**City of Salem**

**Traffic and Parking Commission**

**Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, October 18, 2018**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held on Thursday, October 18, 2018 at 6:30pm at 98 Washington Street, Salem, MA. Present were Commission Chair Tanya Stepasiuk, Commission Vice-Chair Eric Papetti, Commissioner Jamie Metsch, Commissioner Robin Seidel, and Commissioner Officer Michael Levesque. 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.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Joyce Kenney 282 Lafayette Street commented that she has noticed cars parking on the crosswalk on Ocean Avenue. The new crosswalk markings have not been laid down yet, but Officer Levesque asked Ms. Kenny to call the PD when she sees it happen to have it taken care if.

**TRAFFIC AND PARKING DIRECTOR UPDATE**

Acting Director Downing gave his update. The new rates at the garages have gone into effect and we are seeing the impact. By this time last year, the garages had brought in $67k in revenue, but we are right now at $122k in revenue. A large portion of that is due to the rate increase, but even with that, the numbers are up overall. At least cone a day this month the garage has filled, sometimes more than once. Numbers have been high everywhere in the City.

The department is still down staff on enforcement and maintenance, but offers are out and accepted for the 2 enforcement positons and they should be starting soon. We are also looking into getting part-time help from other municipalities for the remainder of the month.

There has been a lot of confusion about temporary resident parking streets this year, and what streets get them and what streets don’t. Some year round streets residents want orange signs because they are more effective, but then that adds confusion to who can actually park on the streets. The goal is to avoid this next year by adding streets to the temporary resident parking ordinance rather than order. Additionally, Acting Director Downing noted he is working to finalize the Department’s recommendations re: resident and visitor permit parking as well, including better signage.

Despite being down staff, nearly 300 tickets were issued the first weekend and a similar number were issued the second weekend as well.

Chair Stepasiuk asked how complaints were being handle. Acting Director Downing noted that most parking complaints were directed to the PD and Officer Levesque added that the PD handles complaints as staff becomes available based on the need.

Vice-Chair Papetti asked Officer Levesque if parking in a crosswalk is a towable offense, and Officer Levesque replied that it is. Vice-Chair Papetti commented further that he knows of residents who have called about cars parked in crosswalks multiple times, and sometimes the same care and it has not been towed or ticketed. Officer Levesque responded that in his experience, every call gets a response but individual calls not getting a response would be an isolated incident.

Acting Director Downing continued that an order was submitted to create some new parking zones on streets that are adjacent to downtown that do not currently have paid parking. It was noted that after the first weekend in October, the Mayor’s office received a number of calls and emails from residents on and near these streets about parking issues, notably Fort Ave, Canal, Margin Street, and Jefferson. The Mayor worked with Councilor Turiel to file an order that would create new paid parking ones just on weekends and Halloween in October on these streets. Parking would remain free for residents but visitors would be charged a flat $10 fee. The order also included a new rate for the meters at Riley Plaza to be increased to a flat fee of $20 for weekends and Halloween as well. The payment would be made strictly via the Passport parking app.

Acting Director Downing added that he asked for an update on the Lafayette/Loring/West striping plan, but still did not hear back about what specific aspects of the Commission’s comments were included and which were not, just that many of the comments could and would be included. Vice-Chair Papetti added that he has been consistently asking for information for almost 2 years now on this project, and is frustrated it has been so hard to come by.

Vice Chair Papetti asked about the preliminary striping for Mill Street and if this Commission’s comments and the Bike Committee’s comments re: how it would interact with the end of the bike path had been incorporated. Acting Director Downing noted he hadn’t received word on that work being done so couldn’t speak to any comments being incorporated.

**NEW / OLD BUSINESS**

* Traffic Calming Projects – Valley Street and River Street

Acting Director Downing gave a brief overview about 2 traffic calming projects. He noted that he is seeking input from the Commission about their preference for pursuing time limited trial periods for traffic control changes vs. pursuing permanent ordinance changes. Both Valley Street and River Street are locations where stop signs are being sought by residents, but in very different circumstances. Acting Director Downing asked if the Commissioners felt trial periods were better or if full ordinance change recommendations were preferred, or if it should be considered on a case by case basis.

Vice Chair Papetti asked if these are the first projects the Department is undertaking. Acting Director Downing responded that there are 2 projects, one at Chestnut and Pickering and one at Endicott and Margin. Vice Chair Papetti asked if the criteria for the program was finalized, and if the department was documenting everything about each project and how the selection criteria were used and what data was collected and how it would be measured and evaluated afterward.

Acting Director Downing responded that yes the criteria were finalized and this summer staff met with all the Ward Councillors about it. These two projects came specifically from meetings with the Councillors and residents. He added that with the low number of formal applications we have received so far, weighing projects against one another has been less necessary because the Department has enough flexibility to advance multiple projects. But that said, we should especially in an instance like Valley Street, get before and after data to evaluate success.

Commissioner Seidel asked about the community engagement aspect of the program. Acting Director Downing answered that in both instances, the Department received a general request for traffic calming and then he went and met with residents to discuss particular concerns and options.

Vice Chair Papetti commented that stop signs shouldn’t be used solely for traffic calming, per FHWA guidance, so any installation should be MUTCD compliant.

The Commission generally agreed that it will be a case by case basis to determine what path forward is most appropriate.

* Maintaining Sidewalk Access

Vice Chair Papetti brought forward a resolution about maintaining sidewalk access. He knows it is something that will take months and years to address completely, but thinks it is important enough that the Commission should take an action now to guide work going forward. The resolution proposes that the Commission request Department staff or other staff designated by the Mayor develop a detailed list of temporary barriers to access on otherwise accessible existing public sidewalks, crossways, and pathways and procedures and policies to address the barriers including but not limited to enforcement, now removal, maintenance, and installation of temporary accessibility devices during construction.

Vice Chair Papetti said he is bringing this up because it is some of the lowest hanging fruit for accessibility in the City. As ADA nears its 30th year, the City should be doing all it can to maintain accessibility. The idea is to break down the type of issues we face and how we can address each of them. These include sidewalk parking, deliveries, crosswalk parking, ambiguous sidewalk areas, construction related sidewalk closures (which do require an accessible route to be maintained during construction), vegetation, and snow. Accessibility is not just about people in wheelchairs, but people with any type of mobility related issue or visual impairment that might impair their ability to walk on an uneven surface. On snow, many issues are caused by plows the City pays, so we should consider altering our contract to make sure our snow removal doesn’t cause accessibility issues. Vice Chair Papetti’s hope is this resolution would support the Department in its effort to improve accessibility in the City and would make it easier for them as they try to coordinate and cooperate with all the other City departments involved. This will be a tool for the Department to use as they interact with other City departments.

Commissioner Seidel added that she has observed access being blocked by cars double parking in driveways meant for single cars. Additionally, there is an educational component for property owners in terms of snow removal being required along the entire property line.

Acting Director Downing agreed and added that the City should look at locations to prioritize snow removal on sidewalks in key locations.

Chair Stepasiuk asked if this could reasonably be done. Acting Director Downing responded yes. The Department reapplied for an ADA transition plan grant and if we receive it, this would fit into that larger effort. If we don’t get that grant, we should request City funds to do that same work. Because this work hits so many City departments, even with a transition in staffing, the work can still move forward as a new director is brought on. Chair Stepasiuk is supportive, but wants to make sure we are realistic about our ability to move this forward and when it could happen.

Commissioner Metsch asked about the snow removal ordinance. Since we already have that in place, that’s mostly a matter of enforcement, and we can use this resolution to elevate that issue.

Vice Chair Papetti agreed with various comments that this work will take a long while, but the only way to get started is with action like this resolution. This resolution begins the long process to see this changes come to fruition.

On a motion duly made by Vice Chair Papetti and seconded by Commissioner Metsch, the Commission voted unanimously to support the following resolution regarding sidewalk access:

Whereas: The ordinance which created the Traffic and Parking Commission states that it should “oversee traffic planning and policy development for the city; implement the city’s complete streets policy;”

Whereas: Equal access to a public right of way is a civil right;

Whereas: Access to existing sidewalks, crosswalks, and pathways within the city is often impeded by illegally parked cars, inadequate snow removal, construction, and maintenance issues;

Whereas” Sidewalks are an integral part of our transportation system, and maintaining access to them is a key component of addressing climate change, meeting housing needs, and addressing equity;

Therefore be it resolved:

The Traffic and Parking Commission requests that Traffic and Parking Department staff, or other staff designated by the Mayor, develop a detailed list of temporary barriers to access on otherwise accessible existing public sidewalks, crosswalks, and pathways, and potential policy solutions for each type of problem. This scope may include, but should not be limited to, parking enforcement, snow removal, maintenance practices, and accessibility of temporary routes during construction.

In developing this list, the Commission requests:

* + - That it consider accessibility for wheelchair users, as well as the full range of people with other kinds of disabilities, both visible and invisible, permanent and temporary.
    - That it be developed in consultation with other boards and commissions as appropriate, including the Commission on Disabilities, and that it be developed in consultation with the Salem Police Department, Department of Public Works, ADA Coordinator, Parks and Recreation, the building inspector, City Council, and the Mayor.
    - That it be used to help develop a scope of work for the upcoming ADA Transition Plan, and integrated with it as appropriate.
    - That the process reflect that the laws and regulations related to ADA, MAAB, and case law represent the legal minimum, and the city should look to exceed these regulations wherever possible in order o achieve universal design.
    - That it be finalized within 90 days.
* Parking Near a Crosswalk

Acting Director Downing presented a slightly revised ordinance recommendation for parking near a crosswalk. At the last meeting, the Commission asked to see best practices re: visibility at crosswalks, but after a lot of searching, couldn’t find anything specific to crosswalks, just general visibility guidelines. The change in this version mirrors the language that prohibits parking within 20 feet of an intersection. That ordinance states parking is prohibited within 20 feet of an intersection excerpt where a sign requiring a greater distance has been erected. Including that language in this ordinance recommendation gives Traffic and Parking and the Police the flexibility to on a case by case basis restrict parking near a crosswalk at a distance of more than 10 feet to make sure needed visibility is maintained.

Officer Levesque asked how many parking spots would be lost City-wide if the ordinance was passed. Acting Director Downing answered that it is tough to tell. In many of the locations where this would go into effect, the crosswalks are within 20 feet of an intersection and the crosswalks are 10’ feet wide, so no cars should be parked in that area already. There would be a parking impact, but the Department doesn’t have an exact number.

Commissioner Metsch commented that having an estimate for the number of potential spaces lost would be important. Acting Director Downing responded that one way to measure this would be for every mid-block crosswalk, you would lose about one parking space on each side of the street that has parking, but most of the crosswalks are at intersections, especially in residential neighborhoods.

Vice Chair Papetti added that this ordinance will remove some discretion from crosswalk parking enforcement. Right now, if a trunk or hood is hanging over, an enforcement officer might hesitate to ticket them, but if the ordinance says you can’t park within 10 feet, that is a clearer violation and easier to enforce. In terms of the impact on parking, it is likely less a concern for overall numbers and more instances of people who always park in the same place near a crosswalk who will be impacted.

Chair Stepasiuk asked that as we send this to the City Council, it should be accompanied by a strong cover letter. Acting Director Downing agreed and said he would get that letter to the Chair for her approval before this recommendation goes to the Council.

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Seidel and seconded by Vice-Chair Papetti the Commission voted 4-1 (Officer Levesque in opposition) to recommend the following ordinance to the City Council for passage:

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

**Section 1.** Section 50 of Article V be amended by adding the following:

P. Within ten (10) feet of a crosswalk on the side from which traffic approaches, or except where a sign requiring a greater distance has been erected.

**Section 2.** Section 74 of Article V-A be amended by adding the following:

Upon any way within ten (10) feet of a crosswalk on the side from which traffic approaches, or except where a sign requiring a greater distance has been erected.

**Section 3.** Section 17A of Article I be amended by adding the following:

$25.00 fine – Within ten (10) feet of a crosswalk on the side from which traffic approaches, or except where a sign requiring a greater distance has been erected.

After the vote, Officer Levesque noted that it is the Police Department’s viewpoint that they have to preserve parking and as the Chief’s designee that is why he voted in opposition to the measure. Commissioner Metsch asked that in the future, he would appreciate if the Police made their perspective know prior to the vote.

**OTHER BUSINESS**

Commissioner Metsch informed the Council of his decision to resign from the Traffic and Parking Commission, effective immediately. Since joining the Commission two years ago, he has opened 3 new businesses, and with those commitments, he does not feel he can consistently attend the Commission meetings and provide informed opinions on the matters before the Commission. He added that he will consider options for a replacement to the Commission of someone who has a business background or owns a business in the City.

Acting Director Downing discussed his forthcoming leave. His last day is November 2 so he will staff one more meeting on November 1. The City is currently doing reference checks on a candidate for the full time director positon and he is hopeful that candidate will accept an offer. The biggest impact for the Commission will likely be scheduling, so hopefully we will know a start date by the next meeting.

Chair Stepasiuk asked about Councillor Turiel’s order about dockless bikes and scooters. Acting Director Downing responded that Councillor Turiel submitted an order that would prohibit any dockless bike or scooter companies from operating in the City unless they have an agreement with the City. These types of systems would not be banned entirely but if they wanted to do business here, they couldn’t simply dump bikes or scooters as they have in other cities. We do sometimes see dockless bike system bikes end up in Salem, and when we do, we reach out to those companies to let them know when the bikes are here and that they need to come pick them up. The order that was submitted seems to be more preemptive in nature.

**MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL**

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Seidel and seconded by Vice-Chair Papetti, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes from the meeting on September 20.

**ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion duly made by Vice-Chair Papetti and seconded by Commissioner Metsch, the Commission voted unanimously to adjourn at 7:36pm.