**City of Salem**

**Traffic and Parking Commission**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, August 2, 2018**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held on Thursday, August 2, 2018 at 6:30pm at 98 Washington Street, Salem, MA. Present were Commission Chair Tanya Stepasiuk, Commission Vice-Chair Eric Papetti, Commissioner Jamie Metsch, and Commissioner Robin Seidel. Commissioner Lt. Robert Preczewski was absent. Acting Director Nicholas Downing was also present.

**CALL OF MEETING**

The meeting was called to order at 6:31pm. Acting Director Downing noted audio of the meeting was being recorded to assist with notes.

Acting Director Downing noted that Lt. Preczewski is on an extended vacation and will be retiring, so the Commission is down one member, which may cause some quorum issues. We have not yet heard from the Police Chief who will be appointed to fill Lt. Preczewski’s seat.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Chair Setpasiuk opened the public comment period by noting that she attended a meeting of the newly formed Downtown Neighborhood Association and heard from residents about many issues relevant to the Commission’s work and invited those residents to attend tonight.

Joan Sienkiewicz, 51 Lafayette Street, purchases a reserved parking space in the Museum Place Garage, but the reservation is not enforced. Last October, Ms. Sienkiewicz had 5 instances of someone parking in her space, and when she complained to parking staff, was told tow trucks won’t come to downtown Salem in October, which she finds unacceptable. She pays $1500 for her space and she should always have access to it. Enforcement needs to be increased.

Marleen Faust, 51 Lafayette Street, agrees with everything Ms. Sienkiewicz said. When she and her husband purchased their space, they were told if someone parked in it, they would be ticketed and towed 100% of the time, and that has NOT been the case.

Dan Faust, 51 Lafayette Street, identified a number of maintenance needs at the garage, including lights in the elevators and other small things that should be fixed. Staff should sue the time on weekends when the garage is less full to do this work. Mr. Faust also suggested the reserved spaces be moved from the 3rd floor. The 3rd floor is very messy, and difficult to access late at night, especially when there are issues with access to the elevators.

Bill Nikolis, 51 Lafayette Street, commented that when they can’t find a space in the garage, they are forced on street and that has issues because employees and business owners park all day. We need better enforcement on-street to help garage parkers when they are forced to park on street.

Linda Stark, 11 Church Street (Essex condos), is required to buy a garage pass, but regularly can’t get into the garage in October and is requesting residents at 11 Church Street get resident permit street parking in October.

Barbara Mank, 51 Lafayette Street, is asking about enforcement. She heard that enforcement staff pay for themselves and then some in terms of revenue, so if that is the case, we should have more enforcement staff. It would help a lot of parking issues if we had better enforcement of existing rules.

Vice-Chair Papetti asked Acting Director Downing to clarify the number of enforcement staff. Acting Director Downing answered that currently, the City has 3.5 full-time equivalent parking enforcement officers, and had a new full-time position approved in the budget, but had asked for 4 additional full-time positions. The new hire will work a slightly different schedule than the existing team to give us more enforcement coverage on nights and weekends.

**DIRECTOR’S UPDATE**

Acting Director Downing gave his monthly update. The parking rate restructuring this body discussed and recommended was sent to the Council in 2 parts. The recommendation to extend enforcement hours was sent to OLLA as it requires an ordinance change, and everything else went to Admin and Finance. Admin and Finance had one hearing and what they recommended to the full Council and what was adopted by the full Council took the Commission recommendation generally with some changes. Those changes are (1) resident rates where we have kiosked parking, (2) higher rate for weekends at South Harbor Garage of $1.50 per hour, and (3) limited Sunday enforcement (but was also sent to OLLA). The Council only asked one clarifying question, and then the recommendations as modified were passed unanimously. Since passage, staff has been working on all the steps to take on implementation, including steps to meters, kiosks, garage software, labels, Passport app, etc. and working to have it all go live ASAP, date TBD.

Acting Director Downing gave a brief update on the Passport Parking app. We have already changed the functionality to set a minimum purchase dollar amount that will vary based on the hourly rate of the spot. Previously the amount was set based on time alone, which resulted in some cases where a user purchasing time with a credit card cost the City money because they purchased 15 minutes in a $0.25/hour space, and the credit card finance charge was higher than the price they paid for the parking. Now there will be a minimum dollar amount purchase and the minimum time will vary based on how much the space costs. Chair Stepasiuk asked about feeding the meter via the app. Acting Director Downing answered that he confirmed with the Passport Parking rep that you cannot feed the meter via the app.

Acting Director Downing gave a brief update on the Commission’s proposed regulations. The proposal is still with OLLA. Chair Stepasiuk asked for the Commission to form a plan to get the proposal on OLLA’s agenda and passed. Acting Director Downing responded that this and many other things have been help up at OLLA and the Committee can’t be forced to take action.

**NEW / OLD BUSINESS**

* MBTA Bus Parking Spot on Washington Street

Eric Burkman, MBTA Service Planner for Lynn District, presented about the need to move a bus stop on Washington Street. He is looking at bus safety issues throughout the district, and as part of the Better Bus Project he has identified a bus stop on Washington Street and Federal Street that is not safe or easy to serve passengers. The bus needs to move from the stop to the far left turn lane, crossing multiple lanes of traffic. Traffic backs up here and the bus can’t get over, and cutting across multiple lanes is something we try to avoid. He visited the site a few weeks ago to identify alternative locations and found 2: one at Washington and Federal but before federal Street, but the sidewalk here isn’t ideal and the stop isn’t quite long enough; and two at Washington Street and Church Street on the far side of the intersection. Currently that area is metered parking which would need to be moved.

Commissioner Metsch noted that the metered parking here has only been in place for a short time, as it used to be police parking when the District Court was still in this building. Vice Chair Papetti expressed some concern about the status of the sidewalk as the district court project is developed and that we might need to move the stop again during construction. Also moving to the preferred stop would mean there isn’t an accessible route from the current stop to the new one, so we should be sure to provide that as well.

The Commission generally agreed that option C would be preferred, and asked staff to draft the necessary ordinance language for their review and vote at the next meeting.

* Museum Place Garage Parking Concerns

The Commission generally discussed the concerns identified by residents at the meeting of the Downtown Neighborhood Association meeting that Chair Stepasiuk attended. These included feeding the meter via the parking app move away from lottery for reserved spaces and grandfathering in people who buy them, move reserved spaces to 2nd floor, how many monthly and annual passes for non-reserved spaces we sell, passes purchased by Hotel Salem, access to the garage via the elevator, a City-owned tow truck or more pressure put on the City’s towing contractor, increased fines for illegal parking, garage security and employees circulating more frequently, improved signage language/clarity, painting generally of spaces and striping, partially roofing the top floor (maybe with solar) to allow for more all-weather parking, width of parking spaces at South Harbor Garage, resident overnight parking in municipal lots, and some type of October parking relief for residents that park in Museum Place. The Commission and residents generally discussed these and other issues related to downtown parking issues.

Acting Director Downing is going to look into each of these issues, as well as those brought up in the public comment period, and report back to the Commission on them at future meetings with recommendations on actions to take if possible.

* October Carnival Location

Acting Director Downing provided an update on the proposal for a new location for the October carnival. The initial idea had been to locate it on Riley Plaza, but when it was submitted to the Council, it was met with significant opposition from Councillors and residents. The proposal would for this year only rescind the ordinance that prevents carnivals form happening on Riley Plaza. The City wants to find a location for the carnival for multiple reasons. It is an attraction in and of itself, but also gives teenagers something to do and is a draw for families with young children. The Police see a real benefit to having the carnival in terms if giving teenagers something to do. Riley Plaza checks off the needed boxes from the carnival operator. All City departments are supportive of Riley Plaza, but are also actively looking for alternative locations. None of the alternative options check off all the boxes in the same way Riley Plaza does, but the City is trying to look at any and all downtown locations. Not looking beyond downtown due to how the Police handle managing crowds, etc. during October and Halloween.

The one idea that came out of recent meetings is some combination of Front Street and Klop Alley lots. Some parking loss during Halloween already, but would be greater if the carnival was located here. The other space that would work logistically is the Common, but residents and the Ward Councillor have shown very strong resistance to the idea.

Chair Stepasiuk asked if a recommendation is needed tonight. Acting Director Downing said we don’t need a vote tonight, but wants to keep talking any and all ideas for where it could be located.

Vice Chair Papetti asked about what the objections are to Riley Plaza. Acting Director Downing answered that despite the support from City departments, there are still concerns about safety, especially lots of children pedestrians and loss of parking in an area that is highly utilized in October. Vice-Chair Papetti added that Riley Plaza seems to be the least bad option if we need to have a carnival.

The Commission did not make a recommendation, but will consider alternatives and take a vote if a further proposal is made by the Mayor.

* Essex Street Reconstruction

The Commission looked at the 2 design proposal for Essex Street between Washington Street and Summer/North Streets. The first proposal was more modest in its changes and would maintain existing parking with modest increase to sidewalk width and add a new bike lane, whereas the second proposal is more dramatic and would remove parking from the southern side of the street with much wider sidewalks as well as the same bike lane.

The Commission discussed the proposals, and there was general agreement that this is a chance to dramatically redesign an important street in downtown. There was support for the second proposal that would remove parking on the southern side of the road, but with the addition that if we are going to remove parking from one side of the road, the City should make the offset as beneficial as possible with the widest possible sidewalks, a dedicated, protected bike facility if possible, and a speed table at the intersection with Crombie Street. The Commission wants to see the highest and best use of space if we are going to remove parking from one side of the street.

* Motorcoach Parking on Congress Street

Based on previous conversations, the Commission considered recommended ordinance language to move motorcoach parking on Congress Street and create a new motorcoach parking space on Congress Street as well.

On a motion duly made by Commission Metsch and second by Vice-Chair Papetti the Commission voted unanimously to recommend the following ordinance change to the City Council:

***Be it ordained by the City Council of the City of Salem, as follows:***

**Section 1.** Section 11 of Article I be amended by replacing the following:

Congress Street Bridge – Bus Stops – outbound, southeasterly direction for a distance of one hundred sixty (160) feet starting at the beginning of the Bridge curbing. Near 26 Congress Street. Tour Bus Parking only, Tow Zone.

With:

Congress Street Bridge – Bus Stops – outbound, southeasterly direction for a distance of one hundred sixty (160) feet starting one hundred fifty (150) feet from the beginning of the Bridge curbing. Tour Bus Parking only, Tow Zone.

**Section 2.** Section 11 of Article I be amended by adding the following:

Congress Street – Bus Stop – Inbound, northwesterly direction for a distance of fifty (50) feet beginning eighty-six (86) feet from the intersection of Peabody Street. Tour Bus Parking Only. Tow Zone.

**MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL**

Staff is still working on transcribing minutes from previous meetings.

**ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Seidel and seconded by Commissioner Metsch, the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 8:48pm.