

City of Salem
Traffic and Parking Commission
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, January 12, 2022

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held remotely on Wednesday, January 12, 2022 at 6:00pm, in accordance with Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021.

Present: Commission Chair Tonya 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:** None

CALL OF MEETING

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 pm by Chair Shallop. Ms. Shallop explains how members of the public may participate during the remote meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Nina Cohen (no address given) introduces herself and states she would like to share her experience with the shared streets program during 2021. Ms. Cohen explains that she represents the Chestnut Street Association, and that the calming measures put in place were very effective and helped reduce cut-through traffic. She indicates the planters helped inform drivers to slow down and narrow the streets. Ms. Cohen remarks that there seemed to be fewer wrong-way drivers as well. She urges the Commission to expand the program further where possible as it has improved quality of life for her and neighbors. Ms. Cohen also states she is concerned about enforcement of removal after the first storm. She notes that many business owners were not clearing walkways, and that it can be a real issue for people accessing downtown, particularly those with limited mobility. Ms. Cohen also indicates certain residential properties have not been good about clearing snow as well.

Osvaldo Sanchez of 26 Leavitt Street introduces himself. Mr. Sanchez expresses concerns regarding cars always parking on the sidewalk, and states that he has called the city many times but there is never any enforcement. He explains that the sidewalk is narrow and that there is a school nearby. Mr. Sanchez indicates this has been a longstanding problem for many years and that there is no space for people to walk. Mr. Sanchez next discusses police officers working detail to control traffic and suggests that they often seem to make traffic worse, and sometimes are just sitting around talking. He provides examples of police officers at construction sites and details and asks if they are paid to assist with traffic or just stand there.

Kevin Talbot of 36 Jefferson Avenue introduces himself and states he would like to propose no parking signs in front of his property, near Far From the Tree. Mr. Talbot discusses the

difficulties exiting out of the driveway as there is a corner with limited visibility and people often speed down Jefferson Avenue and roll through the stop sign. He suggests the no parking signs will help him be able to pull out of the driveway safely. Chair Shallop indicates this is an agenda item and will be discussed in more detail.

Felipe Zamborlini of 62 Perkin Street introduces himself and states he has yet to hear anything regarding what could be done to have resident permit parking in the Point neighborhood. Mr. Zamborlini explains it is very difficult to park at times, particularly during winter storms when residents of other neighborhoods take up all the parking in the neighborhood. Mr. Zamborlini contends it is unfair and inequitable to have the densest neighborhood in the city treated as overflow parking. Chair Shallop asks Mr. Kucharsky to put the topic on a future agenda for discussion.

Chris Comeau of 3 Cleveland Street introduces himself and states he is here for an agenda item regarding resident parking but would like to remark that it is very difficult to reach anyone on the Commission. He states the website only shows emails for two or three people, and that Lt. Tucker and Chair Shallop have not responded to attempts to reach out. Mr. Comeau suggests updating the website with up-to-date contact information. He indicates he sent an email pertaining to tonight's meeting and an issue regarding Lt. Tucker's employees that took place on the 8th.

Richard Hamel of 31 Washington Square North introduces himself and seconds the concerns expressed by Mr. Talbot. Mr. Hamel provides firsthand accounts of difficulty pulling out and exiting, having nearly been hit several times. Mr. Hamel also asks about what happened to the traffic calming measures in the Washington Square North area. He indicates signs were installed in the middle of the street to slow traffic in October, which worked well, but that some drivers ran over them within a week and they have since not been replaced. Mr. Hamel notes the intersection at Winter Street can be particularly bad on the inbound side, with people speeding around the corner. He states he has been nearly hit in the cross walk around the corner at Oliver Street many times.

Peter Gaylas of 31 Winthrop Street introduces himself and asks if the speed limit could be lowered on Winthrop Street. Mr. Gaylas explains the neighborhood is congested and home to many children and dogs. He suggests the current limit of 25 miles per hour is ridiculous. Mr. Gaylas also asks if there can be a crosswalk across from Winthrop Street to Endicot Street, as there are a lack of crosswalks in the area. Mr. Gaylas requests something be done to slow down traffic as it can take up to 15 minutes some days to pull out of his driveway due to speeding traffic. Mr. Kucharsky informs Mr. Gaylas that Winthrop Street is on tonight's agenda.

Ward 2 Councilor Caroline Watson-Felt of Beacon Street introduces herself as the new city council liaison to the Traffic and Parking Commission. Councilor Watson-Felt informed Mr. Hamel and others in the area that aside from the Commission and Mr. Kucharsky, residents could reach out to her as the Ward Councilor as well.

NEW/OLD BUSINESS

On-Street Parking Evaluation: Leavitt Street

Mr. Kucharsky presents revised layout plans based on feedback received from the Commission and public during the November meeting. The updated plans include proposed amendments to the Traffic Ordinance that will restrict parking on certain sections of the street. Mr. Kucharsky explains that he was approached by residents and councilors regarding concerns on Leavitt, as there has been an ongoing issue with parking on the sidewalk. The updated plans maintain parking on a section of the north side of the street where no parking was initially proposed. These changes were the result of discussions with Councilors Prosniewski and Cohen, as well as nearby residents. Mr. Kucharsky presents and discusses the striping plan, which will formalize where people can park to assist with enforcement. He notes that an amendment to city ordinance to restrict parking would need to be recommended, and he presents drafted language.

Chair Shallop thanks Mr. Kucharsky and states it is great to see the changes from last time after receiving resident input.

Vice Chair Papetti and Commission Lt. Tucker thank Mr. Kucharsky as well.

Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Felipe Zamborlini of 52 Perkins Street introduces himself and states he appreciates the swapping of the no parking zone to the other side of the street. Mr. Zamborlini reminds every one of the importance of these changes to help prevent parking on the sidewalks and allow pedestrians to walk safely. Mr. Zamborlini also suggests the addition of a crosswalk.

Ward 5 Councilor Jeff Cohen of 12 Hancock Street introduces himself and explains this area borders Ward 5, and that he discussed the issues with nearby residents. He echoes Mr. Zamborlini's statements and thanks Mr. Kucharsky for his responsiveness and great work.

Oswaldo Sanchez of 26 Leavitt Street introduces himself and states it is a good design and that he appreciates Mr. Kucharsky's efforts. Mr. Sanchez thanks Mr. Kucharsky and suggests it will be much safer for students now.

Mr. Kucharsky presents the recommendation language to submit to council.

Motion and Vote: Commissioner Swartz motions to approve the drafted recommendation to City Council to restrict parking on certain sections of Leavitt Street. Commission Lt. Tucker seconds the motion. **The vote is four (4) in favor and none (0) opposed. The motion Passes.**

Request for Traffic Ordinance Recommendation

Jefferson Avenue No Parking Restriction

Mr. Kucharsky presents a map of the relevant location, and explains that Mr. Talbot contacted him with his concerns, discussed above in public comment. Mr. Kucharsky shows the area between two driveways where Mr. Talbot is seeking parking restrictions, as it is a blind spot. Mr. Kucharsky explains that businesses in the area have ample off-street parking, so it should not be an issue. The recommendation from staff would be to institute this change and put it forward to Council.

Chair Shallop asks Lt. Tucker if he has any comments on the issue.

Commissioner Lt. Tucker suggests it makes sense, as it is a high traffic in and out area with work vans, made difficult by people coming around the corner from Jackson Street quickly or carelessly. There is a discussion about the short extension of curb between the driveway and garage as well. Mr. Kucharsky states no cars should be parking there as it is not a legal space. Lt. Tucker indicates on occasion he has seen a car try to park there.

Vice Chair Papetti asks if this is a new issue or something people have just now gotten around to addressing. Mr. Kucharsky indicates Mr. Talbot was the first to bring this to his attention, but that there have been comparable requests in other areas in the City where circumstances were similar.

Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Kevin Talbot of 36 Jefferson Avenue introduces himself explains the issue again. He also indicates that the small stretch discussed by Lt. Tucker and Mr. Kucharsky does have cars parked there sometimes. He also notes that as renovations with the property move forward, the curbing will extend to the area in the photos presented where trucks are shown sticking out. The curb will grow a bit.

Mr. Kucharsky presents a drafted ordinance amendment but suggests that it might need to be refined based on Mr. Talbot's comments to account for the extended curb.

Chair Shallop asks Mr. Talbot about the property renovations. He explains that sometime in the summer the curb will extend 10 feet, as the city ordinance allows for 24 foot curb cuts, and the existing ones are larger.

Mr. Kucharsky states he will take additional measurements and can amend the language.

Motion and Vote: Commissioner Swartz motions to approve the drafted language to restrict parking on Jefferson Avenue with edits as needed. Vice Chair Papetti seconds the motion. **The vote is four (4) in favor and none (0) opposed. The motion passes.**

Cleveland Street Resident Permit Parking

Mr. Kucharsky explains that a resident, Mr. Comeau, contacted Councilor Morsillo about the issue, and they all met on-site with Lt. Tucker at St. Anne's parish. Mr. Kucharsky explains

that during certain functions, people take up spaces in front of Mr. Comeau's home and park in other areas labeled no parking. There are also handicapped spaces that are inadequately signed where people park as well. Mr. Kucharsky indicates it was requested that a section of the road be designated resident permit parking in front of Mr. Comeau's home, as he is the only resident without off-street parking, and it can be challenging for him when events take place. Mr. Kucharsky presents a map of the area and demonstrates that the proposed stretch could fit one to two vehicles, depending on size.

Chair Shallop asks what zone this would be, and Mr. Kucharsky responds it would be Zone D, yellow.

Lt. Tucker offers that it is a tricky area, and notes that the applicant does not have any other parking options. He suggests this is an appropriate solution.

Commissioner Swartz asks about parking at St. Anne's, and Lt. Tucker explains there is a small subdivision under construction, and Mr. Kucharsky notes they have a smaller space now, which may have triggered the issue.

Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Chris Comeau of 3 Cleveland Street explains the situation in more detail, and states it is very frustrating. He indicates he provided photographs to Mr. Kucharsky, and discusses incidents where cars were parked illegally.

Commissioner Swartz asks if this were to go through, if there is anything preventing other residents from applying for permits and parking here. Mr. Comeau states the other residents on the street all have driveways.

Mr. Kucharsky explains that the commission has designated specific sections of roadway for resident permit parking, most recently on Heritage Drive near the hospital, for residents with no off-street parking. Mr. Kucharsky suggests this appears to be the most practical solution and outcome to accommodate Mr. Comeau. Lt. Tucker adds that the issue appears to be mostly during church events, and that there does not appear to be an issue with other residents parking there outside those instances.

Councilor Morsillo introduces herself and states she is in favor of this proposal. She suggests this is a unique situation where only one house does not have off-street parking. Councilor Morsillo states this would greatly help this resident.

Oswaldo Sanchez asks if it would make more sense to have residential parking on the other side of the street. Mr. Kucharsky and Lt. Tucker explain why the current side makes more sense, particularly given the reason for the proposal.

Vice Chair Papetti refers to the map of the area and asks if 5 Cleveland and 7 Cleveland Street share a driveway. Mr. Comeau indicates they have a shared entrance that opens up in the back.

Mr. Kucharsky presents the proposed ordinance language.

Vice Chair Papetti suggests extending the resident parking area a bit more so as to not just essentially create a private street space for one residence. Commissioner Swartz reiterates his concerns regarding others with resident permit parking in the spot. Lt. Tucker acknowledges Mr. Papetti's concerns, and Chair Shallop states she worries about taking additional spaces the church may need during events that would otherwise be underutilized. Vice Chair Papetti and Commissioner Swartz suggest there may be another home, perhaps number 12, with no off-street parking as well. Chair Shallop suggests getting insights from the petitioner or councilor.

Councilor Morsillo states the house the commissioners identified on the map actually faces Story Street, and they are looking at the back of the house. She states this will not be an issue. Councilor Morsillo underscores the fact that she met with Lt. Tucker, Mr. Kucharsky, and a representative from the church to find a happy medium that would make it easier for the petitioner to park while not taking away too many parking options for the church. She notes as others have mentioned, that all other homes on Cleveland Street have off-street parking. Councilor Morsillo maintains this was a compromise arrived at by all parties.

Judy Ware of 24 Wilson Street introduces herself as the chair of the finance council of St. Anne's church. Ms. Ware states she was present at the on-site meeting and that she understands Mr. Comeau's problem and would like to accommodate. She does note that any additional residential permit parking could be problematic for the church.

Lt. Tucker states that Mr. Comeau is the only resident who has mentioned having an issue, and he is in favor of the proposal as is.

Motion and Vote: Lt. Tucker motions to approve the proposed ordinance language as written proposing resident permit parking on Cleveland Street beginning 40 feet from the intersection with Jefferson Avenue, proceeding in a westerly direction for a distance of thirty feet. Commissioner Swartz seconds the motion. **The vote is four (4) in favor and none (0) opposed. The motion passes.**

Neighborhood Traffic Calming Request: Winthrop Street

Mr. Kucharsky explains that a neighborhood traffic calming request was submitted for Winthrop Street. Mr. Findley presents a map of the relevant area and indicates there have been requests for speed humps similar to those on Buffum Street. Mr. Findley indicates during certain hours this area receives a lot of traffic.

Mr. Findley explains the street is narrow, and he discusses the various priority scores. Winthrop Street has a demographic priority of 3 and a land use proximity priority of 2. Mr. Findley presents crash and speed data, noting there have been six crashes in the last five years, mainly low severity with one injury. While the speed and volume priority are low,

Mr. Findley suggests that because the street is quite narrow, even a going a little over the speed limit can make a difference and feel more dangerous. Mr. Findley notes the speed limit is 25 miles per hour, and the street has an average volume of 1,944 cars per day on the northern side. This section has an average speed of 22 miles per hour and a high of 48 miles per hour, with 13 percent of drivers traveling over the limit. On the southern side the daily volume is 1,688 cars, but this section sees highs of 50 miles per hour, an average of 23 miles per hour, and 25 percent of drivers traveling over the speed limit. Mr. Findley next presents density data, as well as a review of existing ordinances in the area.

Mr. Kucharsky states that the data suggests the roadway experiences relatively higher traffic volumes and given the close proximity to downtown there may be a propensity for more pedestrian/vehicle conflicts. Mr. Kucharsky also notes there are no crosswalks along the corridor and suggests they could not only improve connectivity for pedestrians, but also make motorists aware that pedestrians are in the area. Mr. Kucharsky explains that staff are committed to several other projects currently, but that he would like to get a sense of the scope and design costs as we proceed into a new budget cycle. He adds that they are looking to kick off a traffic study examining Broad Street as well, and movements along Broad, Flint, Warren, Pickering, and Chestnut.

Chair Shallop states it sounds like a persuasive potential case for the calming program, and that the only question seems to be capacity and timing. She asks if it would be possible to clean up ordinances as part of the project if and when it can be executed. Mr. Kucharsky says that is certainly possible.

Vice Chair Papetti suggests it would be a good idea to determine what kind of streets need this type of work and how to do it efficiently. He asks staff to consider how they can roll out this type of work much faster. Mr. Papetti states that while in personal finance you would never advise someone to spend all their money and then complain they are poor, but in the public world he suggests spending the money, then approaching council with the list of projects that still remain and requesting they get done. Vice Chair Papetti suggests requesting budgets that reflect the ability to implement 100 percent of the traffic calming projects in the queue. He adds that if the mayor or council seek to cut the budget after, let them make that decision.

Chair Shallop asks that at one of the next meetings staff review where they are with projects and see what is making it into the fiscal year and what is more appropriate for the following.

Lt. Tucker suggests the area is overdue for some crosswalk striping, and that the ordinance clean up should not be a problem.

Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Susan Gailis of 31 Winthrop Street introduces herself as a resident of 40 years and explains that in that time the street has become more crowded and traffic has gotten much faster. Ms. Gailis contends that many cars drive much faster than the speed limit, and that her

neighbor had their car hit while backing up. Ms. Gailis states there are children, people with disabilities, and pets in the neighborhood, but that it no longer feels safe for pedestrians. Ms. Gailis is in favor of speed bumps, but also suggests crosswalks, particularly at the corner of Endicott and Winthrop and Summer and Endicott. She also suggests lowering the speed limit to 20 miles per hour, stating it is only a matter of time before something horrible happens.

Councilor Morsillo states the timing for the project may be appropriate, as the street is supposed to be getting new electrical pipes in the spring and will be dug up. She also notes that the property on the corner of Broad and Winthrop is in the process of being sold, and once that is complete the corner bump-out done years ago will become permanent. Councilor Morsillo suggests it is a good time to look for solutions for the whole length of the street as they work on repaving.

Anne Neely of 8 Winthrop Street introduces herself as a resident of 10 years and echoes Ms. Gailis' concerns. Ms. Neely asserts that traffic volume and speeds have increased significantly over the years, and while she acknowledges there are limitations with respect to budgets, resources, and city processes, she states she senses a lack of urgency. She notes that there are more children in the neighborhood now, and that she worries something horrific will happen. Ms. Neely contends her quality of life has decreased, and that stop signs may not even help as there is little to no enforcement.

Anne Genovese of 35 Winthrop Street introduces herself, and remarks that she is surprised her home has not yet been hit by a car or truck. She states he has been here since 2005 and that traffic and the number of trucks have gotten way out of control. Ms. Genovese suggests stop lines and crosswalks at intersections could be a simple fix that would yield some benefits. Ms. Genovese notes, as others have, that cars fly around the corner at Winthrop and Endicott, and that her partner has had three cars hit (two totaled, one hit and run).

Nancy Daly of 35 Winthrop Street introduces herself and notes that there are signs posted in recent years indicating no trucks are allowed, but that she sees large trucks driving by all the time and can sometimes count ten to fifteen in a few hours. She also notes that she sees many cars rolling through the stop sign nearby as it is a bit hidden, but that even in winter when it is more visible people drive through it.

Kevin Balaban of 8 Winthrop Street introduces himself and provides observations of the area. Mr. Balaban states the traffic calming measure that created a 90 degree angle at the corner of the cemetery rather than a sloping curve has been helpful. Mr. Balaban notes that while the data suggests the speed may not be as fast as people are perceiving, he explains that cars make that turn at full speed, turning onto Broad and Winthrop from Pickering, and that when you are walking or exiting a car, it can be difficult to anticipate the cars coming toward you so quickly. There is little time to react, so even when cars are only at or slightly above the limit, pedestrians are experiencing cars coming at them around a blind turn.

Mr. Kucharsky indicates some additional measures can possibly be done when street work and repaving occurs. Commissioner Swartz says striping might help, as would a three-way stop as others have suggested.

OTHER BUSINESS THAT MAY LEGALLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

Vice Chair Papetti notes there was a fatality last Thursday on Highland Avenue. Mr. Papetti suggests when there is a fatality that the Commission highlight it in a meeting and identify anything we should be doing to make sure a project underway takes it into consideration. He indicates MassDOT has been planning work on Highland Avenue for six or seven years and nothing ever seems to happen for a variety of reasons. Vice Chair Papetti suggests having something related to this on an upcoming agenda and enquire MassDOT about their plans for Highland Avenue. Chair Shallop agrees.

Chair Shallop suggests as we are in a new year, it presents a new opportunity to discuss the ordinance that created the Commission, with the possibility of taking on additional rules and regulations if approved by City Council. She proposes creating a working group to develop a presentation to City Council and any other interested parties regarding the matter. Chair Shallop asks Vice Chair Papetti and Mr. Kucharsky to work with her on the proposal to bring before the whole Commission in the near future.

Mr. Kucharsky announces that there is a new staff member, Brendan Linard who is the City's Transportation Planner.

UPCOMING MEETINGS SCHEDULE

The next meeting is scheduled for January 26, 2022 at 6:00PM, and will be a joint meeting with the Bicycle Committee to discuss the North Street corridor project. The next regular meeting will be on February 9, 2022 and continue to be held on the second Wednesday of every month and at time on the 4th Wednesday if it is needed.

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL

November 18, 2021

There are no edits proposed.

Motion and Vote: Commissioner Swartz motions to approve the November 18, 2021 meeting minutes of the Traffic and Parking Commission. Vice Chair Papetti seconds the motion. The vote is all in favor. **The motion passes.**

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Swartz and seconded by Commission Vice Chair Papetti the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 8:06 PM.