**City of Salem**

**Traffic and Parking Commission**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, June 6th, 2019**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held on Thursday, June 6th, 2019 at 6:30pm at 98 Washington Street, Salem. **Present:** Commission Chair Tanya Stepasiuk, Commission Vice-Chair Eric Papetti, Commissioner Robin Seidel, Commissioner Todd Waller, Commissioner Lt. David Tucker and Director David Kucharsky.

**CALL OF MEETING**

The meeting was called to order at 6:36pm.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

*Eric Sayce, 7 Milk Street* explained that heowned a new business on the corner of Washington Sq. West and Brown Street. He said the Salem Trolley stop in front of the Peabody Essex Museum on the corner of Essex and New Liberty Street currently has two zones (A & B), which he and other local business owners believe to be under-utilized. Mr. Sayce suggested with some signage, up to three spaces could be added to better access the local businesses. He presented pictures to emphasize his point, he said zone B could be vastly improved as it’s approximately 70 feet long and could accommodate 2 parking spaces along with the trolley stop. He also stated that there is an oversized crosswalk in zone B which had plenty of room for pulling out and this is often under-utilized as the Salem Trolley does not take advantage of the space. Director Kucharsky said he would discuss this at the next meeting as it is not on tonight’s agenda. Chair Stepasiuk asked if Commissioner Lt. Tucker would look at the area and bring his findings back to the Board for discussion.

**TRAFFIC AND PARKING DIRECTOR UPDATE**

* Local Transportation Improvement Plan (LTIP)

Chair Stepasiuk asked Director Kucharsky to give an update on all current projects.

**ADA Transition Plan**: The City received a grant from the State to do a self-assessment and develop a transition plan for the City, they had hired the institute for Human Center Design (IHCD) and a kick-off meeting took place two months ago. To date, IHCD has inspected several public facilities including schools and open space areas. There will be a Commission on Disability meeting June 18th at 4:30pm at the Community Life Center on Bridge Street. The Director said this would be recorded and all are welcome to attend. The Council on Aging and individuals involved with Salem for All Ages have been notified as well. Following the completion of a draft plan, the findings will be presented at a larger public meeting later in Summer or early Fall.

Vice Chair Papetti asked about a resolution by the Traffic & Parking Commission that was passed last October asking the City staff to take a look at the barrier access on the existing sidewalks in the City, he wanted to confirm if this information was shared. Director Kucharsky said he was not aware of it but that he would find out. Director Kucharsky indicated the BETA Group has been working on an ongoing project with the Engineering Department to assess every pedestrian ramp in the City. Chair Stepasiuk asked how they physically assess the pedestrian ramps and curb cuts. Director said they follow American Disabilities Act guidelines and go out physically and measure the slopes and other features. He said the sidewalks in the downtown area, the Point and around the University have also been assessed for their conditions which includes identifying obstructions.

**Bates Elementary School SRTS**: The Director informed the Commission that their letter requesting additional expansion of the scope of the project was submitted to MassDOT on May 8th, he had not heard back as of today. Vice Chair Papetti asked about the Boston Street design and the Director said he did not have additional information only that the pavement will have a mill and overlay of Boston Street from the roadway just west of Grove and Nichols to Bridge Street, he added that this would be a temporary measure until the City gets to the full TIP project. Vice Chair Papetti said it would be a good idea to coordinate this with other projects on Bridge Street, he added that a bike lane needed repainting and flex posts installed. He said he was concerned that the Canal Street bike path notice to proceed was not posted for June 1st and wondered if there was a problem with the contract. The Director said he had not gotten a notification but would check with the City Engineer. Vice Chair Papetti asked about the downtown bike upgrades and the Director said the planned start date was early August, and he would discuss this later in the meeting.

**Essex Street Construction**: The Director informed the Commission that they had not received any bids on the first RFP that was released. It was then released again, and one bid came back way over cost. He said the City decided to wait until the Fall and plans on using this time to address some of the tree evaluations along the roadway. Vice Chair Papetti asked if there would be an opportunity to discuss the design process with Mr. Knowlton for Essex Street before the Fall. Director Kucharsky said he is working on scheduling Mr. Knowlton to meet with the Commission.

**Bridge Street Complete Streets (Boston to Flint):** Vice Chair Papetti asked if there were any updates on the Bridge Street design process. Director Kucharsky explained they are looking at design work and assuming they are looking at incorporating the shared use path, he said he would follow up with Mr. Knowlton. Vice Chair Papetti emphasized that before they reinitiate the design process they should look at the many comments from the Commission before they incorporate it and should circle back to review the comments to ensure everyone was on the same page. Director Kucharsky asked if Mr. Downing was on staff when these comments were submitted. Vice Chair Papetti said he believed it was before he came onboard. The Director said he would try to find those comments. Chair Stepasiuk mentioned looking through past minutes to find these comments.

**Museum Place Garage -Elevators**: The Director informed the Commission that the first elevator had been completed and the State inspectors came and signed off on the work, he said work on the second elevator began June 3rd, and he hoped the project would be completed mid-Summer.

**Norman/Chestnut/Summer Roundabout Pilot**: The Director informed the Commission that the pilot was installed on May 19th and ongoing monitoring and adjustments are being scheduled. He said there were some issues but they are hearing many positive comments. Chair Stepasiuk asked what the most common issues were, and the Director said the vertical materials installed were precluding some movements by buses and larger trucks, he said as a result, they have removed those components and this had made it easier to maneuver, however they continue to work on making sure the center is where it should be with other tweaks to the splitter islands. He also indicated that comments were positive from pedestrians, as they felt much safer.

Based on preliminary observations and feedback staff believe a roundabout can become a permanent configuration at this location. The Director explained that once the second round of adjustments had taken place, they then planned on gathering additional traffic data for comparison to data collected right before the roundabout was installed. There are also ongoing efforts to coordinate with MassDOT to have the roundabout incorporated into the planned HSIP project which is due to be installed sometime in August. Commissioner Lt. Tucker said he’s heard mostly positive feedback as did Commissioner Waller who added that he had some queries from Chestnut Street residents on how the overall look will marry in with the Chestnut street look. Director Kucharsky explained that the final design had yet to be developed.

**Paving Program**: The Director informed the Commission that the City Engineer had a meeting May 17th with the BETA group and the Director is working on having Mr. Knowlton meet with the Commission to discuss the program for the coming year and coordinate efforts to identify certain roadways they are working on. Vice Chair Papetti asked about the $3 million budget, he said it was considerably more than last year’s even combining it with the CIP. Director Kucharsky said he believed $1 million was left for this calendar year for this work and an additional $1.8 million that included Chapter 90 for the following year. He indicated he did not have all the details presently but would have more information soon. Vice Chair Papetti said that in past years they had worked with ADA requirements on curb ramps during repaving and had made good progress, he wanted to make sure this continues and had it been discussed. The Director explained that a lot of the work proposed this season was taking a look at sidewalks, crosswalks and curb cuts based on BETA’s findings.

**South Harbor Garage Maintenance Study**: The Director informed the Commission that a designer DiGiorgio Architects Inc. (DAI) had been selected and was currently in fee negotiations with the City. The Chair asked what the scope of work would be and Director Kucharsky said it would entail a basic assessment of the garage to develop a maintenance program in order for the Department to identify future capital requests. Chair Stepasiuk asked if they planned on looking at the vehicle spaces as she has had multiple queries on this issue.

**Other Projects:** Vice Chair Papetti said there are two more projects he would like to discuss, one being the Church Street lot re-stripping for $400,000. The Director explained that he was waiting for Mr. Downing to return to determine the goal of this project. Vice Chair Papetti and Commissioner Seidel asked about the additional money towards upgrading existing traffic signals to “smart signals” and whether it was budgeted in the FY 20 CIP. The Director said he would check on the status of this project.

Chair Stepasiuk asked if there was any movement on the traffic calming projects. Director Kucharsky said he was still in the process of getting an estimate for the Chestnut/Pickering project. Efforts to create a plan for the First Street project will proceed when the Assistant Director returns later this month. Traffic data has been collected to identify existing speeds and volumes. A stripping/signage plan will be developed which also includes resetting the crosswalk location. The Director also informed the Commission that a device had been set out on Valley Street and the data collected would be studied, he said he has requested funds for this coming year to install a radar feedback sign in the other direction on Valley Street. Chair Stepasiuk asked if this was included in the Traffic Calming budget, the Director said yes, it was. He said the Budget hearing went well last week. The Director also informed the Commission that Russell Findley from “Mass in Motion” will come on-board the Traffic and Parking Department to help out, he explained that Mr. Findley had excellent GIS skills and would be a tremendous addition to the Department. The Commission were delighted to hear this news.

* General Departmental Updates

***Scooter pilot program:***The Director said this will go before OLLA on Thursday, June 13th, and he encouraged the Commission to reach out to their respective Council members and also attend the meeting to voice their support.

***Valet Parking****:* Director Kucharsky said the valet parking program is still running. Chair Stepasiuk said that from what she has seen so far, it is logistically not at all what the initial plan was supposed to be. The Director said he had reached out to the company to correct this, he said the numbers had not been good, with a decrease in users, it has not gone above 40 users with the exception of May 17th and 18th where there were 52 users, he said the hope was to have 80 users a weekend.

***Shuttle Study****:* The study is moving forward and Nelson/Nygaard (N/N) is completing the market analysis and service assessment and will present to stakeholders involved in the first report completed by TransAction. There will be a public meeting June 26th on the 3rd floor of the Annex building, he said he has sent a notification to the stakeholders and that the Mayor’s office would be spreading the word. N/N will review the methodology and the costs related to the project, he said he has had a discussion with the Council on Aging and looking at other grant related opportunities. The Mayor has allocated $100,000 to the transportation enhancement fund which is being funded by the 1% marijuana revenue as well as development projects and the Uber and Lyft tax. Vice Chair Papetti said he looked forward to seeing their findings, he said the MBTA initiative to resurrect their pilot program policy and they are trying to come up with ways for the municipalities to propose innovative ideas with respect to bus route options and to collaborate with the T on potential routes.

***CTPS Staff****:* Director Kucharsky indicated he attended a meeting with CTPS staff to look at the idea of creating a transit committee and explore efforts to get transit providers outside of the MBTA to have more representation in the MPO process. Several municipalities attended the meeting as well as TMA s and other transit providers.

**NEW/OLD BUSINESS.**

* Open Meeting Law Complaint

Chair Stepasiuk explained that she, Director Kucharsky and City Solicitor Beth Rennard met to discuss the complaint from Salem resident Michael Caggiano**.** A memo provided by the Solicitor was read for the record. It was noted that if a meeting is designated as a public meeting as opposed to a public hearing, then the Commission is not required to allow the public to make comments, however the Commission traditionally allows public comments in meetings. City Solicitor suggested the following actions be taken

* an explanation of the required allowance of comments during a public hearing versus comments at a non-public hearing when comment is allowed at the discretion of the chairs
* a change in the practice of the Commission to establish a designated comment period of 15 minutes at the beginning of the meeting for comments, of three minutes per person, on any item not on the agenda (no deliberation shall take place by the commission but they refer any new matter to the next meeting) and a comment period for each agenda item, again limited to three minutes per person.

Solicitor suggested these rules be noted on the agenda and announced at the meeting. Chair Stepasiuk asked for feedback. Commissioner Seidel said the recommendations seem fine but asked if the second recommendation be tweaked to allow a vote to waive allowing someone to continue after 3 minutes. Director Kucharsky said from his experience this typically is at the Chair’s discretion, he said that he had found if it is noted on the agenda and is announced at the beginning of the meeting then expectations are set. Chair Stepasiuk said this is what they had been doing, and she suggested adding it to the sign in sheet as well.

Chair Stepasiuk instructed Director Kucharsky to ask the City Solicitor to make one adjustment and add “at the chairs discretion” or “if time allows additional comments”. Lt. Tucker said it also depends on the number of people in attendance and from reading the law, there is no clear guidance. Commissioner Seidel felt that adding “if time allows” created a problem, because if there is only one member of the public in attendance, they may feel they can talk continuously. However, Chair Stepasiuk said there is a 15- minute limit. Vice Chair Papetti suggested anything done to clarify expectations around public comment and make people feel welcome would be good.

***MOTION:*** Chair Stepasiuk made a motion to authorize the City Solicitor Beth Rennard to respond on the Commissions’ behalf with the content of this memo with the slight edit “at the Chairs’ discretion or if time allows”.

Commissioner Tucker made a motion to approve and Commissioner Seidel seconded the motion. All were in favor and so the motion carried.

* Traffic Ordinance Recommendations

***Resident Sticker Parking*:** Director Kucharsky informed the Commission that Councilor Madore submitted an order to the Council directing the Traffic & Parking Commission and Department to review Article V-A, Section 75 of the Traffic Ordinance and develop a set of recommendations to the Council to revise the current resident sticker program with the intent of creating a more equitable system for all Salem residents and visitors. The Director went on to explain that prior to his arrival, his predecessor had begun working on the existing program and identifying issues with the program as well as conducting a peer review not only with other municipalities in the State but also nationally to view best practices. He presented an overview plan that identifies issues and recommendations for discussion. He said the ordinance was originally adopted in 1993 and the purpose was to reduce auto travel, fuel emissions and congestion.

The Director explained that not all the Wards have designated resident sticker parking areas there are no natural defined boundaries. Proof of residency is required on the street that has been designated for resident sticker parking. In addition, the resident’s vehicle must be registered to the address and vehicle registration is required. There is currently no limit to the number of stickers that can be issued to a household as long as they meet the listed requirements. Each household may purchase 2 visitor passes which are good for 2 years and costs $1 per pass. Each pass may be used for no more than 14 consecutive days by a single user. The Director noted that this is very difficult to monitor and enforce.

Director Kucharsky listed the policy issues and concerns with this program; the resident sticker designations are adopted on a street by street basis which creates inconsistencies with a patchwork of streets within neighborhoods where some require a sticker, and some do not. He said it lacks fairness, there’s no equity, residents without resident stickers can only park in non-designated zones thereby having limited options. It is confusing to visitors as to where the resident sticker zones are designated due to a lack of signage and understanding which permit zone the visitor is allowed to park in.

The Director went on to explain the issues with the eligibility requirements, he said the residents on streets not designated as resident sticker but surrounded by resident sticker streets are ineligible to receive a sticker, Derby Street being an example. He said the commercial and mixed-use streets are not designated due to businesses on that street, so the residents are not eligible for resident stickers, the Director said he has been getting multiple phone calls from these residents. He said other areas with similar issues are along Essex Street and parts of Lafayette Street.

Requests are initiated by the residents through their Ward Councilor, if the Ward Councilor approves the request, the Councilor sends the request to the Traffic and Parking Commission (TPC) and the Salem Police Department Traffic Unit. TPC, based on Police Dept.’s input, provide a recommendation to the City Council to approve or deny. There is currently no criteria, nor utilization study performed to evaluate the requests.

Director reviewed the following recommendations for consideration:

* Re-draw the zones based on more natural boundaries and major arteries that will reflect neighborhoods. Commissioner Seidel thought it a good idea to have resident stickers for residents to park anywhere in the City. Director Kucharsky said they were looking at it based on pressures and demands. Vice Chair Papetti suggested redrawing into fewer zones. The Director said one of the ideas being considered by staff, in order to help with enforcement, was to make all streets adjacent to downtown, resident parking, which would mean residents would need to participate in the program. Chair Stepasiuk suggested designating one or two spaces per street available for visitor parking only. The remained of the street would be designated for resident parking only.
* Limit the number of permits issued to households, 1 permit per driver and no more than 2 per unit. Additional passes could be purchased at a higher cost or a tiered pricing system. Vice Chair Papetti said that a neighbor of his had 15 cars, they succeed in keeping 10 on their property at any one time.
* Limit the number of resident parking permits that may be purchased if you already have off-street parking.
* Increase the price of visitor passes as well as replace the hang tag visitor passes and move towards an online registration-based program using license plates. This should be done in conjunction with implementing a License Plate Recognition (LPR) enforcement tool. Commissioner Seidel felt that the parking app should have that capability by entering the license plate and enter the address of the person you are visiting. The Director said the request for visitor passes would only be made by someone who has registered for resident parking. The intent would be for both Police and Traffic and Parking enforcement personnel to possess this technology. Implementing the license plate-based registration along with increased visitor fees is intended to affect the current abuses taking place with the program.

Chair Stepasiuk thanked the Director and staff for providing the analysis and proceeded to ask him what he was envisioning. The Director said they would need to go to the various neighborhoods along with City Council to discuss the recommendations as well as refine the zones further to ensure that residents understand that a buy-in is needed from everyone in these specific areas for it to work and explain that the technology is available to enforce this.

Chair Stepasiuk suggested that three options should be presented when it comes to zoning as opposed to too many options and specifics are needed before any neighborhood visits happen. Vice Chair Papetti said that signage and visitor parking reform should be easy to accomplish but that raising prices and redefining zones is a longer process. Director Kucharsky said that in some areas (upon agreement) we would require purchasing a permit with the price remaining the same because we have increased the pool of people needed to participate. Chair Stepasiuk suggested increasing it to ten dollars, because the benefit to a lot of residents on these streets would be taking this money and putting it towards enforcement, she felt a lot of people would look at this as a benefit, particularly Derby Street. Commissioner Lt. Tucker agreed and gave an example of a person living on Bentley Street if they get shut out of parking there they would have to look on a non-residential street to park, after they have paid the fee, so, by paying more for the permit enforcement would be better. He also asked if there were enough spaces for residents currently.

Commissioner Seidel felt that ten dollars for a two-year permit was extremely affordable and she suggested these permits be made available for purchase online for convenience. Commissioner Lt. Tucker said that it could be added as a feature to an online application. Commissioner Seidel suggested that an application for hardship be available on an annual basis to people like social workers, medical aids etc. Vice Chair Papetti suggested the Director take a look at the City of Somerville’s website to view all the different parking options available as it is an excellent source of information to ensure that the City of Salem has thought of everything.

Chair Stepasiuk recommended going to the neighborhood groups and that the presentation needs to be concise with options. Commissioner Seidel suggested an open house type meeting where residents could come in and provide their ideas on options that we present along with the Ward Councilor. Vice Chair Papetti agreed that some type of public engagement is advisable. Director asked for clarification on the recommendations. The Commission discussed the options put forward in the presentation and asked the Director to tighten the presentation for further discussion at the next meeting. The Director asked if the Commission wanted tiered pricing options and this was agreed upon.

A member of the public said he currently lives near two resident sticker zones that abut each other, he wanted to know if he could park 100 feet into the other one if needed, would it be possible to offer that as an option to residents? Chair Stepasiuk said they would note this and consider. Commissioner Seidel said this could resolve some issues with members of the condo association on Essex Street, as they are not able to get temporary on-street parking during the month of October. Chair Stepasiuk said that the Commission should incorporate the October issues into this project.

Director said he would tweak the presentation and bring before the Commission’s next month. Director Kucharsky stated he would make some changes to the presentation based on the discussion and bring it back to the Commission next month. Following that he would find a time to meet with the Councilors as well as the Mayor to present the findings and recommendations and gather their input.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

***Shuttle Stop Request:*** The Director informed the Commission that Salem State University converted the property at 287 Lafayette Street to the School of Social Work & International Education where the Synagogue used to be, they are asking for three spaces that are adjacent to their driveway be designated for a shuttle service as they have people with disabilities and the O’Keefe Center is too far away. Commissioner Seidel asked if the MBTA can share this stop with the shuttles and if Salem State could get a bus shelter at this location. Director Kucharsky said he would reach out to the T about this and get the ridership numbers.

**MOTION**: On a motion duly made by Vice Chair Papetti and seconded by Commissioner Seidel, the Commission voted to recommend granting Salem State the parking spaces for a shuttle stop provided that efforts are made to relocate the MBTA bus stop to the same location.

***Handicap Parking Space Request:*** Commissioner Tucker informed the Commission that a resident at 5 Winter Street is requesting a handicap sign as he has no driveway and continues to struggle to find a space. Councillor Madore has been involved and approves the request. Commissioner Seidel asked if there are efforts to evaluate and remove existing handicap parking spaces in cases where the person who initially requested it has moved or passed away. Commissioner Tucker said he is in the middle of reviewing the existing list of spaces to determine this.

**MOTION**: On a motion duly made by Commissioner Waller and seconded by Commissioner Seidel, the Commission voted to recommend designating the on street space at 5 Winter St as a handicap parking space.

Commissioner Waller approves, Seidel second

**MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL**

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Seidel contingent upon referencing any documents that were presented during the meeting and seconded by Vice Chair Papetti, the Commission voted to approve the minutes from the January 17, 2019 Traffic and Parking Commission meeting. Commissioner Stepasiuk and Waller abstained.

On a motion duly made by Vice Chair Papetti contingent upon referencing any documents that were presented during the meeting and seconded by Commissioner Seidel, the Commission voted to approve the minutes from the May 2nd, 2019 Traffic and Parking Commission meeting. Commissioner Tucker abstained.

**UPCOMING MEETINGS SCHEDULE**

The next Traffic and Parking Commission meeting will take place June 20th, 2019.

**ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Seidel and seconded by Vice Chair Papetti, the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 8:49PM.

The following documents were used at the meeting and can be viewed by making a request to the Traffic & Parking Department

* Local Transportation Improvement Plan Spreadsheet
* Open Meeting Law Complaint – City Solicitor Guidance Memo
* Resident Permit Parking Findings & Recommendations Presentation