**City of Salem**

**Traffic and Parking Commission**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, March 7, 2019**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held on Thursday, March 7, 2019 at 6:30pm at 98 Washington Street, Salem, MA. **Present**: Commission Chair Tanya Stepasiuk, Commission Vice-Chair Eric Papetti, Commissioner Robin Seidel, Commissioner Lt. David Tucker and Director David Kucharsky. **Absent:** Commissioner Todd Waller.

**CALL OF MEETING**

The meeting called to order at 6.34pm.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

*Eric & Melissa Noack, 19 Columbus Avenue* stated they were concerned for their safety and that of their neighbors due to speeding along Fort Avenue and Columbus Avenue. They said they had spoken to both the Traffic and Police Departments and solicited City Councilor McCarthy to post signage. The Councilor had a barrel placed near the intersection that helped for a while, but that it was moved during the snowstorm. They said there is a lot of drag racing and children play along the road, there’s a high risk that they could get hit, they said a child was killed a number of years ago.

Chair Stepasiuk thanked the couple and asked Director Kucharsky his thoughts, he suggested they talk to their neighbors and get a petition going to see how large the issue is, he said the City could look at the ordinance to see what the agreed upon speed limit was between the municipality and the State, if there wasn’t an agreement there would should be no signs posted and it would more than likely be a statutory 25mph speed limit. If that is the case, the City could put up black and yellow signs to remind motorists that it is a thickly settled area and they should slow down.

Vice Chair Papetti said it related to one of the items on the agenda, the Bike Master Plan, Fort Avenue has been identified for on-street bike accommodations, he said this would narrow the road for vehicles and would compel them to slow down and to look at other ways to encourage adhering to the speed limit through the design of the road. Ms. Noack added that part of the neighborhood is not designated for resident only parking. This results in many visitors parking on local streets especially during the summer months. Chair Stepasiuk said she agreed that it is a problem and that they would look at the area. Director Kucharsky asked if they had been to any of the meetings related to the redevelopment of the hill near the Willows, he indicated the city would be looking at traffic and parking issues as part of that effort. Lt. Tucker said that for the short term he would send some Police down to survey the area. He asked if there were any times that were worse than others, and Mr. Noack said usually the end of the work day.

*Judith Riley, 20 West Avenue # 3* commented on the MBTAs Better Bus Project, she is a Salem resident, commutes to Boston, and is a member of the Affordable Housing Committee. She does not believe the removal of the 459 bus is wrong, but the trip from Salem to Wonderland is over one hour, she said commuting should not be a part time job. She thinks there should be an express bus to Wonderland and noted there should be more focus on improving bus service than getting another train stop in South Salem.

**TRAFFIC AND PARKING DIRECTOR UPDATE**

* Local Transportation Improvement Program (LTIP)

Chair Stepasiuk asked Director Kucharsky to give an update on all current projects.

**ADA Transition Plan:** Director Kucharsky explained that the State had awarded the City a $75,000 grant, he said they put out an RFP and one bid had been submitted/reviewed and they are currently moving forward with awarding the project. He said initially they were discouraged by this but when they looked at the Company, they found that they were very reputable and had worked with a lot of municipalities across the State and with the MBTA. The price is within the City’s range. He told the Commission he would inform them as soon as possible.

Vice Chair Papetti asked what the scope of work would be. Director Kucharsky noted that the project involves identifying and compiling past as well as ongoing programs and projects in order to provide the City with a comprehensive list of both current accommodations and critical areas throughout the city where accommodations are lacking. The scope was developed with input from the Commission on Disability Chair as well as others associated with Salem for All Ages. Director Kucharsky said the City must move quickly to spend the $75,000 as the invoices must be submitted by June 30th for the City to be reimbursed. The Director also informed the Commission that he had left aside some additional funds in case they go over budget. Chair Stepasiuk asked what he thought the total budget might be at this time. The Director said the scope was for $85,000. Vice Chair Papetti again asked what the scope of the project is and not what the consultant is being paid for. He wanted to know if the City figured out what needs to be done for an ADA Transition Plan and allocated internal staff hours over the course of the year to get that done. Director Kucharsky said they have not gotten yet into that level of detail. Vice Chair Papetti said that his concern was the amount of the grant awarded that he thought somewhat arbitrary and might not match the level of work that is required to map all the City’s sidewalks and curb ramps to analyze them in adequate detail.

Director Kucharsky said that information is in the process of being collected by a consultant hired by the Engineering Department and has been going on for several years now. Vice Chair Papetti asked how many curb ramps they had surveyed. The Director did not know but would look into it, noting the GIS administrator is working with this information to help develop a paving plan. Vice Chair Papetti said it needs to be clear on how much data is missing before the scope of work is finalized as his impression to date was the amount of data on curb ramps and sidewalks is very small. Chair Stepasiuk asked if the GIS data was publicly available yet. Director said it’s not, and that they are currently using that data internally to set the pavement program, not just for the roads but the sidewalks. He said he believes they are using a pavement condition index (PCI) to assess when areas need to be reconstructed.

**Downtown Bike Upgrades:** Director Kucharsky explained that they still do not have any information on the schedule, he said he knew that it had been awarded. He spoke to Mr. Knowlton, DPS Director, and he is putting in a call to find out where things stand. The Director said he would like the striping to take place after the roundabout at Norman, Chestnut and Summer Streets has been installed. Vice Chair Papetti asked that there be some discussion as to how on street bike accommodations are maintained before they are installed noting that the shoulder on Bridge Street is currently full of snow as it is not technically a bike lane yet. There needs to be a plan in place to deal with street sweeping and snow removal. Perhaps it is training the DPS staff change some of their practices.

**Bridge Street Complete Streets**: The Director explained that the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is requiring the City to incorporate compensatory storage space into the current design plans. He said the City feels that it is not applicable as the Conservation Commission approved the current design, he said that the City may need to go to an adjudicatory process. The Mayor is attempting to make some overtures to the DEP officials and others to sit down and discuss the disagreement further. He would let the Commission know what happens. Vice Chair Papetti asked if there were a point where the City should just cut its’ losses and redesign it. The Director explained that it is a MassWorks project and although that is what might end up happening it would be unfortunate as this particular portion was looking to expand the pedestrian and cyclists network in that area. Vice Chair Papetti asked about other aspects of the design that did not deal with compensatory storage. It wasn’t clear to him if Mr. Knowlton thought there was a problem with the design, noting that Stantec, the consultant developing the plans, had ignored comments made by the Traffic & Parking Commission and did not appear to display much knowledge at the public meetings about those comments and that this was concerning.

**Museum Place Garage:** Director Kucharsky told the Commission that the equipment for the elevators had been shipped and work would commence at the end of March. He explained that only one elevator at a time would be worked on. He said he was coordinating with the Building Department and the Mayors office to ensure all stakeholders be notified. He said signage and notifications on social media would be instigated to alert the public of this work taking place.

**Norman/Chestnut/Summer Roundabout Pilot:** Director Kucharsky notified the Commission that a meeting had taken place on March 6th at Hamilton Hall, he said Lt. Tucker, Mr. Knowlton and Councilor Madore were present and there was a good turnout. He said there was some skepticism on the part of the residents but there was also support for the pilot. He said he reviewed the results of the study that Stantec had done for the City in 2017/18, that provided the rationale for taking this route as he said the desired result is to calm the traffic down and make it safer for pedestrians. He said they received good feedback, the other concern from the residents was street lighting which he said they will address separately. He said he would be moving forward with procuring the contractors who would stripe and sign the intersection as well as monitor traffic conditions both before and during the pilot. He went on to say the plan is to have it in place in May before MassDOT installs striping associated with the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP). If the project works as planned, the City would then approach the State and ask for a change order to incorporate the roundabout using thermo-plastic striping. The City would then look at doing more long-term infrastructure improvements which would include resetting granite curbs.

**South Harbor Garage Study:** The Director informed the Commission that the RFQ was released and the bids are due April 3rd. This is for the overall maintenance assessment focusing on the stairs and other items to get an understanding of what needs to be done. Chair Stepasiuk asked if that included re-striping vehicle spaces, she said there had been complaints about the narrowness of the spaces, the Director did not believe so, and the Chair asked if he could find out.

**Szetela Lane Multiuse Path Extensions:** Director Kucharsky informed the Commission that the MassTrails grant was submitted last month and design plans were going before the Bike Committee. Tom Devine, from the Planning Department, who staffs the Bike Committee will get additional comments from them to be submitted to Engineering. Vice Chair Papetti asked how long it would take to announce those awards, the Director believed it would be May or June. He said Mr. Knowlton is proceeding with a capital request, in the event that we do not get the grant.

* General Departmental Updates

Chair Stepasiuk thanked the Director and asked new members of the public if they had any comments.

*Dick Friedberg, 57 Britannica Circle* asked if there were any plans to build up on the South Park Garage, he said his business partner and he had been exploring building automated parking, he said it has worked well in New York and other cities, he understood the need for an operator but said there are ways around this. He said the Front Street design that they had come up with included a lot of resident and retail and parking.

**Valet Pilot Parking Program**: The Director indicated he had a recent discussion with the Mayor about valet parking. He said the Mayor reached out to Councilor Madore and this would go before the Ordinances, Licenses and Legal Affairs (OLLA) next Thursday (7/14/2019). Chair Stepasiuk noted she believed there was an issue when this was brought forward last year and suggested the Director check on past minutes to find out what that was.

Vice Chair Papetti asked if there were any additional meetings coming up on the Essex Street construction or any plans to do a parking analysis before deciding on the design. He went on to say that the Commission is tasked per City ordinance with directing parking policy and he felt strongly that settling on a design for the street without doing the analysis is a missed opportunity. Director Kucharsky said he did not think it feasible given the time frame that Engineering is moving forward. Vice Chair Papetti said that Engineering had been working on this for a long time and the Commission had been seeking this study for a long time. Chair Stepasiuk suggested that Mr. Knowlton attend one the Traffic and Parking meetings and discuss this topic. The Director said he would see if this were possible.

**NEW / OLD BUSINESS**

* Better Bus Project

Director Kucharsky told the Commission that he had drafted a response letter that was shared with the Vice Chair last week and would be submitted to the MBTA before the public comment period ends on March 13th, he asked the Commission for comments or edits. Commissioner Seidel thought it a good start. Vice Chair Papetti suggested adding some language which addresses both the 465 bus that goes by the North Shore Mall and Danvers and the 451bus that goes roundtrip to Beverly. He suggested mentioning if as part of the overall evaluation of service if better transfers between them and other routes serving Salem could be explored. Director Ku8charsky indicated he would revise the letter before submitting it.

* 2019 Priorities

Commission held a discussion about what items they would like to see on their priority list. Chair Stepasiuk asked that Director Kucharsky place the items on a priority list for further discussion at the next meeting.

Vice Chair Papetti said he would like to better understand the relationship/coordination between the Police and parking enforcement personnel. He said his understanding was the parking enforcement staff do not venture out from the designated parking areas and downtown. Lt. Tucker explained the enforcement personnel cover all metered areas and the resident parking areas adjacent to the University. Vice Chair Papetti noted an issue he has with sidewalk parking, he has given up calling the Police on this issue and believes it is not taken seriously by the dispatchers, indicating it is better enforced downtown. Commissioner Seidel said this is a problem downtown and said she was not sure if it was an enforcement matter. Chair Stepasiuk asked the Director for his opinion. Director Kucharsky indicated that staff cover specific routes which have been established for some time and unless notified of any ongoing issues, such as contractors working, they focus on those areas to ensure compliance with the parking rules. Chair Stepasiuk said sidewalk parking creates accessibility issues for baby strollers, wheelchairs and other users and would like to explore what can be done to address this, perhaps it involves hiring more parking staff, if it is financially feasible. She indicated it may not be addressed due to the time of day it is occurring, and that she understood there were more urgent matters to attend to at times.

Chair Stepasiuk indicated she would like to address the lack of snow removal on city sidewalks, especially on the commuter routes, she said the city relies on businesses and homeowners to shovel their sidewalks but oftentimes that does not happen. She said we need to think bigger on what we are going to do, particularly if we want people to take the train as opposed to driving to work. Commissioner Seidel gave an account of how she came across a woman that fell on ice, she had to call 911 as she had hit her head. She said the area in front of the Cemetery is particularly bad. Chair Stepasiuk noted the City is one of the prime offenders. Vice Chair Papetti said there are areas that are not getting cleared at all, he suggested a pedestrian diagram be created and an inspector be appointed to audit those areas after every snow storm, he said it could be done in segments. Chair Stepasiuk said the City needs to prioritize pedestrians walking in the City as much as people driving around the City.

Commissioner Seidel asked Director Kucharsky to review the sustainable transportation plan put together by the city planner for North Hampton. She believes North Hampton is a comparable community to Salem and the planner has created documents and resources which will serve as a good model on reducing the City’s carbon footprint.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

No other business was discussed.

**MEETING MINUTES**

Chair Stepasiuk asked for the approval of the February 7th, 2019 minutes. Vice Chair Papetti made the motion to approve, Commissioner Seidel seconded the motion. – All approved.

**UPCOMING MEETINGS SCHEDULE**

Director Kucharsky requested meeting one time in the month of March. He also requested the next meeting be April 11th as he had a prior engagement. The Commission agreed to the schedule. Lt. Tucker suggested meeting once a month moving forward, unless there was something pressing. He suggested having one a month might be more productive and can be coordinated with the City Council meetings. Chair said they would consider it.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Chair asked for a motion to adjourn. On a motion duly made by Commissioner Seidel and seconded by Vice-Chair Papetti, the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn at 7:53pm.