

**City of Salem
Traffic and Parking Commission
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, December 13, 2023**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held remotely on Wednesday, December 13, 2023, at 6:00pm, in accordance with Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023.

Present: Traffic and Parking: Acting Chair Jaime Garmendia, Commissioner Jeff Swartz, Commissioner Brendan Casey, Commissioner Lt. David Tucker, Commissioner Erin Turowski, Director of Traffic David Kucharsky, and Traffic and Parking Staff Russell Findley. **Absent:** None

CALL OF MEETING

The meeting was called to order at 6:03pm by Acting Chair Garmendia. Mr. Kucharsky explains how members of the public may participate during the remote meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Acting Chair Garmendia opens the floor to public comment, but there is none.

NEW/OLD BUSINESS

Director's Update

Mr. Kucharsky states that work on Fort Avenue at the intersection of Winter Island Road and Columbus Avenue is set to begin, and utility work and drainage will commence in the following weeks. There are two raised crosswalks that will be installed for safety improvements along with the bike path extension. Mr. Kucharsky also provides updates on grants received, noting staff are still working on the RFP related to the Safe Streets for All grant. Mr. Kucharsky explains that he spoke with the City Electrician regarding North Street, and a contractor was brought on to upgrade the traffic signals in the corridor beginning next week. The signals will be upgraded to communicate with each other and help with traffic flow and pedestrian movement. Mr. Kucharsky also notes that work at the intersection of Peabody Street and Ward Street has been halted due to weather, but it will continue next season, along with work at other nearby intersections. Mr. Kucharsky also notes the city purchased several bike racks that had been ordered, and staff have identified locations on North Street, Bridge Street, and in the Downtown area.

New Commissioner

Mr. Kucharsky introduces Erin Turowski as the newest Commissioner to the Traffic and Parking Commission, noting she is a senior veterinarian who lives in the Point

neighborhood, and she is one of the founders of the Salem Safe Walking Advocacy Group (SWAG).

Erin Turowski introduces herself and explains her appointment was finalized last week. She states she is originally from the midwest but has lived in Salem for eight years and in Massachusetts for over a decade. Commissioner Turowski indicates she is familiar with driving in Salem as well as being a pedestrian, and she currently works in Somerville.

October Planning Recap

Mr. Kucharsky presents the 2023 October recap with data and information regarding staff and City efforts during October. With respect to October resident parking, Mr. Kucharsky provides a map outlining the streets that have year-round resident parking permits, as well as those where they are designated for resident parking in October. Mr. Kucharsky states there were 5,238 October passes issued as well as an additional 615 year-round passes processed during the month of October. DPS posted 1,300 signs on 86 streets, which took an estimated staff time of 120 hours. Mr. Kucharsky also explains that 90 percent of the year-round passes are obtained by walk-ins which also takes considerable staff time and resources. He indicates that the City is looking to move toward a license plate-based system because of the amount of staff time taken up by the resident permit parking program. He also notes that there were a total of 458 October visitor passes requested, and he presents a map showing the location requests. Mr. Kucharsky next discusses October parking enforcement, indicating there were a total of 2,225 resident parking tickets issued, compared to 1,887 in the prior year. There were also 293 tows, compared to 294 last year. Of all violations, Mr. Kucharsky explains that 1,461 were issued to MA plates while 764 were issued to out of state plates. Mr. Kucharsky presents a map and list of streets with the highest number of violations for year-round resident permit parking violations (Federal Street, Turner Street, and Derby Street being the top three), as well as a separate map and list pertaining to October only resident parking (top three being Peabody Street, Washington Square, and Winter Street).

Mr. Kucharsky also discusses Riley Plaza parking counts after the changes to the ordinance earlier this year. Citations in October totaled 275, with 40 citations for meter violations and 235 citations for pass violations. Mr. Kucharsky presents a map showing the accessible spaces, permit spaces, and metered spaces (11 metered spaces for one hour parking). Based on the data, staff recommend increasing the number of permits and reducing the number of meter spaces.

He next discusses the Museum Place Garage roof parking counts which are reserved spaces for \$115 for the month of October. This year 104 were sold, and the spaces are coned with signage for individuals. Mr. Kucharsky states that counts were conducted throughout the day and weekend, and that they found a maximum utilization at any point in time of 35 spaces. Staff will reevaluate and bring back potential language changes to the Commission that would reduce the number of passes sold. Anecdotally, he states that some people seem to purchase the pass more as insurance, but park in lower levels if spots are available or elsewhere.

Next Mr. Kucharsky discusses the October Parking Overlay District which was a new designation through the Zoning Ordinance in 2022 that allows businesses and commercial properties to sell parking during the weekend in October. He presents a map of the overlay district and notes there were a total of 23 applications, of which 21 were approved (the two non-permitted applications were from residents who did not seem to understand the program). There were zero citations, though some warnings were issued involving signage placed in the public right of way.

Regarding the October weekend shuttle, Mr. Kucharsky explains that this year there were extended days of service including Indigenous Peoples' Day and on the 30th and 31st. He presents a map of the satellite lot locations, and notes that they did not fill up on the weekends like they did last year, and he suggests part of the reason may be more people taking the commuter rail and weather. Mr. Kucharsky indicates the BlueBikes in October saw a 79 percent increase in ridership over 2022, with 3,365 total rides. He presents month over month data and explains that this year free passes were given to both residents and employees working in Salem. Mr. Kucharsky presents a map showing the BlueBikes activity, and he notes that the two highest trip locations for start and end points were at either end of the Canal Street bike path.

The Salem Skipper, the City's on-demand ride share service, saw a 13.5 percent increase in October weekday trips and a weekend trip increase of 17 percent. A new daily ride record was made on Friday, October 27th with 458 completed rides in a single day. Mr. Kucharsky presents more granular ridership data by day of the month.

He explains that the commuter rail saw a 20 percent increase in ridership from last October, and the Newburyport/Rockport line had 400,000 passengers for the month, with 21,000 on Halloween. The Salem Ferry, which runs from late May to October 31st was also an option for visitors, and October accounted for 37.6 percent of the total 2023 ridership.

Mr. Kucharsky explains that the next steps for the City are to continue with ongoing efforts investigating the license plate recognition system for resident permit parking, as well as garage way finding (electronic signs on an open API that can push out information to the public about garage vacancy). Staff will eventually present traffic ordinance amendments and recommendations at a future date.

Commissioner Swartz thanks staff for the presentation and asks about October employee parking passes. Mr. Kucharsky states staff will need to meet more to discuss and that it may make sense to focus on rolling out the license plate recognition program, which could facilitate the idea easier.

Commissioner Casey asks about the towing and ticketing numbers, noting that the towing seemed to only be about 10 percent compared to the number of tickets. Commissioner Lt. Tucker explains it is in part a capacity and bandwidth issue, as there is cycle time to get the trucks back. Commissioner Casey also asks about the Museum Place Garage and whether there are changes currently proposed. Mr. Kucharsky indicates staff will return with a proposal to reduce the number of reserved spaces sold on the roof in October.

The Commissioners and staff discuss the data generally, and acting Chair Garmendia asks if there is any data to share regarding traffic incidents, or if that could be presented at a future meeting. Commissioner Lt. Tucker states there were a couple of serious incidents/crashes, and they were alcohol related. He indicates he can get more information and provide a synopsis at a future meeting.

Acting Chair Garmendia opens the floor to public comment, but there is none.

OTHER BUSINESS THAT MAY LEGALLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

None.

UPCOMING MEETINGS SCHEDULE

The next meeting is scheduled for January 10, 2024, at 6:00PM.

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL

November 15, 2023

Motion and Vote: Commissioner Swartz motions to approve the minutes from the November 15, 2023, meeting as drafted. Commissioner Casey seconds the motion. **The vote is four (4) in favor and one (1) abstained, the motion passes.**

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Swartz and seconded by Commissioner Casey the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 7:17 PM.