

**City of Salem  
Traffic and Parking Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, February 1, 2018**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held on Thursday, February 1, 2018 at 6:30pm at 120 Washington Street, Salem, MA. Present were Commission Chair Tanya Stepasiuk, Commission Vice-Chair Eric Papetti, Commissioner Jamie Metsch, Commissioner Lt. Robert Preczewski, and Commissioner Robin Seidel. Assistant Director Nicholas Downing was also present, and Traffic and Parking Director Matt Smith joined the meeting at 7:00 pm.

**CALL OF MEETING**

The meeting was called to order at 6:30pm.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Joyce Kenney of 285 Lafayette Street again asked the Commission to take action on an ongoing parking violation she sees regularly with the same car parked in a bus stop. Staff indicated they've sent enforcement staff to the location multiple times, as has the Police Department, but tickets can only be issued if the car is there when enforcement staff or the Police arrive.

**TRAFFIC AND PARKING DIRECTOR MONTHLY UPDATE**

Assistant Director Downing began the Monthly Director Update.

The City's shuttle study is ongoing. There is a meeting on February 12 for anyone interested in learning more about the study and what it entails. The goal is to make sure this work complements the work being done by the City, MAPC, and other North Shore municipalities to consider a regional shuttle network as well. The City has contracted with TransAction Associates to undertake the study.

Total December 2017 parking revenues, including fines, totaled \$200,785, a decrease of 5 percent (-5%) year-over-year. However, this was likely more a result of unseasonably cold (even for December) weather conditions the week between Christmas and New Year's Eve, and the extended long holiday weekends observed by the City. This is reflected in the lower Museum Place Garage gate revenues (down 15% YOY), and kiosk parking lots and meters (down 23% YOY). However, revenues collected from the Parking Office increased (+27% YOY), as did those from the South Harbor Garage (+44%). The increased South Harbor revenues in particular reflect the overall increase in utilization along the Derby Street Corridor. Parking fine revenues also increased by 8% YOY.

The order to allow for a downtown valet parking pilot was submitted to the Council by Councilor Madore and was referred to the Committee on Ordinances, Licenses, and Legal Affairs (OLLA). The order did NOT include the recommended timeframes the Commission included in its recommendation.

Assistant Director Downing began giving an update on the Local Transportation Improvement Program (LTIP), but the conversation was paused until Director Smith arrived to provide further information.

## **NEW / OLD BUSINESS**

- Visitor Parking Permit Technical Change

Department staff was recently notified about a technical issue with the current visitor parking permit ordinance. As currently written, only households who garage (owned or leased vehicle registered in the City of Salem) are eligible to obtain Visitor Parking Permits. This is a discriminatory practice, as it prevents only those households who do not own or lease a vehicle registered in the City of Salem from providing their visitors on-street parking.

In order to prevent households from attempting to purchase a less expensive Visitor Parking Permit to use in place of a Residential Parking Permit, the fee structure for both permits must also be changed. Currently, Resident Permits cost \$10 and Visitor Permits cost \$1. This language would change the cost of a Visitor Permit for households without a Resident Permit to \$10 for the first permit, and \$1 for the second.

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Metsch and seconded by Commissioner Seidel, the Commission voted unanimously to recommend to the City Council to amend Chapter 42, Section 75 as follows:

### **Procedures for Obtaining Stickers**

The sticker is to be placed on the front window, driver's side, lower left corner.

**C. Visitor parking permits:** The City Collector shall also be in charge of issuing two portable visitor Parking Permits per household excluding College Student Resident Parking Permit holders as defined in sub-section A above that shall be used for visitors of the residents of the area. For households who garage a vehicle within the City of Salem, Proof of residency is required as in Sub-Section B above. Households that do not garage a vehicle in the City of Salem are eligible to receive two (2) Visitor Parking Permits per household. Proof of residency is required. At the discretion of the City Collector, visitor parking permits may either be issued in hand or mailed to a resident parking permit holder. Visitor Permits will not be replaced if lost.

The Visitor Permits are to be used ONLY while visitors are actually visiting the household to which the permits are issued. Visitor permits shall carry the address of the household to which they were issued, and shall be valid only within the immediate area of the address so stated on the permit, and for a period of time not longer than 14 consecutive days for any one visitor. Any abuse in the use of a Visitor Permit will result in the revocation of the Permit. The Visitor Permits are to be displayed on the front dashboard, above the steering wheel, and must be fully readable from the exterior of the vehicle. The Visitor Permits must be returned to the resident at the conclusion of the visit.

**D. Fees:** The fee for each resident Parking Sticker shall be \$10.00 and shall be valid for a period of two years, provided that the owner of the vehicle continues to be domiciled within the zone indicated on the resident parking permit, in the event the owner of the vehicle is domiciled outside the zone indicated, the resident parking permit shall be considered null and void. The fee for each Visitor Parking Permit shall be \$1.00 for households who have obtained a Resident Sticker and shall be valid for two years. For households who do not garage a vehicle in the City of Salem, the first Visitor Parking Permit shall be \$10.00, and the second shall be \$1.00 and shall be valid for two years.

- Traffic and Parking Commission Regulations

Assistant Director Downing presented the Commission with the proposed regulations to be submitted to the City Council. The regulations have been updated to include all action taken since the Commission made its submission of these same regulations to the Council last year. The major difference between this year's submission and last year's is the removal of the section concerning parking at Salem High School.

The Commission agreed that it is better to submit a larger proposal knowing the Council may make changes to it than to try and assume that aspects the Council may object to. Chair Stepasiuk stressed the importance of working with the Council to get the regulations considered and passed so the Commission can begin to function as intended when it was created by the Council.

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Seidel and seconded by Vice-Chair Papetti, the Commission voted unanimously to submit the proposed regulations to the City Council.

### **TRAFFIC AND PARKING DIRECTOR MONTHLY UPDATE (continued)**

Director Smith joined the meeting and the Commission returned to the discussion of the Local Transportation Improvement Program. Vice-Chair Papetti expressed some concern that while the Commission was being kept more up to date on projects

**Approved at the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting on Thursday, February 15, 2018.**

overall, it may still be missing important opportunities to provide feedback on projects or to set the stage for how project design should proceed. Director Smith indicated that all projects have a kickoff meeting, and going forward, we can invite all Commissioners to attend, but we need to make sure the Commission does not get too far into the weeds on a given project. Vice-Chair Papetti agreed, but wants to make sure there is some bigger picture thinking about what the City wants and how to set the tone for initial design work. Director Smith suggested creating some type of guidance document to be drafted by staff and issued by the Commission. Commissioner Metsch indicated we already have a Complete Streets Policy and ADA requirements that these projects should be following, but maybe we need to add to those in terms of guidance about the City's goals. Chair Stepasiuk suggested having lead staff on projects attend Commission meetings, and Director Smith suggested having DPS attend one of the monthly meetings regularly.

Director Smith provided an update on the Museum Place Garage. Utilization regularly exceeds 85%. It was down somewhat in December, but is still high. The price is currently \$0.75, but with such high utilization, we may need to consider pricing changes to ensure we have spaces available. The garage itself has required substantial investment in recent years - \$3.5 million in the last 4 years, including \$1.3 million emergency maintenance to fix the stairs this last year. These emergency fixes could become more frequent unless we invest significant resources to fix multiple issues.

Commissioner Metsch asked how much money the department receives for maintenance of the garage? Director Smith answered the department receives \$80,000 to \$100,000 each year, but that is for maintenance of the entire parking system. The garage maintenance study is still being completed, but the draft report shows that it will cost millions to maintain the garage even for a short lifecycle. The City needs to determine its goals for the garage – whether that means maintaining it for 10, 20, or 30 years, or looking at potential redevelopment or reuse. The issue is legally complex, as the Museum Place Mall is privately owned, and the City owns the air rights above it where the garage is. The final report should be completed soon, and it will include information re: the necessary revenues the garage would need to generate to cover the costs associated with maintaining it.

Commissioner Metsch asked if there were currently any big ideas on the table for what to do. Director Smith answered not as of now, and the legal issues make any ideas very complicated. Commissioner Metsch asked if it would be possible to do minimum fixes that would extend the life of the garage 10 years and then build the capacity elsewhere? Director Smith answered that we don't know just yet because we need the final report. We can't lose the parking supply the garage offers today, but we need to prepare for some of it coming offline. Even if it is decided to keep the garage for another 30 years, the required maintenance will take some capacity offline as the work is done, and we need to have that capacity elsewhere. We are currently looking at ways to maximize our currently supply through restriping or potentially even modular, temporary structures.

Commissioner Seidel asked if the City has data on garage users? Director Smith answered that we do, but we need more. We know some things about the users. Approximately 25% of users are municipal employees who receive a free parking pass, then there are large percentages of Salem 5 employees and resident parking. Vice-Chair Papetti suggested the City consider a parking cash-out option for municipal employees both to encourage alternative modes and to free up space. Director Smith agreed the City may want to consider such a program, and overall we need to look at pricing. Beyond October, the garage is full 3 or 4 times a week in the summer as well. Commissioner Metsch who would be biggest opposition to higher prices? Director Smith answered that some business may oppose higher rates and residents may as well too. That's why it's important to have as much data as possible, and to show that pricing changes can free up spaces in higher demand areas. Commissioner Seidel added that the City may wanted to consider a summer price as well as an October price for the garage.

Vice-Chair Papetti had a follow-up comment on the proposed valet pilot. He suggested possibly linking loading zones and valet parking spaces. Spaces could act as loading zones in the morning and valet spaces in the evening. Assistant Director Downing responded that the Commission hadn't discussed that at the last meeting, but would keep it in mind as the valet order moves through the process.

Vice-Chair Papetti also had further comments on the shuttle studies. He expressed concern about creating another mini shuttle service but not trying to fix the big issue of poorly planned MBTA bus routes in Salem and across the North Shore. Director Smith indicated that part of both the Salem study and the regional effort is talking with MBTA to identify potential route improvements. Commissioner Metsch asked if some of the existing shuttles such as SSU or the Council on Aging could be used by a wider segment of the population. Assistant Director Downing answered that yes, that idea is part of both conversations.

- Traffic and Parking Commission Leadership

Per the ordinance that created the Commission, the members must elect a Chair and Vice-Chair each year, and other officers as they see fit. Currently Commissioner Stepasiuk serves as Chair and Commissioner Papetti serves as Vice-Chair. Commissioner Metsch asked if each is willing and able to continue to serve in those roles? Both Chair Stepasiuk and Vice-Chair Papetti answered in the affirmative.

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Metsch and seconded by Commissioner Seidel, it was voted to re-elect Commission Stepasiuk as Chair and Commissioner Papetti as Vice Chair, with Commissioner Metsch, Lt. Preczewski, and Commissioner Seidel voting yes, and Chair Stepasiuk and Vice-Chair Papetti abstaining.

## **MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL**

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Seidel and seconded by Lt. Preczewski, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes from the January 18, 2018 Traffic and Parking Commission meeting.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Metsch and seconded by Vice-Chair Papetti, the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 8:17pm.