-4mph reductions overall. Chair Shallop thanks Mr. Kucharsky and Mr. Findley for using the prioritization tool and refining it over time as it is very useful. Next Chair Shallop asks about the budget and capacity to move forward. Mr. Kucharsky states staff will identify low hanging fruit first such as signage and radar feedback signs, and that the survey would be the initial step to start and engage in any potential future curb resetting or other modifications. Chair Shallop recalls in the past having a spreadsheet of projects in progress, and asks if that can be reviewed at one of the next meetings.

Vice Chair Papetti states he crosses Mason and Buffum often as a North Salem resident. He acknowledges there are probably more pedestrians and bikes crossing now than in the past, but notes there will continue to be more in the future due to the new development at Ice Cream Way, and the fact that it is a good way to get to Leslie's Retreat or downtown without going through North Street. Vice Chair Papetti suggests that temporary solutions here are tricky. He notes that while the intersection is striped well, in practice people park on the hatched lines frequently. As such, he suggests adding flex posts to deter parking and improve the sight lines for crossing. Regarding traffic calming, Vice Chair Papetti suggests rather than restriping double yellow lines, there is a school of thought that double yellow lines of this type of road actually increase speeds as it makes people think they are on a highway. While he does not suggest getting rid of lines completely, Mr. Papetti suggests perhaps trying a single yellow or some other type of dividing line when restriping. He adds that the long term plans sound like a great direction.

Commissioner Swartz suggests this area seems to be related to other areas seeking traffic calming, such as North Street, Barr Street, Barstow, and Dunlop, and that it may make sense to look at them together. Commissioner Swartz asks if there is no other crosswalk between Buffum Street Extension and Flint Street, and Vice Chair Papetti confirms. Vice Chair Papetti also notes that the paint in the area is just paint, and suggests it may be replaced with thermoplastic that can be seen better at night and in the rain.

Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Malorie Landgreen (no address provided) introduces herself and thanks staff and the Commission for looking at this and taking the issue seriously. Ms. Landgreen agrees with concerns and suggestions raised by Mr. Papetti and Mr. Swartz regarding parking getting close to the intersection on Buffum, noting it is difficult as a biker coming in toward Buffum to see around parked cars as drivers fly down the street. Ms. Landgreen also states the sidewalks are very narrow, making the constant speeding of cars even more stressful for pedestrians. As a longer term solution for the Buffum intersection, Ms. Landgreen suggests a four-way stop, as even though there is a four-way crosswalk, drivers do not seem to stop or care.

Linda Stark states that while she lives downtown she has a friend on Buffum and is in the area regularly. Ms. Stark states there is a tremendous amount of speeding on Buffum Street, and that people take it as a cut-through to avoid hitting traffic lights. Ms. Stark notes that last year speed bumps and planters were used, and questions whether they will be coming back. She also notes that cars often park in the wrong direction on Buffum. Chair Shallop indicates the area was discussed at last month's meeting and that some interventions will be returning this year.

Chair Shallop asks Mr. Kucharsky about the timeline for traffic calming. Mr. Kucharsky states staff will begin with work orders to get signage, and then wait on quotes. Radar feedback signs will be installed, and over the next few weeks he will also begin drafting a letter to MassDOT about lowering the speed limit. Mr. Kucharsky indicates in total it will be a couple of months.

Commissioner Swartz asks if the restriping on Buffum could use reflective paint for the crosswalks. Mr. Kucharsky states it is currently being done by a contractor with a set scope of work, but that he can look into getting a quote on the thermoplastic for those locations.

Salem Loading/Service Zones & Essex Pedestrian Mall Deliveries

Mr. Kucharsky explains staff would like to begin a discussion about service/loading zones throughout the City as it has been on staff radar for a while and the subject of resident requests. He indicates a development survey will be used to gather feedback from local businesses, retailers, and restaurants. Mr. Kucharsky discussed existing conditions, noting that Article I Section 13 of the traffic ordinance establishes service zones in Salem, and that the current ordinance allows for an area in the roadway be set aside for the accommodation of commercial vehicular traffic. The ordinances date back to 1950's or earlier, to date service zones have been based on individual requests. Mr. Kucharsky notes there are other related ordinances, namely Section 13A regarding live parking, Section 14 regarding corner distances, Section 55 regarding parking in residential districts, Section 61 regarding bus stops, taxicab stands, and service zones in metered areas, and Section 67 regarding commercial loading and unloading. Mr. Kucharsky discusses current conditions on the pedestrian mall, which is not to have truck deliveries between 11AM and 2PM per Section 43D, and that staff are looking to see how that fits with overall pedestrian activity. He provides examples of existing signage for a service zone on Washington Street and Essex Street, noting it is not particularly large, as well as other signage in front of other businesses.

Mr. Kucharsky compares the current signage downtown with the ordinance using the staff GIS tool and discusses some issues and concerns regarding mismatches. Mr. Kucharsky states many businesses in the downtown area do not have access to service zones for deliveries, and that some existing loading zones are too small for certain trucks and trailers. As a result, trucks end up double parking or parking on sidewalks, in bike lanes, and crosswalks, which creates unsafe conditions, impacts emergency vehicle access, and creates accessibility issues. Mr. Kucharsky says the goal is to find a way to accommodate deliveries without having these issues.

Mr. Kucharsky indicates the next step is to move forward conducting the survey of businesses to see if there are additional comments or suggestions, and to continue to evaluate the spatial analysis and cross reference ordinance language with signage. Staff will continue to identify best practices, and the goal is to return to the Commission with recommendations regarding relocation, removal, and creation of service zones. Mr. Kucharsky indicates he would like to identify dimensions for certain vehicles and obtain more information regarding hours of operation and enforcement.

Chair Shallop states this is a great project and that she is impressed with the mapping and thoughtful approach to the signage and ordinance cleanup.

Vice Chair Papetti also states the project is great, and suggests showing City Council the map with ordinance and signage conflicts to demonstrate the need for reforming traffic regulations. Mr. Papetti indicates City Council likely does not have the time to deal with this, and it would be important to show them if they want to support the business community. Vice Chair Papetti suggests that while figuring out best practices going forward is great, more immediate enforcement is important as well, particularly with respect to trucks parking on sidewalks, blocking bike lanes, and blocking hydrants. He adds that he has witnessed police officers directing traffic while trucks are parked illegally with no enforcement, and that this sends a bad message to pedestrians and bikers. Mr. Papetti contends he frequently sees delivery vans parked in bike lanes even when spots are available nearby, and that the only way to deter this behavior is with ticketing.

Commissioner Swartz thanks staff for the maps and resources, and states it will be good to figure out what makes the most sense while getting community input. Mr. Swartz indicates the Chamber of Commerce will do its part to get the word out to the business community. Commissioner Swartz notes that the relationship between businesses and deliveries can be nuanced, as the businesses are not the ones doing the deliveries. He suggests better enforcement and clarity for the deliveries, rather than penalizing businesses.

Mr. Findley presents the survey visuals and questions that will go out to Salem businesses. Survey questions include location, hours of operation, length of customer stay, frequency and timing of deliveries, delivery vehicle types, location of staff and customer parking, etc.

Mr. Kucharsky notes as an incentive for businesses to participate, respondents will be included in a raffle for 2 annual memberships to the BlueBikes program courtesy of Blue Cross Blue Shield.

Vice Chair Papetti suggests focusing on delivery companies for feedback as well. He suggests adding questions regarding contact information of distributors so they could be reached for future surveys. Commissioner Swartz states that could be helpful, and notes that there are not that many delivery companies/drivers.

Mr. Findley speaks to his experience as a delivery driver, and states that drivers do not care much about enforcement as they do not personally pay for tickets, but that the businesses might eventually care as tickets and cost accumulate.

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

Chair Shallop summarizes the next steps, and Mr. Kucharsky indicates staff have an intern helping out as well. He estimates preliminary recommendations based on survey findings should be ready for the Commission by August or September.

OTHER BUSINESS THAT MAY LEGALLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

None.

UPCOMING MEETINGS SCHEDULE

The next meeting is scheduled for July 15, 2021 at 6:00PM.

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL

May 27, 2021

Motion and Vote: Commissioner Swartz motions to approve the May 27, 2021 meeting minutes of the Traffic and Parking Commission. Commissioner Papetti seconds the motion. The vote is all in favor. **The motion passes.**

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Papetti and seconded by Commissioner Swartz the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 7:59 PM.