

**City of Salem  
Traffic and Parking Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, January 10, 2024**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held remotely on Wednesday, January 10, 2024, 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 Assistant Transportation Director Christina Hodge. **Absent:** None

**CALL OF MEETING**

The meeting was called to order at 6:02pm 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.

Ward 5 City Councillor Jeff Cohen, of 12 Hancock Street, introduces himself and expresses his gratitude to staff and the Commission, noting he has been designated as the Council Liaison for the Traffic and Parking Commission.

Stacey Curran, of 363 Lafayette Street, introduces herself and states she is still awaiting traffic calming measures on the section of Lafayette Street where she lives.

Jane Arlander, of 93 Federal Street, introduces herself and expresses concern regarding the intersection at North and Federal Street, noting there used to be a "No U-Turn" sign for vehicles traveling west that has never been replaced. She states she has almost been hit several times by cars taking a U-turn around the traffic island while she is in the crosswalk. Ms. Arlander also suggests attempting to lower speeds in the area as well.

**NEW/OLD BUSINESS**

**Director's Update**

Mr. Kucharsky states that design plans for the Jefferson Avenue and Willson Street intersection have been finalized and will be put out to bid soon. Work will hopefully be scheduled for later in the year. He also explains that staff have been asked to evaluate all right turn on red signs and ordinance regulations in the City. Councillor Morsillo has requested to have a joint meeting to discuss.

Mr. Kucharsky indicates it is budget season and that staff are working with other City departments on bigger capital projects moving forward.

### **Traffic & Parking Commission Election**

Acting Chair Garmendia explains that the prior Commission Chair stepped down at the end of her term and that he has been acting chair for recent meetings. The Commission must now elect a new Chair and Vice Chair. Mr. Kucharsky explains that there must be a motion to nominate, discussion if necessary, and then a vote for the positions. Mr. Garmendia nominates himself for the position of Chair, noting his experience with the Commission as well as running meetings outside of the Commission. Commissioner Swartz expresses his support.

**Motion and Vote:** Commissioner Swartz motions to conduct a vote for Commission Chair and nominates Jamie Garmendia. Commissioner Casey seconds the motion. **The vote is five (5) in favor and none (0) opposed, the motion passes.**

Chair Garmendia next opens the floor for nominations for the Vice Chair position. Commissioner Swartz nominates himself and discusses his experience and interest in filling the position.

**Motion and Vote:** Commissioner Turowski motions to conduct a vote for Commission Vice Chair and nominates Jeff Swartz. Commissioner Casey seconds the motion. **The vote is five (5) in favor and none (0) opposed, the motion passes.**

### **Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program 2023 Evaluation**

Mr. Kucharsky introduces Jessica Mortell from Neighborways, who will present the 2023 neighborhood traffic calming program evaluation for Raymond Road, Proctor Street (Mansell Parkway to Highland Avenue), Federal Street (North Street to Boston Street), Mall Street, Cedar, Fairfield, and Gardner Streets, Columbus Avenue (Fort Avenue to Bayview Avenue), and Chestnut Street, along with next steps for 2024. Mr. Kucharsky presents a map showing the pilot installations (Raymond Road, Proctor, Federal, Mall, and Chestnut Streets, and Columbus Avenue), as well as the permanent installations (Buffum, Barr, Barstow, and Dunlap Streets as well as Cedar and Fairfield Streets).

Jessica Mortell first discusses Raymond Road and presents a map and photos showing before and after measures were installed. Ms. Mortell discusses data collection and presents average daily traffic, noting that volumes decreased slightly by six percent. She next discusses the speed analysis, which demonstrates a reduction in vehicles going over 20MPH and an even larger reduction in those going over 25MPH. While the temporary speed humps were installed the average speed was reduced to 21MPH.

Commissioner Casey asks about whether cars are slowing down and speeding up between speed humps, and Ms. Mortell explains that they are positioned to be in sight from one another to prevent speed spikes.

Chair Garmendia asks if there is any public comment on Raymond Road.

City Councillor Andy Varela introduces himself and acknowledges the lower speeds, but he suggests that a traffic reduction of six percent is not enough and asks if there is more than can be done to discourage cut-throughs for those traveling from Salem to Marblehead.

Commissioner Casey states he was not on the Commission when the program began, and he asks if the intent of the interventions and measures was to lower speeds or to lower traffic volumes. Chair Garmendia states the main goal is speed reduction, with traffic reduction as a secondary benefit.

Jessica Mortell next discusses Proctor Street and presents a map along with pre- and post-intervention photos. She notes that travel lane and parking lanes were defined in addition to the installation of speed humps. Ms. Mortell discusses data collection measures for Proctor Street, noting that there was a decrease in average daily traffic, except for on Witch Hill Road which saw a significant increase (27%), perhaps as a result of drivers trying to avoid the speed cushions. Ms. Mortell notes that the speed cushions and striping showed significant decreases in both vehicles traveling over 20MPH and those traveling over 25MPH. The average speed during the interventions was 23MPH. Mr. Kucharsky notes that based on the analysis, additional striping and signage may be proposed for Witch Hill Road. Commissioner Casey asks if the striping work will be thermo striping, and Mr. Kucharsky indicates that to the extent it makes sense and will adhere to the surface it will be. Commissioner Casey next asks Commissioner Lt. Tucker if there have been any complaints about people parking on the sidewalk. Commissioner Lt. Tucker states the situation has improved, as there used to be more complaints. He notes, however, that the people parking on the sidewalk are usually residents of the street and the calls complaining are from pedestrians trying to use the sidewalks. Mr. Kucharsky adds that when the parking lane striping was introduced there were also signs and flyers informing residents that no parking on sidewalks was going to be enforced more heavily going forward. Commissioner Casey opines that going down Witch Hill Road to avoid the speed humps is rather out of the way, and Commissioner Lt. Tucker suggests that recent traffic has decreased as nearby road conditions have improved.

Caroline (no last name given) of Raymond Road introduces herself and states she was pleased to see the results of the data and study, and that the measures also helped with people parking illegally and blocking her driveway.

Ms. Mortell next presents the map, photos, and data for Federal Street, noting it is the second year of the pilot with adjustments based on resident feedback. Ms. Mortell discusses the data collection points and explains the average daily traffic data. The pilot area saw an increase in traffic with the first iteration of the pilot but a decrease back to pre-pilot levels on average with the adjustments the second year. Ms. Mortell indicates that side street

traffic decreased slightly on Beckford and Lynn Streets, but Monroe Street only has data for the most recent year. Regarding speed data, both years of the pilot had decreases in percentage of vehicles going over 20MPH and 25MPH compared to the control year, but the second year of the pilot showed slight increases. The average speed in the most recent year was 20MPH on Federal Street. Ms. Mortell states there is a current project looking at a longer-term design for the Federal, Beckford, and Andover intersection.

Justin Whittier introduces himself on behalf of the Federal Street Neighborhood Association and states that neighborhood input has been gathered regarding the measures and that they will be submitted in detail. Mr. Whittier expresses gratitude for the adjustments based on initial resident feedback, but states some feedback was not addressed, such as the difficulties and striping at the Boston Street intersection causing unnecessary backups and minimizing parking. Mr. Whittier also notes that the speed humps help reduce speeds, but they have been less effective at getting drivers to stop at stop signs, particularly at the Beckford Street intersection. He acknowledges that the humps are not supposed to be placed within 15 feet of the intersection but states that people tend to drive through stop signs if they recently slowed down for a hump. Mr. Whittier suggests that if the speed hump cannot be moved closer, a raised crosswalk would be a good solution. Mr. Whittier contends that Flint Street requires at least one, ideally two, speed humps between Federal Street and Essex Street.

Jane Arlander, of 93 Federal Street, expresses concern regarding the location of the speed hump near the beginning of the entrance to Federal Street near North Street. She notes the Murphy Funeral Home has two entrances (one off North Street and one off Federal Street), and that some drivers are driving and speeding through the funeral home to avoid the first speed hump. She suggests moving the speed hump or reducing the number there.

City Councillor Caroline Watson-Felt introduces herself and expresses support for the intersection redesign suggested for the Beckford and Federal Street intersection. She also expresses support for the inclusion of Flint Street.

Danielle Hammerhan, of 28 Beckford Street, introduces herself and asks when the speed humps would become permanent. She also notes during the most recent installation, many of the anchors and bolts came out and were catching on some tires.

Mr. Kucharsky states staff are working on a longer-term capital project for the intersection of Beckford and Andover, including the installation of a raised crosswalk, which would impact the placement of the preceding and following humps. He explains that the placement of speed humps following such work needs to be evaluated before a permanent solution can be implemented.

Ms. Mortell reminds the public that the comment period is open through February 15, 2024, and residents can provide feedback and comments on the Public Input site. She next presents on Mall Street showing a map and reference photos. She explains that this is the second year of the pilot, with speed humps utilized, rather than the speed cushions used in the year prior. There were also location adjustments in the second year. Ms. Mortell

presents the street data, noting increases in average daily traffic on both Oliver Street and Mall Streets. Speed analysis shows significant decreases in drivers going over 20MPH and 25MPH. Ms. Mortel indicates the average speed with intervention was 16MPH.

Matt Formica, of 13 Mall Street, introduces himself and thanks everyone for working together. He hopes to see more permanent installations in the future.

Councilor Watson-Felt agrees with Mr. Formica and echoes his comments.

Next Ms. Mortell discusses the South Salem zone, consisting of Cedar, Fairfield, and Gardner Streets. She presents a map and reference photos of the area, and notes the pivot between humps and cushions, with a permanent installation this most recent year of speed humps. Ms. Mortell presents the street data which shows increases in average daily traffic on Cedar Street and Fairfield Street but slight decreases on Gardner Street. Speed analysis shows reductions in speed on all three streets compared to the control year, with reductions in both vehicles driving over 20MPH and over 25MPH. The average speed in the area was 19MPH.

Chair Garmendia asks about the traffic increases, and Ms. Mortell suggests the vehicle volumes are still within an acceptable range for a neighborhood street, with Mr. Kucharsky noting the collection occurred at different points in the year so that can also affect the data. Staff and Commissioners discuss other potential impacts and variables regarding data collection.

Councillor Cohen states he lives nearby and that every street in the area is a cut-through. Councillor Cohen suggests the perception of the permanent humps is that it is easier to go over them, and sometimes people do not see them, which is why the signs are so important. Mr. Cohen states he has been very impressed with the traffic and parking staff and the way they have communicated with residents. Councilor Cohen also asks if cushions and humps are reusable in the process of switching over to permanent ones. Mr. Kucharsky states they are stored and reused as long as they are in good condition.

Jay Velodka, of 40 Cedar Street, introduces himself and states he has noticed an improvement in the traffic quality with the permanent installations, although there is a stretch approaching Cabot Street where cars are able to speed up. Mr. Velodka asks why there is only one speed bump on Cedar Street. Mr. Kucharsky explains the design requirements and spacing best practices, and the placement was impacted by the grade of the roadway. Ms. Mortell also notes the location of driveways as being a factor as well.

Ms. Mortell next presents a map and photos of Chestnut Street from Flint Street to North Street and explains the progression of the pilot from 2020 to date, noting that the street is particularly wide. Data shows that the pilot speed humps reduce both the percentage of drivers going over 20MPH and those going over 25MPH. Ms. Mortell explains that they are working with residents on a permanent design, and Mr. Kucharsky confirms. Ms. Mortell notes the average speed on Chestnut was 20MPH with the measures in-place.

Andy Lipman, of 28 Chestnut Street, introduces himself and states that it is clear the traffic calming measures do what they are intended to do, which is slow speeding, but that they may not be able to reduce overall traffic much. He suggests the best outcome may be from encouraging and enforcing safe driving on the cut-through streets, and he also states that it is important to reduce commercial vehicles from traveling through. Mr. Lipman applauds all the work done by staff, consultants, and the Commission.

Ms. Mortell presents a map and photos of Columbus Avenue and discusses the piloted speed humps. Ms. Mortell summarizes the data collected showing reductions in average daily traffic and the percentage of drivers going over 20MPH and 25MPH. The average speed is 20MPH, and Ms. Mortell notes a plan to go to permanent speed humps.

Ryan White, of 79 Columbus Avenue, introduces himself and states the speed humps have been a great addition to the neighborhood. Mr. White suggests the humps be placed a bit closer to prevent speed spiking in between. He also states he would like to see different data collection points.

Ms. Mortell explains that additional information, including project ranking and speed and volume data, can be found at <https://traffic-calming-1-salemma.hub.arcgis.com>. She also notes the public feedback period is open until February 15, and comments can be provided at [www.publicinput.com/salemtrafficalming](http://www.publicinput.com/salemtrafficalming).

Mr. Kucharsky indicates the next steps include a review and analysis of additional feedback followed by additional planning and design. By the end of spring and early summer pilot and permanent installations should begin.

Stacy Curran, of 363 Lafayette Street, asks how the streets were selected for the pilots and if there is an update on the traffic calming planned for West Street and Lafayette Street.

Mr. Kucharsky explains that Lafayette Street is a larger project and bigger effort, and a portion of this project is being worked on with the town of Marblehead (as it is near the town line). He notes this will be a longer-term design, and that it requires more analysis and design work as it is an arterial street rather than a local street. Work is being done with Councillors and the two municipalities, but no concrete timeframe is currently known.

### **Future Meeting Format**

Mr. Kucharsky asks the Commission how they would like to proceed with meeting formats going forward, as the legislature has extended the ability to have meetings remotely. He notes that in person and hybrid are potential options as well.

Commissioner Swartz suggests it may be beneficial and necessary to switch to hybrid as opposed to online only since some other groups in the city are doing so.

Commissioner Turowski suggests if a virtual option is not offered, she will be unable to regularly attend because the end of her workday is not always clearly defined, but that she can always make it for a virtual meeting.

Commissioner Casey states he is fine with remote meetings, but also thinks occasional in person meetings can be of benefit. Commissioner Casey indicates hybrid is his least favorite option because there can often be technology problems. He concludes he has no strong feelings either way.

Chair Garmendia indicates he is in favor of virtual meetings, particularly as commuting can be tough, and he has a day job like other commission members. He states he is open to hybrid meetings, but he stresses the importance of remote options for people who are unable to make it in person.

Vice Chair Swartz notes there are some older members of the community who may struggle with technology, and that he feels there is some pressure to have an in-person meeting option. He asks if there is an option to alternate between virtual and in-person or hybrid, and Mr. Kucharsky states there are no clearly defined options, but that the hybrid option seems to be the trend absent any ruling. Commissioner Swartz states he if is the only commissioner in favor of in person meetings he is fine with hybrid or remote, as he would not want to preclude other commissioners from being able to attend.

Commissioner Lt. Tucker states he has no strong feelings one way or another. Mr. Kucharsky also notes that with the hybrid option, not every Commissioner would be required to be present in person, just a physical quorum.

City Councillor Jeff Cohen states that Salem is one of the first communities to be fully hybrid for City Council, and that they have had to make some changes. There is a tendency to have technical issues because there are additional factors not present with just Zoom, according to Councillor Cohen. He echoes Mr. Kucharsky and explains that with hybrid meetings a physical quorum must be present. Councillor Cohen states that none of the city boards or commissions are offering hybrid meetings yet. He also notes that the Disability Commission considers hybrid meetings to be a hinderance for those with mobility issues. Mr. Cohen contends that when the pandemic first occurred, and meetings switched to virtual, public participation increased over 700 percent.

Mr. Kucharsky states the commission will continue with remote for now, but he will share more information as it is received.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS THAT MAY LEGALLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION**

None.

#### **UPCOMING MEETINGS SCHEDULE**

The next meeting is scheduled for February 21, 2024, at 6:00PM.

## **MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL**

**December 13, 2023**

The Commission tables the approval of minutes because not all have had a chance to review.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

*On a motion duly made by Commissioner Swartz and seconded by Commissioner Casey the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 8:01 PM.*