

City of Salem
Traffic and Parking Commission
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, April 12, 2023

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held remotely on Wednesday, April 12, 2023, at 6:00pm, via remote participation in accordance with Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023.

Present: Traffic and Parking: Commission Chair Tanya Shallop, Commissioner Jeff Swartz, Commissioner Jaime Garmendia, Director of Traffic and Parking David Kucharsky, and Assistant Director of Traffic and Parking Christina Hodge. **Absent:** Commissioner Lt. David Tucker

CALL OF MEETING

The meeting was called to order at 6:01pm by Chair Shallop. Chair Shallop explains how members of the public may participate during the remote meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Commission Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Linda Stark of 11 Church Street introduces herself and asks about improvements that need to be made to Jefferson Avenue. Ms. Stark states there will be a vigil walk for the woman who was struck and killed, and Ms. Stark was curious if improvements would be discussed at a future meeting.

NEW/OLD BUSINESS

Director's Update

Mr. Kucharsky explains there is an ongoing investigation regarding the incident on Jefferson Avenue and that staff have been working with engineering on plans for intersection improvements in the area. Mr. Kucharsky indicates once he has additional information, he will provide it to the Commission and the public.

Chair Shallop asks that we take a moment to recognize that a pedestrian was fatally struck on one of our City streets and sends her condolences to the friends and family of the victim.

Mr. Kucharsky provides an update on the Safe Streets for All Grant, noting the kickoff is tomorrow. Staff are also working with Engineering and DPW on pavement striping and refreshing crosswalks as well as getting ready for the traffic calming projects. Mr. Kucharsky states they are still looking for someone that meets the transportation/engineering/planning background requirements for a new commission

member and that currently there are no candidates that meet the background requirements.

Chair Shallop asks that the Safe Streets for All Grant be put on the next meeting agenda.

Commissioner Garmendia states he would like more information on the Jefferson Avenue incident from Commissioner Lt. Tucker at whatever meeting he next attends.

Traffic & Parking Commission Election for Chair and Vice Chair

Chair Shallop asks the other commissioners if they would like to table this discussion until Lt. Tucker is back and they have full attendance from all four commissioners.

The other commissioners agree.

Passport Resident Permit Parking Program

Mr. Kucharsky explains that Mollie Bolin is present from Passport, and that we currently use Passport to pay at meters in the City. Mr. Kucharsky notes a desire to move to an online parking program where people can register their vehicles via an online portal and improve the program administration overall. Staff are working with Ms. Bolin to develop a contract for the city. There are still additional discussions that must be had with the Mayor, Finance Director, City Council, and other departments. The goal is not to roll anything out until all meetings are complete.

Ms. Bolin introduces herself and begins a presentation on the online parking platform. Ms. Bolin provides a brief overview of Passport and notes the following goals for Salem: To streamline and automate administrative tasks for permits and enforcement; to better serve constituents regarding resident and visitor parking; continued enhancement of quality of life in Salem; and to implement future proof technology that can adapt with innovation. Ms. Bolin explains that Passport has over 70 clients in New England and notes it is the number one mobile pay provider in Massachusetts. She also indicates that municipalities have the ability to procure multiple products through Passport, including multiple mobile payment options for parking, digital permitting, citation management, license plate recognition, and payment processing. Regarding license plate recognition technology, Ms. Bolin states it is used currently in Chelsea and Newburyport. Over 400 cars can be scanned in a span of 15 minutes according to Ms. Bolin, which would allow for better and quicker enforcement.

Ms. Bolin discusses Salem history with Passport and increases in transactions and revenue since 2019. She also notes savings using Passport compared to meters with respect to maintenance, upkeep, and staffing. Ms. Bolin provides statistics regarding increases in transactions during October, and indicates visitors are adapting well. Ms. Bolin discusses new Passport features, such as automated address-based permit applications, enhanced visitor pass experience and monitoring, the ability to offer additional types of permits, permit messaging capabilities, modernized appeal processes, in-field reporting of work orders to expedite repairs, and advanced overall reporting capabilities. She contends the

new features meet all the current required functions of Salem as well and would help with various efficiencies. Ms. Bolin provides Portland, Maine, as an example and demonstrates their online portal and what it would look like for Salem, providing examples of various dashboard elements and applications.

Chair Shallop asks where the City is in the overall decision-making process and if there is a timeline. Mr. Kucharsky explains the contract details are being worked out, which involves the discussions with those various other departments mentioned previously. The goal is to roll out an operational contract by January 2024. He notes it will be a big change and transition and that the idea is to roll it out for residential use before an October season.

Chair Shallop asks about additional modules that might be available from Passport, and Ms. Bolin discusses a few of the additional offerings in the pipeline regarding permitting, enforcement, fleet management, etc.

Commissioner Swartz speaks to the benefits of allowing permitting for employees of businesses downtown, particularly with the license reading during October. Commissioner Garmendia states he is a fan of parking apps, but states there are a number of people that still do not use smart phones and try not to excise those people from the conversation.

Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Ward 2 City Councilor Caroline Watson-Felt introduces herself and states she is excited for the potential enhancements. She asks if anything will change regarding the current process of not paying a ticket and having it be reported to the RMV, now that this information will be digital. Ms. Bolin explains that Massachusetts is uniform where all tickets escalate at 21 days, and Passport has an integration with Massachusetts RMV, so nothing changes from an enforcement perspective. Councilor Watson-Felt next asks if folks can manually change their license plate and location if they move, and if there is any auto-auditing done through the RMV connection. Ms. Bolin explains that if someone moves, they can update their location and permit. If someone moves, the City will not get a notification, but if someone gets a ticket when they move, their history will follow them. Councilor Watson-Felt states she loves technology and is supportive of this app but asks what the plan is for circumstances where the app goes down and the worst were to happen. Ms. Bolin explains they have a 99.9% uptime and that everything is cloud hosted, so the data cannot be lost with equipment failure. In extremely rare circumstances if the systems were all down, then handwritten citations would be required, but that has not happened. Councilor Watson-Felt asks how an enforcement officer would be able to confirm a citation if they are using the app and it were down in this circumstance. Ms. Bolin states if it goes down it would never be for more than an hour and that they have not had situations beyond that. Mr. Kucharsky also discusses the current protocol for when Passport is down, including notifying enforcement and temporary suspension of issuing citations.

October Order & Ordinance Recommendations

Mr. Kucharsky presents the October weekend parking rate recommendations, based on discussions with acting Mayor McCartney, the City Finance Department, and the City Solicitor regarding potential changes for the upcoming season. The goal is to create more opportunities for residents to park downtown for free during October and to bring in more revenue from visitors. Mr. Kucharsky states the proposal is for parking lots. For the Crombie Street Lot, Old Salem Jail Lot, and Crescent Lot, the proposal is to charge \$20 per day on October weekends for visitors, and to make them free for residents. Residents would need to register their vehicle at a kiosk or via the app. He presents the current existing rules and pricing for the lots for comparison. Mr. Kucharsky next explains that the proposal for the Church Street East and Church Street West Lot is to charge \$40 per day on October weekends for visitors and to make them free for residents. Visits shall be defined as any length of stay between zero and 12 hours. Mr. Kucharsky next discusses the Museum Place and South Harbor parking garages, noting that currently on October weekends and Halloween they charge \$10 for zero to two hours and \$30 for over two hours. The proposal is to add Indigenous Peoples' Day, and to charge \$20 for the first two hours, and \$50 for more than two hours. Mr. Kucharsky notes that when Halloween falls on a weekday, the higher rates would go into effect at 3PM.

Chair Shallop asks if residents have to register their car just once or every time they park. Mr. Kucharsky states it is every time they start a session, similar to now. Chair Shallop asks how the rates compare to other available parking in October, and Mr. Kucharsky indicates some private parking lots charge \$60 or more for a full day. Chair Shallop notes that the Crescent Lot, with its proximity to the MBTA lot, is quite a deal at \$20. Mr. Kucharsky notes the Crescent Lot is slated for development in the near term and will only be available for the City in the 2023 season.

Mr. Garmendia states some people may experience sticker shock with the changes, but that he feels they are appropriate and worth it. Chair Shallop suggests more publicity regarding the "free for residents" aspect. They discuss how charging market rates will help with availability for residents as well. Commissioner Swartz states he believes the proposed pricing is appropriate, and neither too low nor too high.

Mr. Kucharsky next discusses on-street parking weekend rates, noting there will be no changes from last year, but that the orders need to be resubmitted to Council along with those just reviewed. The parking rate shall be \$1.00 per hour on October weekends for Canal Street and Margin Street from 12PM to 6PM, and \$2.00 per hour on the sections along the established North Street temporary parking meter zone. Residents may park for free, during these times, but must register with the Passport Parking app. Commissioner Garmendia asks for more information regarding the price differential. Mr. Kucharsky states it was based on feedback from ward councilors and the ease of ability to walk downtown. Commissioner Swartz and Garmendia discuss the potential for an increase in the rate for the spaces on North Street, and Mr. Kucharsky states such a change would be easy if put forth and approved. Chair Shallop states she has no strong feelings either way.

Ms. Bolin notes that in other cities, they offer progressive pricing that increases based on the amount of time, so the longer they stay the more is charged incrementally. She notes the ability to impact behavior with pricing and policy.

Councilor Watson-Felt provides additional information regarding parking bleeding into residential areas and illegal parking and states the proposals are based on a balance of what people are willing to pay and encouraging better behavior. She indicates she would like to hear from the Ward 6 Councilor for additional thoughts on the matter.

Mr. Kucharsky presents the drafted order language.

Motion and Vote: Commissioner Garmendia motions to recommend the orders and changes related to October parking as drafted to City Council. Commissioner Swartz seconds the motion. **The vote is three (3) in favor, and none (0) opposed, the motion passes.**

Mr. Kucharsky next presents the October ordinance amendments related to resident permit parking based on public feedback. There has been a desire to extend the temporary resident permit parking. Section 75A is the October Resident Parking Ordinance, and Mr. Kucharsky states one of the proposed changes is to extend the timeframe to begin the third Saturday in September, rather than October first, and to run through November 1st. With respect to street updates, the proposal is to remove Essex Street from Cambridge Street to Summer Street from Section 75A, and to add Lynch Street from Congress Street to Perkins Street. Mr. Kucharsky also indicates it has been proposed that Section D be removed, which discusses Church Street East and West Lot, as they are covered by the prior agenda item. The Commission discusses the length of October Resident Parking and Haunted Happenings generally, and whether the extension makes sense and is appropriate. Mr. Kucharsky states he could propose the fourth Saturday in September as the start date to Council. Chair Shallop indicates she does not have enough information at this time. The Commission asks for more information on what parking is like in late September and early to mid-November before making a decision on the proposed timeframe changes.

Motion and Vote: Commissioner Swartz motions to recommend only the October ordinance amendments associated with street changes and removal of Section D, as drafted to City Council. Commissioner Garmendia seconds the motion. **The vote is three (3) in favor, and none (0) opposed, the motion passes.**

Mr. Kucharsky next presents the recommended order on temporal year-round resident parking, which states: The streets set forth below, with limited resident permit parking, shall be designated as temporary resident permit parking only streets from the third Saturday in September to November 1, 2023, during the hours of 5PM to 7AM, Monday through Friday, and 12PM to 7AM Saturday through Sunday - Chestnut Street from Cambridge Street to Summer Street, Derby Street from Becket Avenue to Webb Street, Essex Street from Monroe Street to Summer Street, and Hawthorne Boulevard from Essex street to Charter Street. Mr. Kucharsky states this was done last year but that this may need to be paused as it is requested to begin on the third Saturday in September.

The last item Mr. Kucharsky presents is a change to Section 17B, Universal Steel Parking Lot. Mr. Kucharsky explains the proposal is to remove the \$20 fee per vehicle per day, and state that “a fee” can be charged, allowing for flexibility. Any Salem youth organization operating in the City can request the ability to have the lot for the day and charge parking.

Motion and Vote: Commissioner Garmendia motions to recommend the Section 17B ordinance change as drafted to City Council. Commissioner Swartz seconds the motion. **The vote is three (3) in favor, and none (0) opposed, the motion passes.**

OTHER BUSINESS THAT MAY LEGALLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

None.

UPCOMING MEETINGS SCHEDULE

The next meeting is scheduled for April 26, 2023, at 6:00PM.

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL

February 8, 2023

Motion and Vote: Commissioner Swartz motions to approve the minutes from the February 8, 2023, meeting as drafted. Commissioner Garmendia seconds the motion. **The vote is all in favor, the motion passes.**

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Garmendia and seconded by Commissioner Swartz the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 7:41 PM.