

**City of Salem
Traffic and Parking Commission
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, February 15, 2018**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held on Thursday, February 15, 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. Traffic and Parking Director Matt Smith and Assistant Director Nicholas Downing were also present.

CALL OF MEETING

The meeting was called to order at 6:31pm.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Joyce Kenney of 285 Lafayette Street again told the Commission about an ongoing parking issue. Director Smith informed Ms. Kenney he is working with the new bus planner at MassDOT about appropriate signage for the bus stop in question.

NEW / OLD BUSINESS

- Mill Street Tactical Bicycle Infrastructure

This item was taken out of order so Director Smith could give a presentation to the Planning Board.

Director Smith gave an overview of the current situation. The Canal Street Multiuse Path is wrapping up construction and will open this spring. It is an excellent addition to the City's bicycle infrastructure but has a problematic element: as designed, the path ends in a 10-foot-wide curb cut that seems to invite bikers to enter into traffic on mid-block Mill Street before the intersection with Washington Street and Canal Street, which at that point is 3 lanes, plus a median, plus another lane of traffic. In addition to being a safety concern, this shows a big gap in north-south bike connections. Staff have looked at the intersection and drafted a conceptual idea to address these issues. The concept would take the southernmost lane on Mill Street (right turn only onto Canal Street) to make a 2-way bike lane allowing cyclists to travel west toward Margin Street or east toward the Mill/Canal/Washington intersection. The second phase of this tactical approach would bring cyclists across Mill Street at the aforementioned intersection and through Riley Plaza in a bike lane on the eastern edge of the parking lot. This lane would not require any parking to be removed from the lot and would eventually connect to the striping project MassDOT is doing on Washington Street later this

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year. The idea is for this project to be tactical and quick, using paint and movable bollards to test if this conceptual idea could address these issues.

Vice-Chair Papetti asked what the extent of the restriping from MassDOT would be on Washington – would it reach Mill Street? Director Smith answered no, it would stop at the rapid flashing beacon.

Chair Stepasiuk asked what staff is seeking from the Commission tonight. Director Smith answered we are looking for feedback on the tactical approach and if you support the idea, along with any comments or other ideas to address these issues. The discussion is limited to this item only, NOT the proposed two-way Margin Street idea the Commission has discussed previously.

Commissioner Metsch asked if this proposal would reduce Mill Street to 2 lanes? Director Smith answered, yes, and we would observe and do traffic counts to see if that works in the long term. Commissioner Metsch added it has been his experience cars can tend to stack up at this intersection so taking away a lane may have an adverse impact. Director Smith responded anything we do here would at first be tactical – using paint, movable bollards, even cones or barrels, and we would continue to assess its effectiveness. We would need to work with an engineer to check the alignment. It could be done in conjunction with the two-way Margin idea, but right now the focus is just this concept to get the Commission's general feeling.

Lt. Preczewski asked if the slip lane on Mill Street would remain? Director Smith answered for this to work, the slip lane would likely need to be removed or altered in some way, but this is just conceptual so engineering would have to determine how best to do that. Lt. Preczewski suggested staff use barrels to remove the lane for a brief pilot without anything else being done to see how traffic behaves.

Vice-Chair Papetti commented that if done on conjunction with Margin Street, this idea would require more curb work anyways, but the Margin/Mill intersection should be T'd off no matter what. Vice-Chair Papetti expressed skepticism at the path through Riley Plaza, and suggested staff try to think of other ways to make the connection and work with MassDOT to get their striping project extended to Mill Street.

Commissioner Metsch echoed Vice-Chair Papetti's suggestion of working with MassDOT to extend their striping project, but wants to retain the path through Riley Plaza to help cyclists travelling north. Commissioner Metsch suggested width on Mill Street be taken on northern side instead of southern side. Lt. Preczewski expressed his support for that idea, with a bike lane being striped from the path end to the crossing at the intersection, and then a facility on the northern side of Mill Street.

At-Large Councilor Sargent suggested staff look at the ownership of the Domino's Pizza parcel, as the city or state may own more right of way than the sidewalk, which could allow for some of that width to be used by cyclists.

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Vice-Chair Papetti suggested staff frame this as being a safety project and one geared at all users, as increased bike safety is good for drivers and pedestrians as well.

Staff is meeting with GESNA later this month to discuss this and other projects in the area, and will report back to the Commission at the meeting on March 1 to continue to discuss this.

- Gedney Street Area Parking Meters

Assistant Director Downing presented to the Commission on the status of proposed changes to the parking meters and parking restrictions on and surrounding Gedney Street.

The Commission discussed this issue some months back, and tasked staff with working with the business owners in the area and the neighborhood association about proposed changes recommended by the Commission. At that time, the Commission recommended changes to the existing parking restrictions that would add more metered spaces to the area and lessen the number of different types of parking available along Gedney Street.

Staff met with business owners from the area, as well as representation from the neighborhood association and Ward 2 Councilor Madore at the end of January to discuss proposed changes. The group came to the consensus that a mix of parking options was needed, but perhaps less of a mix than is in the area now. The group also expressed concern with the time restrictions on parking, as too long a restriction means no turnover and too little means patrons cannot use the spaces. Based on this meeting, staff drafted the proposed plan. All parking along the northern side of Gedney Street would be metered, 2-hour parking. The non-metered, 15- and 30-minute parking spaces on Margin Street would remain. The first 5 spaces on the southern side of Gedney traveling in a westerly direction from Margin Street would remain as unmetered, 15-minute parking. The next 3 spaces on the same side of Gedney Street would be metered, 2-hour parking. The 2 resident spaces on the southern side of Gedney Street would remain. The unmetered, 2-hour parking on the eastern side of Holyoke Square would become metered, 2-hour parking, as would the southernmost parking space on the western side of Holyoke Square. All of the metered spaces would cost \$0.50 per hour to park, and with the rest of the city would be enforced Monday through Saturday from 8:00am to 6:00pm.

Chair Stepasiuk asked if the metered spaces would sue traditional meters or kiosks, and if the department has a policy on this? Assistant Director Downing answered he isn't sure, but generally we are looking to sue kiosks more.

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Commissioner Metsch asked about pricing. If the city might be making pricing adjustments later, should we start new metered spaces at a higher rate rather than just have to raise this rate later? Assistant Director Downing answered while we are looking at pricing, we have no recommendations at this time, and there is no guarantee pricing would change here. We need to follow utilization and see if this price works in this area.

Chair Stepasiuk asked if staff has done outreach to residents and abutters? Director Smith answered no, but we can invite them to the GESNA meeting when we will discuss this and the next Commission meeting as well. They may have concerns with the proposed metered parking on the western end of the street as it is currently unrestricted.

Commissioner Metsch suggested if abutters do not want the metered parking there, perhaps the spaces on the eastern side of Holyoke Square would be diagonal to fit more metered spaces. Staff said they would consider. Vice-Chair Papetti commented that the city should not add parking in an opportunistic way, so we shouldn't automatically feel the need to find more metered spaces if there is pushback about the meters at the western end. The department needs to take a holistic approach to managing parking city-wide.

At-Large Councilor Sargent commented that he has been trying to get the deed restricted spaces on Norman Street and Holyoke Square returned to the city, but to no avail. He expressed some concerns with metered spaces in front of residences on the western end of the street, but is glad the businesses support this plan.

This proposal will be discussed at the GESNA meeting later this month and staff will report back at the meeting on March 1.

- Resident and Visitor Permit Parking

Assistant Director Downing gave an overview of the work department staff has one to date on the issue of resident and visitor permit parking. Primarily, that work has been focused on creating the memo the Commission was sent on the issue. The memo outlines the current state of the resident and visitor permit parking program in the city, as well as some issues with the existing system and its implementation, examples of other approaches to this issue from municipalities in Massachusetts and elsewhere, and ends with questions for further consideration and discussion. The goal is for this meeting to be the starting point of a long public process that includes discussion at future Commission meetings and presentations to neighborhood groups and other public meetings as well.

Chair Stepasiuk asked how exactly do visitor passes work? Director Smith answered they can be used for any resident permit parking spot for up to 14 consecutive days. This makes them almost impossible to enforce as enforcement staff would have to visit the same exact area and note the location 14 days in a row and the City has no

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enforcement staff on Sundays. Commissioner Seidel noted she knows of residents who use a visitor pass on their 2nd car all year round.

Commissioner Metsch asked if there is a limit to the number of passes per household? Could a household of 4 adult roommates each have a resident pass and 2 visitor passes? Director Smith answered no, there is no limit; and yes, a household of 4 adult roommates could each have a resident pass and 2 visitor passes.

Lt. Preczewski asked why any resident that doesn't currently have it would want resident permit parking and if a city-wide program makes sense? Assistant Director Downing reiterated that no one is suggesting a city-wide, one-size fits all resident permit parking program. Any proposal would still be zone based in some way, and would have some process for determining which zones have it, and for zones that didn't, how they could get it if they wanted. Director Smith added that what has happened is a piecemeal approach that has shifted problems from one street to another – resident permit parking began right next to the university, but has grown to encompass more and more of that neighborhood. Some neighborhoods are now stuck between zones such as streets between the Common and Collins Cove. They have constrained parking issues but do not have resident permit parking. Residents on Derby Street that live mid-block do not have access to permit parking while their neighbors on the corners do.

Commissioner Metsch suggested there are 2 maps we need to look at – one is an eligibility map, and the other is a map that defines every single space on every street. We need consistency between zones in terms of how spaces are allotted and consistency within zones as well. Commissioner Metsch also added that we should look at technology that would help, both with getting passes and with enforcement.

Vice-Chair Papetti suggested that Somerville's system may not be the best fit as it is very complicated, and we should aim to keep our system as simple as possible. Commissioner Metsch agreed, saying while Somerville may offer too many, Salem offers too few. The three variables to consider are term, price, and variety. Pricing should be adjusted and probably increased substantially, and perhaps guests passes should require a more frequent renewal.

Commissioner Seidel added that residents should still have flexibility in using passes, so more frequent renewal requirements may be difficult, but 2 years is likely too long.

Vice-Chair Papetti asked about AirBNB – is the department involved in those ongoing conversations? Director Smith answered yes, he is in the committee the Council formed to look at AirBNB related issues.

There was a general discussion about data and how data could inform decisions the city could make re: the number of permits issued and if any type of limitation could or should be placed on that number. There are a number of different sources of data,

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and taking them all together paints a relatively clear picture of car ownership in the city.

Assistant Director Downing outlined a general timeline for this work and these conversations to move forward. Staff is actively seeking meetings with the neighborhood groups and councilors and will continue to add to the memo, hopefully having an updated version to share in the next couple of months.

- Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program

Assistant Director Downing provided an update on the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program. Staff have worked on the memo outlining the program to try and simplify the process for neighborhoods. As proposed in the current memo, the program would require residents or neighborhood groups to have at least 50% of residents within a given area of a proposed project sign a petition in support of the project. Staff would work to verify the issue and determine project eligibility, then meet with the petitioners and present traffic calming options with input from the city engineer. A second meeting with the petitioners would be held and the Commission would review requests for funding. Once approved, projects would be added to the funding queue. Once implemented, projects would be assessed after 6 months. If a project is determined to cost more than \$25,000, it would not be added to the funding queue for NTCP, and staff would work with the petitioners to identify other funding sources. Director Smith added that we want there to be a clear process for this program, with data driving objective decisions whenever possible.

Vice-Chair Papetti commented that he is very excited about this program, as he has seen similar programs be very successful in other cities. He feels much more leeway and discretion should be given to staff and the whole program need to be simplified. The 50% requirement raises lots of tricky questions in terms of how to measure that 50%. A petition from residents or a neighborhood group should be one way a project could move forward, but not the sole way. If an intersection has a serious crash with injuries or even a fatality, staff should be able to go out and act quickly with a temporary intervention to address the issue causing the crash.

Chair Stepasiuk agreed with Vice-Chair Papetti, and asked what the goal of the memo is? Director Smith answered that this memo will eventually be developed into the policy for this program, which is why we are seeking Commission feedback.

Vice Chair Papetti asked once a budget is set for this program, perhaps certain percentages should be allocated for certain types of projects, with a mix of community initiated projects and a mix of staff initiated projects.

Commissioner Seidel commented that perhaps a date should be set each year for resident requests, with a way for other residents to vote on or prioritize projects they think should be funded.

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Chair Stepasiuk emphasized making the process simple and giving staff discretion both in terms of initiating projects and reviewing proposals from residents and neighborhood groups.

Commissioner Metsch asked how much money will be available for this program, and would it be available even if the city received no requests from residents? Assistant Director Downing answered that this program is intended to be “in addition to” not “instead of” other funding for projects. Some money has already been allocated which is what is being used for the work on Chestnut Street, and some would come from the City’s Chapter 90 allocation.

Chair Papetti Commented that visuals matter, and staff should take advantage of events like Haunted Happenings and 4th of July when streets are closed to go out and do small tactical things to show residents how it can work.

Staff is going to rework the memo with these comments in mind and bring back to the Commission at one of its next meetings.

- New Business: Essex Street Pedestrian Mall

Commissioner Metsch requested that in the next few months, the Commission re-open the discussion on the Essex Street Pedestrian Mall that stalled some years back.

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Metsch and seconded by Vice Chair Papetti, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes from the February 1, 2018 Traffic and Parking Commission meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Vice-Chair Papetti and seconded by Commissioner Metsch, the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 8:31pm.

Approved on March 1, 2018