**City of Salem**

**Traffic and Parking Commission**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, September 6, 2018**

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

**CALL OF MEETING**

The meeting was called to order at 6:33pm. Acting Director Downing noted audio of the meeting was being recorded to assist with notes. Chair Stepasiuk welcome Officer Michael Levesque as the newest member of the Commission, serving as the Chief of Police’s designee.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Marlene Faust, 51 Lafayette Street asked about what was being done about the reserved parking spaces in the Museum Place Garage. Acting Director Downing responded that he has worked with the Parking Operations Director to identify a place to move the reserved spaces. In the short term, they will stay on the same level but be moved away from where the birds have been nesting. The spaces will still be in the covered/enclosed area. The spaces are not being moved down any levels for now, as the Department and administration feel if the spaces are moved down, the price should be increased to reflect the added convenience.

Bill Nikolas, 51 Lafayette Street asked two questions. First, what about access to the garage via the elevators 24/7? There are known issues with the mall operator, but someone needs to hold them accountable. Second, what is the revenue generated in the month of October city-wide as compared to November in 2017? Acting Director Downing answered that he would provide that information to Mr. Nikolas when he could compile it. Additionally, he noted that the bids to fix the elevators have been put out and he is working with the building department to issue an RFP for the garage camera system, both of which are related to the issue of access, though not directly, but doesn’t have a specific item to report back on in terms of the mall operator maintaining access. Mr. Nikolas commented further that feeding the meters is worse than it has ever been and that we need to enforce the regulations more than we are. Chair Stepasiuk responded that she would encourage all residents to reach out to the Mayor and City Council for added enforcement personnel as part of the next budget cycle. Chair Stepasiuk commented further that the department is very shirt staffed and headed into its busy season, and asked everyone to be patient with what we can do in the coming months.

Barbara Mank, 51 Lafayette Street commented that clearer, more consistent enforcement is a huge issue and needed on many levels.

Joan Sienkiewicz, 51 Lafayette Street commented on the towing issues for Museum Place for October. Towing is important to make sure these spaces stay reserved, and you can’t get a tow truck in October. The enforcement team can issue a ticket but not have a car towed. Officer Levesque responded that a police officer is needed to authorize a tow, and so he is going to create procedures for the Traffic and Parking Department and Police Department to follow and to coordinate to ensure these tows happen when they need to.

Mr. Nikolas commented further that the Traffic and Parking Department should consider hiring a tow truck for the month of October, as it would pay for itself and then some. Chair Stepasiuk responded that more patrolling and working more closely with the towing company should be done, especially in October.

Jody Salanzi, 141 Washington Street commented that signage throughout the garage, especially the one-way signage, is not very clear. Also, large pick-up trucks make the corners very narrow. Acting Director Downing responded that we are waiting for responses back to requests for information from contractors to stripe spots, centerlines, arrows, and other wayfinding, but we haven’t received responses back yet.

Joyce Kenney 282 Lafayette Street commented that crosswalk stripes have not been added on Ocean Avenue after it was recently repaved. Acting Director Downing responded that he would reach out to the Department of Public Services to make sure the lines were painted ASAP.

Linda Stark, 11 Church Street commented that the signage on the reserved spaces should be made clearer that they will be towed if they park there without a permit.

**TRAFFIC AND PARKING DIRECTOR UPDATE**

Acting Director Downing gave his update. First, on the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program, the Department will be painting curbs red on City streets where requested to make it clear you can’t park too close to an intersection. This came from a meeting with the Salem Common Neighborhood Association, and so far 60+ residents have submitted requests for painting at 70+ locations. This will make it easier to enforce the 20’ restriction and improves sightlines for drivers and pedestrians. We are waiting on other materials for our other projects on Chestnut Street and Endicott Street, as well as Broad Street.

Second, the City will be running a shuttle the last 2 weekends in October at Salem High and SSU. The Salem High shuttle will run both weekends, and the SSU shuttle will run just the last weekend. The shuttle will be free of charge and there will be no charge to park. We think it will be even more successful this year than it was last year.

Third, the Haunted Happenings Carnival will likely no longer involve this Department or Commission needing to make a decision. The Riley Plaza proposal will likely not pass, and the new frontrunner is the Salem Common. Chair Stepasiuk asked if the Klop Alley/Front Street option would happen, and Acting Director Downing responded that he does not think those other ideas will come back.

On the Local Transportation Improvement Plan (LTIP), Acting Director Downing provided updates on some projects. The City will be applying for a grant for the ADA transition plan again this year; Canal Street Phase 1 should be happening in the next 2 weeks; the bike master plan has a draft final report that will be out and available for public comment very soon; the downtown bike upgrades were reviewed by this Commission a long time ago, but there was a problem with the bidding process which delayed implementation and a notice to proceed hasn’t been issued yet; the Bridge Street Complete Streets project has been delayed due to an appeal by DEP re: coastal or inland flooding; Lafayette/Loring/West construction is underway but final striping not done yet and still waiting to hear response to our comments; and the Margin Street two-way pilot is on hold for now given low staffing levels, but will be revisited in the spring.

For general updates Acting Director Downing provided an update on staffing. In addition to the new enforcement officer included in the budget, a current enforcement officer resigned, so we have 2 openings we are actively working to fill. We’ve done first round interviews with some great candidates, and we hope to fill both positions before October 1 or as close to it as possible. The full-time director position was re-posted recently with a slight change that added some planning elements to make it clearer what the role is.

Finally, Acting Director Downing noted that he will be on leave for an extended period of time starting in November. He hopes the full-time director position will be filled by then, but is going to start thinking about how to continue the Commission’s and Department’s work if the positon is vacant when he goes on leave.

**NEW / OLD BUSINESS**

* October Orders

Chair Stepasiuk opened up the discussion re: October parking orders. Acting Director Downing noted there are 5 separate orders to be voted on by the Commission, 3 of which have been done previously, 1 of which represents formalizing a process that had bene done informally in previous years, and 1 being a brand new idea that could prove more difficult.

The first order would add some streets to the temporary resident parking zone for October via order. There are some streets that receive this protection via ordinance, but for some reason, each year the Council has also added some streets via order. The only change to the order this year is to mirror language in the ordinance to ensure cars can be towed from these streets.

Commissioner Seidel asked to clarify if the fines listed are the same as the other streets, and Acting Director Downing responded that yes, they match.

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Seidel and seconded by Officer Levesque the Commission voted unanimously to recommend to the City Council the following order:

That the following streets be given temporary status as “Parking Prohibitions Towing Zones, Resident Sticker” parking from October 1 through October 31, 2018 to allow parking enforcement staff and police officers to enforce during the month of October.

1. Broad Street
2. Downing Street
3. Endicott Street
4. Hathorne Street
5. Margin Street
6. Mt. Vernon Street
7. Prescott Street
8. Summer Street
9. Winthrop Street
10. Union Street

Be it further ordered that the fine for violating the aforementioned temporary parking prohibitions during the month of October shall be $15 on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, and $40 Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.

Acting Director Downing explained the second order that would allow Salem youth organizations to use the Universal Steel Lot as a fundraiser on October weekends and Columbus Day. It’s a great fundraiser for the organizations, and something we want to continue to do.

On a motion duly made by Officer Levesque and seconded by Commissioner Seidel the Commission voted unanimously to recommend to the City Council the following order:

Salem youth organizations (e.g. Salem High School Music Boosters, Salem High School Football Boosters, Salem High School Drama Club and Salem Youth Football and others), are hereby authorized to staff the parking lot at 297 Bridge Street and collect a parking fee of $20.00 per day on the following designated weekend and holiday dates:

1. October 6, 7, 8
2. October 13, 14
3. October 20, 21
4. October 27, 28

Organizations interested in staffing the lot are to schedule dates through the City of Salem’s Traffic and Parking Department.

Acting Director Downing explained the third order. Every year, the City lto at the MBTA station and the Church Street West lot are free for Salem residents on October weekends.

On a motion duly made by Officer Levesque and seconded by Commissioner Seidel the Commission voted unanimously to recommend to the City Council the following order:

The City of Salem lot at the MBTA Station and the Church Street West lot shall be made available for use by Salem residents at no cost for weekends in October.

Acting Director Downing explained the fourth order. It has been an informal policy in years past, but the Mayor felt it should be formalized. It would allow the Acting Director of Traffic and Parking to issue up to 25 parking passes for residents that show some type of emergency need but who would not have access to parking otherwise. Such as a woman who is 7 or 8 months pregnant in October. In previous years the number of these passes issued has been substantially less than 25.

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Seidel and seconded by Officer Levesque the Commission voted unanimously to recommend to the City Council the following order:

Up to twenty-five (25) parking passes shall be issued by the Acting Director of Traffic and Parking to residents who demonstrate an emergency need for access to resident only parking in the month of October but live on a street that is not limited to resident parking, either annually or only in October.

Acting Director Downing explained the final order. This has been drafted as a proposal to try and provide parking relief for downtown residents required to purchase passes at either the Museum Place or South Harbor garages who cannot access that parking given the high utilization in October. From an operations side, we don’t know how easy it will be to implement, so this is a starting point, but adding this could make it more difficult for garage staff at an already busy time. We also need to consider where these residents should be allowed to park with this type of pass as well. There is no obvious location with enough parking for all of these residents. The Commission should keep in mind as noted by Vice-Chair Papetti at the last meeting that the total number of potential passes is 260, and not every one of those passes will need to use these passes all the time.

Chair Stepasiuk asked if we are sure we have all of the buildings covered that fall into this category, and Acting Director Downing responded that yes, this is the complete list. Chair Stepasiuk commented that she would follow the Acting Director’s recommendation re: what works operationally, but we should make this as broad as possible for where they can park and they will spread themselves out, and make it as simple as possible. This is a test for this year and we can figure it out going forward.

Acting Director Downing asked the Commission if they felt the resident should have to come to the garage first and be given only a daily pass, or make it broader and for the entire month as a backup. Commissioner Seidel asked where they would be going to get a pass, and Acting Director Downing responded they would get the pass form the garage office. Chair Stepasiuk commented that a monthly pass would be simpler and we should trust our neighbors to not abuse it. Acting Director Downing commented that a broader system will be easier to implement, but is also less likely to pass the Council. We can be sure to include clear, strongly worded language with the pass if/when we issue them about going to the garages first.

Chair Stepasiuk took a public comment from Jody Salanzi, who clarified that her building at 141 Washington Street was not included, but should be. Acting Director Downing confirmed that residents at this building need to purchase garage passes, and Ms. Salanzi replied that yes, they do.

On a motion duly made by Officer Levesque and seconded by Commissioner Seidel the Commission voted unanimously to recommend to the City Council the following order:

That residents at the following addresses required to purchase parking passes at either the Museum Place Garage or South Harbor Garage shall be granted a temporary one (1) month parking pass, allowing them to park upon any street granted temporary resident only parking status between October 1 and October 31, either by order or by ordinance.

1. 7 Crombie Street (Bluestone Condominiums)
2. 11 Church Street (Essex Condominiums)
3. 281 Essex Street (Latitude Condominiums)
4. 51 Lafayette Street (Derby Lofts)
5. 50 St. Peter Street (Iron Bar Condominiums)
6. Townhouse Square Condos
7. 141 Washington Street
* Brown Street and Washington Square North

Acting Director Downing explained the ordinance recommendation as being an item this Commission has discussed extensively. The proposed ordinance would make permanent the directional changes around the Roger Conant Statue that are currently in a temporary trial period. The restriping to add 2 turning lanes is unrelated to the ordinance, so does not need to be included here.

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Seidel and seconded by Officer Levesque the Commission voted unanimously to recommend to the City Council the following ordinance:

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

**Section 1.** Section 10 of Article 1 be amended by adding the following:

Brown Street – One Way Streets – from opposite 2 Brown Street to Washington Square West, one way in an easterly direction.

Washington Square North – One Way Streets – from 19 ½ Washington Square North to 2 Brown Street, one way in a southwesterly direction.

* Loring Ave at Horace Mann School

Acting Director Downing explained the ordinance recommendation as being brought to his attention by Councillors Turiel and Dibble. There is currently a section of Loring Avenue that has a parking restriction specific to the Horace Mann School, and the school is no longer there, so both Councillors feel the parking along that section or Loring should align with the rest of Loring Avenue as 4-hour parking, 8:00am to 8:00pm.

On a motion duly made by Officer Levesque and seconded by Commissioner Seidel the Commission voted unanimously to recommend to the City Council the following ordinance:

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

**Section 1.** Section 57A of Article V be amended by repealing the following:

Loring Avenue – Parking Time Limited: Unmetered Zones – southeasterly side beginning at a point of forty (40) feet north of College Drive and continuing to the intersection of Linden Street and the marked crosswalk, excluding existing marked bus stops and handicap zones. Fifteen (15) minute parking only tow zone, Monday through Friday 7:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M., or by special permit only issued by the Horace Mann Laboratory School (HMLS).

And replacing it with the following:

Loring Avenue – Parking Time Limited: Unmetered Zones – southeasterly side beginning at a point of forty (40) feet north of College Drive and continuing to the intersection of Linden Street and the marked crosswalk, excluding existing marked bus stops and handicap zones. Four (4) hour parking as marked by signs, Monday through Friday, 8:00 A.M. to 8:00 P.M.

* Parking Fines Review

There is no recommendation being sought on this or the next two items tonight but Acting Director Downing wanted to introduce these topics in advance of more detailed discussions at a future meeting. The Department recently received a survey of municipalities re: parking fines. The Commission has previously discussed the need to adjust the City’s fines for some infractions. This is good information for the Commission to review. Some of our fines do not deter the type of action we want them to, so we should consider making changes. Acting Director Downing asked the Commissioners to review this information for a discussion at the next meeting.

* Parking Rentback/Buyback

Acting Director Downing asked to wait to discuss this item for further review. Some residents who have to purchase passes but don’t own a car have asked for some type of buyback program, but doing so wouldn’t necessarily create capacity because we don’t limit the overall number of passes issued. This does relate to a larger conversation about the zoning ordinance that requires these passes to be purchased. That requirement does have policy implications for this Department and Commission, so we may want to review it at a later date.

* Parking Near a Crosswalk

Acting Director Downing noted that in state law, there is some confusion about how close you can park to a crosswalk. State law isn’t clear, so we may want to consider a local restriction. Generally, most crosswalks fall within the 20’ restriction of parking within an intersection, but we also have many mid-block crosswalks that aren’t protected right now. Restricting parking within a certain distance maintains sightlines and gives the City options for how to implement, either via signage, paint, or curbing. Acting Director Downing will bring a recommendation to the Commission at its next meeting.

**MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL**

Due to only having 3 members present, 1 of whom had not attended any of the previous meetings as a new member, the Commission agreed to wait to vote on the approval of meeting minutes.

**ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Seidel and seconded by Officer Levesque, the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn at 7:45pm.