

**City of Salem
Traffic and Parking Commission
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, June 14, 2023**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held remotely on Wednesday, June 14, 2023, at 6:00pm, in accordance with Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023.

Present: Traffic and Parking: Commission Chair Tanya Shallop, Commission Vice Chair Jaime Garmendia, Commissioner Jeff Swartz, Commissioner Brendan Casey, Commissioner Lt. David Tucker, Director of Traffic and Parking David Kucharsky, Traffic and Parking staff member Brendan Linard.

Absent: None

CALL OF MEETING

The meeting was called to order at 6:03pm by Chair Shallop. Ms. Shallop explains how members of the public may participate during the remote meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

NEW/OLD BUSINESS

Director's Update

Mr. Kucharsky welcomes the newest Commissioner, Brendan Casey, who is currently the Director of Capital Delivery for the MBTA and has a background in civil engineering. The Commissioners welcome Mr. Casey. Commissioner Casey introduces himself and states he has had a geotechnical focus and has worked as a consultant and engineer for the MBTA since 2019. The other Commissioners introduce themselves.

Mr. Kucharsky next provides updates on the North Street corridor project, noting the work is not complete, as he is meeting with a contractor to discuss two additional crosswalks and sidewalk improvements, as well as landings for the northbound MBTA bus stops. Mr. Kucharsky also notes that smart signal upgrades have been put out to bid and that roadway striping work that was paused from last year will soon be completed. Mr. Kucharsky also explains that speed and volume data will be collected on North Street, along with parking and bike lane utilization, and Bluebike station data. Staff are working with Toole Design and enforcement on this effort.

Regarding the Traffic Calming Program, Mr. Kucharsky indicates most of the locations from last year have been implemented, with the exception of Mall Street and Valley Street as there has been some back and forth with residents and there will be a meeting with the Mayor to discuss the locations. Staff are moving forward with the Raymond Road

installation, and the contractor is in-place to install six speed humps from Loring Avenue to Lafayette Street. Permanent speed humps on Fairfield Street and Cedar Street are installed, and once the asphalt is cured, there can be proper chevron striping.

Mr. Kucharsky indicates Salem was awarded a Safe Streets for All Grant of \$200,000, and that Mr. Linard is working on putting together the grant agreements and meeting with the Mayor. There must be an agreement between the City and the Federal Government on how the money will be utilized.

With respect to Fort Avenue, Mr. Kucharsky notes an upcoming Conservation Commission meeting and states that an NOI for the project was filed. The funding has been approved by City Council, and the project should go out to bid and start in the fall.

Mr. Kucharsky explains that the City is working to introduce electric charging stations to some of the parking lots. He also notes that DPW Director and City Engineer Dave Knowlton recently left, and that this will be a big loss for the Department and City.

Formalizing Salem School Zones

Mr. Kucharsky shows maps and proposed ordinance language to formally designate areas as school zones.

Mr. Kucharsky explains that the City was awarded School Zone equipment to replace the old equipment, but he indicates that a requirement for receiving the equipment is to designate formal school zones. Staff is seeking recommendations from the Commission to Council on the matter.

Mr. Linard presents the Massachusetts General Laws (Chapter 90, Section 1, and Chapter 85, Section 2) that govern school zones and reviews the requirements and MUTCD standards, including speed limits under 20MPH. Mr. Linard discusses the school zone criteria, which include: the facility must be a school; children walk or bike to or from the school and are expected to cross or enter a roadway where the school zone is proposed (or the school and related facilities are separated by a roadway requiring crossing on foot); the school facility or municipality must provide a plan showing the routes students take to walk or bike with a list of proposed school zone limits; and the municipality must provide written documentation of their support or approval of the school zone. Mr. Linard also discusses school zone standards and presents examples for the Commission. Mr. Linard presents signage standards as well as visual examples. Mr. Linard explains that Salem currently has no school zones, but that they would go in Section 29A of the traffic ordinance, which deals with signs, traffic signals, devices, school zones, meters, and markings. Mr. Linard next presents the proposed ordinance language and proposed zones for the following schools: Bates Elementary School, Carlton Innovation School, Bentley Academy Charter School, Salem Academy Charter School, Saltonstall School, Collins Middle School, Witchcraft Heights Elementary School, Salem High School and Horace Mann Elementary.

Chair Shallop asks why the zones had not been formalized in the past, and whether this change will make a big difference. Commissioner Lt. Tucker states that this will help with having functioning beacons at all school zones and help with enforcement. Mr. Linard adds that establishing the school zones makes the City eligible for further related grants. Mr. Kucharsky indicates staff will pursue other areas where it makes sense to upgrade new equipment as well.

Commissioner Garmendia asks if any schools were left out. Mr. Linard states that the New Liberty School in the mall was excluded due to its orientation and location, and that further discussions are needed for the Phoenix School around Goodhue and Grove Street, as there is low enrollment currently. Mr. Kucharsky confirms those two schools were left off for this round.

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

Motion and Vote: Commissioner Swartz motions to recommend the proposed ordinance changes to formally designate areas as school zones to Council. Commissioner Garmendia seconds the motion. **The vote is five (5) in favor, and none (0) opposed, the motion passes.**

Vulnerable Road User Law Summary

Mr. Linard presents information and a summary of Massachusetts Bill H.5103, An Act to Reduce Traffic Fatalities and discusses how it will impact Salem. Mr. Linard explains the act was passed by legislature in December 2022 and put into law, and that it has various provisions related to safety for vulnerable road users. The provisions include: motorists must give bikers four (4) feet when passing (and may cross the centerline to do so); bikers must have rear red lights when biking outside of daylight hours; new mirror and back-up camera requirements for large vehicles purchased by the State; new processes for municipalities to request speed limit changes; and new reporting forms for incidents involving vulnerable road users. Mr. Linard states there will be new roadway signs acknowledging safe passage for bicyclists and telling motorists to provide four feet to pass. He provides a visual example and presents new guidelines on placement. There will be 23 signs requested for roadways in Salem.

Commissioner Swartz asks how the signage would work for four feet on some of the tighter downtown streets like Essex Street between North Street and Washington Street. Mr. Kucharsky states signs will not be going on those streets based on the existing criteria.

Chair Shallop asks Lt. Tucker how common of a problem this is, and whether any tickets have been written. Commissioner Lt. Tucker states the department is still learning and trying to make this a part of their daily routine. The earlier initiative, he explains, was "Share the Road", and now it has been upgraded to this. Lt. Tucker states there are good enforcement tools now and that the law quantifies things like dooring and prevents cars overtaking cyclists from making an immediate right turn. The law treats bikes as approaching vehicles.

Commissioner Garmendia asks if the presentation was given to the Bike Committee, and Mr. Kucharsky states he will share it with them.

Commissioner Casey asks how legally enforceable some of this is, noting that some of it seems more symbolic unless a motorist actually strikes a cyclist and the distance is therefore known to be zero feet. Mr. Casey suggests it will be difficult to differentiate between three and five feet, for example.

Lt. Tucker says the hope is that it will make the issue forefront in everyone's mind and to treat the issue similarly to a pedestrian in a crosswalk. He agrees that there will not likely be a giant uptick in violations, but hopes that if someone sees a cyclist struggling, they would take some action.

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

OTHER BUSINESS THAT MAY LEGALLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

Chair Shallop announces there was a fatality a week or week and a half ago and notes the importance of examining the circumstances. She asks Commissioner Lt. Tucker if he has any information, or if it could be put on the next meeting agenda.

Commissioner Lt. Tucker states it is still under investigation, but that based on witness accounts, a young gentleman was driving a pickup trip at high speed southbound on Highland Avenue. The driver struck a guardrail, and subsequently a scooter operator, who suffered significant injuries but survived. Lt. Tucker notes the truck rolled several times and the driver was ejected, who succumbed to his injuries.

UPCOMING MEETINGS SCHEDULE

The next meeting is scheduled for July 12, 2023, at 6:00PM.

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL

May 10, 2023

Motion and Vote: Commissioner Garmendia motions to approve the minutes from the May 10, 2023, meeting as drafted. Commissioner Swartz seconds the motion. **The vote is all in favor, the motion passes.**

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Swartz and seconded by Commissioner Garmendia the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 7:19 PM.