

**City of Salem
Traffic and Parking Commission
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 9, 2022**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held remotely on Wednesday, March 9, 2022 at 6:00pm, in accordance with Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021 and as amended by Chapter 22 of the Acts of 2022.

Present: Commission Chair Tonya Shallop, Commission Vice Chair Eric Papetti, Commissioner Jeff Swartz, Commission Lt. David Tucker, Director of Traffic and Parking David Kucharsky, and Traffic and Parking Staff Russell Findley **Absent:** None

CALL OF MEETING

The meeting was called to order at 6:02 pm by Chair Shallop. Ms. Shallop explains how members of the public may participate during the remote meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

NEW/OLD BUSINESS

Front Street Parking Lot Closure

Salem Main Streets has requested the Commission discuss the possibility of closing the city owned parking lot at the intersection of Front and Lafayette streets during the Salem Arts Festival. Closure of the lot is being requested for Saturday, June 4th and Sunday, June 5th to be able to expand street fair/performance areas. Mr. Kucharsky explains that Kylie Sullivan reached out via email with the request, and that the plan is to make the area connected with Artist's Row.

Kylie Sullivan introduces herself, and indicates details are still being explored, but that last year everything was quite spread out in order to be safe during the pandemic. Ms. Sullivan states the hope is to be more concentrated this year like in years prior, with most of the activity taking place in Derby Square and Artist's Row. She explains that usually Front Street is temporarily closed during the day to make it safer, and that vendors and performances can set up there. Ms. Sullivan also notes that the festival last year expanded because it took place on the Common, and that they are looking into how to keep the density without creating an unsafe situation, and that is how the idea of closing the parking lot came about. She contends she would talk to the neighboring abutters and residents who might use the lot and clarifies that she is referring to the small lot, not the Klop Alley lot. The goal would be to keep people safe without losing a lot of spaces. Ms. Sullivan indicates she will need to discuss the matter more with the Committee, but that she

appreciates the Commission putting it on the agenda to discuss and offer any suggestions, considerations, or ask questions.

Chair Shallop thanks Mr. Kucharsky and Ms. Sullivan and opens the floor to the other commissioners.

Commission Lt. Tucker indicates the lot has been closed in the past, and that he does not believe it would be a big hardship to do again. He suggests conducting some outreach, and states that Traffic and Parking can handle the logistics.

Vice Chair Papetti asks if the closure of the lot is something City Council approves, or it is done via executive action. Mr. Kucharsky states he is not certain, as he could not find anything specific in the ordinance about lots, but that street closures are usually done by order through City Council. Ms. Sullivan indicates she can bundle the request with the closure of Front Street if that is the appropriate avenue. Lt. Tucker says Council will probably have to weigh in on the matter, especially if there is a commercial aspect to it.

Chair Shallop states that while we need to figure out the proper mechanism, she is very supportive of the request and the Arts Festival overall.

Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Councilor Watson-Felt introduces herself and states she is happy to help in any way she can. Chair Shallop suggests that Mr. Kucharsky and Lt. Tucker figure out the logistics and find out who owns the lot.

Motion and Vote: Vice Chair Papetti motions in support of lot closure on Front Street. Commissioner Swartz seconds the motion. **The vote is four (4) in favor. The motion passes.**

Commissioner Swartz confirms that based on looking at a GIS map the lot is an SRA property.

Designated Parking Space in Salem Green Lot

Mr. Kucharsky explains that the Principal of the New Liberty Innovation School has requested the Commission designate a parking space in the City-owned lot off Church Street to permit a school van to transport students and park Monday through Friday during the school year. Mr. Kucharsky indicates the Commission designated some spaces handicap accessible in the lots, and that there is some precedent related to the request.

Commissioner Swartz asks if there are any other spaces in the lot put aside for commercial use. Mr. Kucharsky states there are not in the Church Street lot, but there are some in the Salem Green lot for Salem Five Bank pursuant to an agreement.

Vice Chair Papetti asks about the Green Lot location, and Mr. Kucharsky identifies it on a map.

Chair Shallop asks if the space would just be signed for the van usage just for those hours. Mr. Kucharsky confirms that is the case.

Jennifer Razi-Thomas introduces herself as the principal of the New Liberty Innovation School, and explains it is a small, competency based high school located on the second floor of the Mall. She indicates that currently there is no student transportation, so they have to get to the school on their own. She further explains that the start time moved from 9AM to 8:30AM. Ms. Razi-Thomas states that sometimes the school has utilized Salem Skipper for student transport, but that she was also able to obtain a white mini-bus with some funds, and that she got her certification. She contends that picking the students up is part of an attempt to increase engagement and attendance, and that the choice of the Green Lot was because the vehicle is too tall to fit in the garage.

Chair Shallop asks why the Green Lot was chosen over the Church Street lot, and Ms. Razi-Thomas indicates it was for safety concerns, as the vehicle is brand new.

Chair Shallop asks if a specific spot has been contemplated, and Mr. Kucharsky points out a space adjacent to the walkway. In the lot there are currently the spaces reserved by Salem Five, some accessible spaces, and the rest are metered.

Commissioner Swartz states he is okay with the proposal. Vice Chair Papetti agrees, and suggests it is a reasonable request since it is a public school. Mr. Papetti next asks if Salem Five pays for the spaces they use. Mr. Kucharsky indicates he believes the spaces are part of an agreement, but that he has to look into the details. Lt. Tucker also expresses support for the request.

Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment but there is none.

Motion and Vote. Commissioner Swartz motions to authorize Traffic and Parking Director Mr. Kucharsky to work with City Council to designate a space for the New Liberty Innovation School in the Salem Green Lot. Vice Chair Papetti seconds the motion. **The vote is four (four) in favor. The motion passes.**

Request for Traffic Ordinance Recommendation

North Street Parking Regulations

Mr. Kucharsky explains that the North Street Safety Enhancement Project was reviewed during the last meeting, but that there was no vote because public input on the website was still open. Since then, input has closed and additional comments were reviewed. Mr. Kucharsky indicates the submitted recommendations have not changed. In response to a question Vice Chair Papetti asked at the last meeting, Mr. Kucharsky states that cars can be ticketed for parking in the bike lane.

Chair Shallop acknowledges that there have been no changes or additional comments, but states she would like to open the matter up to public comment here once more as well. She expresses that she had hoped the plan would include more crosswalks, although she recalls the issue was the expense of curb cuts and grade changes. Chair Shallops asks if there is any way those expenses could get funded. Mr. Kucharsky states that he reached out to Toole Design to have additional discussions with them and Councilor Riccardi to determine what is feasible. Because of grade changes from one side of the roadway to the other, Mr. Kucharsky explains that adding more crosswalks would require significant changes to the roadway itself with regrading and the relocation of utilities. He states that further discussions will be had and that the plan is to submit a shared streets grant to MassDOT for the project. If the grant is received, the funds will allow more to be done. Mr. Kucharsky also notes that based on feedback from the Bike Committee, he reached out to Toole Design to look at areas where there were conventional lanes to see if they could make them protected. He indicates there is more work to be done, and that the ordinance is just one piece of the project.

Commissioner Swartz asks for a summary of the comments received. Mr. Kucharsky states there were concerns about having enough service zones and crosswalks, and some comments about loss of parking in front of businesses. He explains there were no new concerns raised, just more detail and nuance. Mr. Kucharsky notes the comments are all available to see on the public input site.

Vice Chair Papetti mentions that one piece of feedback from the Bike Committee is to consider the underutilized surface lots, suggesting an easement for parking spaces to mitigate the loss of off street parking. He acknowledges it could be complicated, but states it could be cheaper and easier than moving the curb to move the cars.

Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Ward 6 Councilor Meg Riccardi introduces herself, and states there seems to be general consensus and support for the changes from School Street west, but that there are still details to iron out from School Street down toward Franklin, and that she is concerned about any vote prior to the decisions being figured out.

Chair Shallop asks how important it is that the Commission move on this today as opposed to next meeting, and Mr. Kucharsky indicates it is fine to hold off and makes sense. Chair Shallop confirms the Commission will table this to the next meeting.

October Resident Parking Ordinance Recommendations

Mr. Kucharsky presents a map of the downtown area and surrounding streets, demonstrating areas with year-round residential permit parking, the streets included in the Section 75A October Ordinance, the streets included in last year's order as well as additional streets recommended by Council. Mr. Kucharsky explains the goal is to add the streets from last year's order and the additional ones to Section 75A. He also points out streets with year-round temporal parking, which are essentially streets with year-round

resident permit parking, but also allow for two-hour non-residential parking during certain hours. An example is Chestnut Street, and Mr. Kucharsky indicates it can be difficult enforcing the conflicting ordinances in the temporal areas.

Chair Shallop asks about the proposed additional streets in the Point area, noting there was some back and forth about how much of the Point to include. She asks how the final proposal was determined. Mr. Kucharsky states it was based on feedback from residents, Councilor McCarthy, and staff, and notes that it was an equity issue, as it is a dense neighborhood and close to downtown. Mr. Kucharsky adds that Congress Street and the main corridors are still open. Commissioner Swartz states that if the residents voicing concerns are in favor of it, then he thinks it is a good proposal. He suggests it makes sense from an equity standpoint.

Chair Shallop asks about North Salem part by Furlong Park. Mr. Kucharsky explains that Councilor Riccardi heard from some residents on Dearborn Street who had asked for the area to be considered, but that there was some concern about pushing people farther out and additional work signing streets and assigning permits. Chair Shallop states she lives on Upham, and that while some October parking occurs, it seems to only be on peak days but that overall it has not seemed like a hardship. Commissioner Swartz asks if it is a neighborhood where the majority of residents have driveways or not. Chair Shallop states there are a good number of driveways, but that not all homes have them, and that some people park on Dearborn. Commissioner Lt. Tucker confirms, but notes that there are more units per building in some areas, so street parking is still utilized. He adds that the intent is not to keep tourists away, but rather to ensure that residents have a place to park. Chair Shallop states that in her mind it could go either way.

Vice Chair Papetti asks where we are in the process, noting it is great that these discussions are happening early. Mr. Kucharsky explains the hope is to get the streets from last year's order incorporated into the ordinance so that signage can get taken care of, and that there is always the option of trying out the North Salem area as an order this year.

Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Ward 5 Councilor Jeff Cohen of 12 Hancock Street introduces himself and echoes the equity concerns regarding the Point neighborhood, noting that lack of parking for residents has been an issue for a while. He adds that his street was included last year and that it was great.

Councilor Riccardi provides additional comment regarding the North Salem area, noting that lower Dearborn received multiple requests last year, but that she is unaware of other streets where residents requested October permit parking. She states she is indifferent as to whether it is through an order or addition to the ordinance, but that she is in favor of Dearborn Street being included.

Mr. Kucharsky and Commissioners discuss the North Salem area and clarify the area at issue is mostly Dearborn Street from North Street to Lee Street, potentially up to Orchard Street.

Vice Chair Papetti suggests thinking creatively about signage to notify visitors of areas that are October resident permit parking only, perhaps installing early signage to prevent tourists from even going down certain streets in search of parking.

Mr. Kucharsky presents the drafted ordinance language for Section 1 of the Section 75A Ordinance regarding October resident parking, and presents the additional streets to be identified and included in the ordinance.

Motion and Vote: Commissioner Swartz motions to recommend the Section 1 language as drafted. Commission Lt. Tucker seconds the motion. **The vote is four (4) in favor and none (0) opposed. The Motion Passes.**

Chair Shallop asks if anyone would like to bring forth a motion to recommend an order to make Dearborn Street resident permit only during October from North Street to Lee Street, on both sides of the street.

Motion and Vote: Commissioner Swartz motions to recommend an order to designate Dearborn Street as resident permit parking in October. Vice Chair Papetti seconds the motion. **The vote is four (4) in favor and none (0) opposed. The Motion Passes.**

Mr. Kucharsky asks if Commissioners have feedback on the temporal year-round areas and suggests adding signage to gateways areas to designate them as resident parking. Commissioner Swartz suggests the best signage for anyone to look at is on the meter itself, and ensuring the information is accurate.

Mr. Kucharsky next discusses recommendations regarding fine increases for October violations from \$50 to \$75. Chair Shallop states she thinks it is great, and that she would even support higher fines as a deterrent.

Vice Chair Papetti asks how the new rates compare to the fine for blocking someone's driveway, and Mr. Kucharsky states he can check the schedule of fines. Mr. Kucharsky also notes that there was an effort from Council to increase all fines, but that it did not go anywhere. Mr. Papetti indicates two situations that he has routinely heard mentioned are people parking in crosswalks and blocking driveways. He asks if there is a way to include those in the increased fines for October, if they are not already that high.

Mr. Kucharsky indicates parking in a crosswalk is a \$25 fine currently. Chair Shallop asks if we could consider having an October crosswalk parking fine that is higher. Mr. Kucharsky suggests he can bring back all the fine suggestions that were previously discussed. Chair Shallop states that if parking in a crosswalk or blocking a driveway only costs \$25, it is worth it for a tourist to park there, and suggests October specific fines that are higher. Lt.

Tucker says he is not opposed to the idea. He also notes that blocking a driveway is an automatic tow.

Chair Shallop suggests voting on Section 2 regarding fines at the next meeting. Commissioner Swartz agrees and suggests also adding hydrants and other violations to the increased October list. Mr. Kucharsky states he will present updates at the next meeting.

Scott Sheehan of 39 Harbor Street introduces himself and voices support for increased fines in October, noting that parking rates can be as high as \$60 in some areas, making a violation seem cheap in comparison.

October Order Recommendations to Introduce Paid Parking On Certain Local Streets and Areas

Mr. Kucharsky explains that paid parking via a temporary meter zone was introduced to Canal Street last year. He indicates there were a total of 812 passport app transactions, \$3,069 in revenue, and 38 citations. The paid parking is only on Saturdays and Sundays from 12PM to 6PM, and costs a dollar (\$1) per hour. Based on the results, Mr. Kucharsky suggests reinstating the order from last year for Canal Street, but also including the east side of Margin Street from Endicott Street to the police station, as well as the 22 perpendicular spaces near the North Street bridge along the HMA site.

Chair Shallop states she believes the proposal is reasonable and is in favor. Commissioner Swartz suggests the rate could even be \$1.50 per hour in October. Mr. Kucharsky explains that the meters along Washington Street are a dollar (\$1) per hour, and the others nearby are fifty cents (\$0.50). The Commission discusses the price more and the desire to encourage people not to drive as much downtown. Lt. Tucker asks if the signs are currently up with the price. Mr. Kucharsky states that on Canal Street they are. Chair Shallop indicates she is in favor of leaving the price at one dollar per hour this year so as not to change the signs. The other Commissioners agree. Vice Chair Papetti asks about the HMA lot, noting that some people have taken advantage and charged for parking in it while it is yet to be developed.

Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Councilor Cohen notes that with respect to Canal Street, there was initial resistance when it was first instituted, but that over time it has become widely accepted. He also agrees that the cost should be similar to nearby meters.

Councilor Riccardi discusses the HMA lot, and states that she would rather see no parking in the area as she would not like it to be known as an area that is okay to park, as the vision for the area is ultimately more of a walkway. She acknowledges, however, that if nothing is done in the interim, others will take advantage.

Ward 4 Councilor Lev McClain introduces himself and states that he has had difficulty using the passport app as a resident, where there are some areas designated as free but ended up

charging a fee for using the app. Vice Chair Papetti also notes he has had issues not being recognized as a resident on the app. Mr. Kucharsky suggests they may not have been in the system, as staff have to provide the list of registered vehicles to the Passport system.

Motion and Vote: Commissioner Lt. Tucker motions to recommend and order designating Canal Street and additional recommended areas as paid parking. Commissioner Swartz seconds the motion. **The vote is four (4) in favor and none (0) opposed. The motion passes.**

Motion and Vote: Vice Chair Papetti motions to change the proposed rate for the HMA lot to \$2 per hour. Commissioner Swartz seconds the motion. **The vote is four (4) in favor and none (0) opposed. The motion passes.**

Employee Parking During October

Commissioner Swartz explains he asked this be put on the agenda because as an employee of the Salem Chamber of Commerce, he hears from businesses that have employees working later and those arriving for second shifts at restaurants have difficulty finding parking in order to get to work. He suggests the City provide a paid or free option for employees to get to and from work safely. Mr. Swartz states he is unsure what options exactly are available for the City to put forth, but he is aware of a shuttle and the Salem Skipper as potential supplemental options. He adds that this issue effects employees, services at local businesses, and employee turnover.

Chair Shallop suggests brainstorming solutions as this likely will not be solved in one evening or meeting.

Vice Chair Papetti acknowledges it is a real issue, but states he does not know of a solution at this time. He states he supports looking into a detailed proposal, and suggests exploring all options, such as businesses look into renting space from the City, enhancing and expanding shuttle services, etc.

Commissioner Swartz asks what has been attempted in the past and what has and has not worked. Vice Chair Papetti states he does not recall this ever coming up during his six years on the Commission. Chair Shallop concurs she is unaware of any prior coordinated effort to address this issue.

Councilor Watson-Felt notes she has heard from many Bridge Street Neck businesses that employees have trouble finding street parking for their whole shifts.

Councilor McClain indicates he worked downtown for many years, and cautions against limiting the scope of strategizing to thinking about shift changes, because even as a more traditional 9 to 5 worker finding parking for work can be difficult. Councilor McClain suggests the issue may need a broad-based set of solutions, and suggests looking into more temporal parking, limited pass systems for residents, passes for workers, and any other potential options.

Scott Sheehan introduces himself as a Point neighborhood resident, and states he disagrees that the nighttime restrictions have helped, claiming that they have actually made parking in the neighborhood more difficult. He suggests issuing downtown workers resident passes for the month of October.

Chair Shallop asks Mr. Kucharsky and staff to put together suggestions and conduct research into what other cities do for workers parking, and to take note of any creative solutions. Chair Shallop also offers the idea of free blue bike passes for employees.

Traffic and Parking Commission Regulations

Chair Shallop explains that a version of the updated regulations was voted on at the last meeting, and that Councilor Watson-Felt has reviewed and indicated she might have some tweaks. Chair Shallop expresses a desire to get the language to Council quickly but wanted to give Councilor Watson-Felt an opportunity to present updates.

Councilor Watson-Felt explains that she met with the Chair Shallop and Vice Chair Papetti, and that based on precedent and other commissions and boards, the updated regulations make sense. She further explains that the only open question was in regard to the appeal process, or rather the ability for Council to maintain the right to veto. Councilor Watson-Felt indicates she thinks bidirectional collaborative opportunities are important and opportunities for the Commission and Councilors to meet to discuss any questions. She states the next steps are to discuss the regulations with the City Solicitor and Ward Councilors. She hopes to have updated language back to us after discussing at the next Council meeting.

Chair Shallop thanks Councilor Watson-Felt for her work and support.

Councilor Cohen states the regulations are long overdue. He also notes that the Licensing Board, ZBA, Planning Board, and others do not have their decisions reviewed by Council, and that he is not in favor of there being a review process here. Councilor Cohen continues this Commission should not be treated differently than any other City board or commission.

Commission Meetings

Mr. Kucharsky indicates that the legislature extended the period of time where cities and towns can conduct remote meetings until July 15th, 2022. All departments have been asked to the ask boards and commissions whether they prefer to wait until then to meet publicly, to come in for meetings, or to have a hybrid model.

Chair Shallop states while she misses seeing people in person, remote is incredibly convenient. She indicates she is willing to meet in person, however, if anyone else feels strongly about it.

Commissioner Swartz indicates he loves freedom of remote, but that he is not sure if public input has been more or less via remote meetings. He states he is open to whatever decision makes sense.

Vice Chair Papetti concurs with Commissioner Swartz and states he is happy to wait a little longer to meet in person again, but that does not necessarily mean waiting until the last possible day either.

Commission Lt. Tucker indicates he is fine with either option.

Mr. Kucharsky explains there are a limited number of spaces that can accommodate hybrid meetings and suggests for now continuing remote to allow staff to work through quirks and technical difficulties of setting up hybrid meetings.

Motion and Vote: Commission Lt. Tucker motions to continue meeting remotely until July 15, 2022. Commissioner Swartz seconds the motion. **The vote is four (4) in favor and none (0) opposed. The motion passes**

OTHER BUSINESS THAT MAY LEGALLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

Shallop asks for updates on the pedestrian crashes that have happened recently, noting there were three in the past week or so, and that there have been others in the last year. She states the recent news saddens and frustrates her and emphasizes how important safety is. Chair Shallop asks for insights on the incidents.

Commission Lt. Tucker explains that all three are still under investigation, with state police conducting reconstruction because the accidents involved serious injuries. On Saturday, March 5th, just before 7:30PM a woman was struck on Loring Avenue by the intersection of Lincoln Road, according to Lt. Tucker. He adds that she was crossing from the Salem State side, not in a crosswalk, and was hit by a car coming inbound from the direction of Swampscott. It was dark and overcast, and the pedestrian was wearing dark clothing. Lt. Tucker informs she is not in very good condition. Commission Lt. Tucker indicates that the same night, a gentleman was hit downtown at 8:45PM while crossing from the direction of the bust stop on Washington Street in front of the Derby Restaurant. The man was walking diagonally from the traffic island on Washington Street to the one at the end of Norman and was hit by an SUV that had just received a green light on New Derby Street intending to continue onto Norman. Lt. Tucker states that despite being older, the man is in fairly good condition and that charges are pending related to the actions of the motorist after the hit. He adds that the man was also not in a crosswalk and was wearing dark clothing. Commission Lt. Tucker also states a pedestrian was hit in front of the entrance to Loring Towers at 1000 Loring Avenue on March 7th. He explains the man was coming from the south side, and was not in a crosswalk, although there is one nearby. Lt. Tucker states the witness to the incident suggested the driver did not appear to be speeding, and that the pedestrian was wearing all dark clothing and entered the street abruptly. The pedestrian is in stable condition. Commission Lt. Tucker notes that while crosswalks are not shields, none of the pedestrians were in one at the time of the incidents.

Vice Chair Papetti thanks Lt. Tucker for the update and suggests that the Commission refocus and start each meeting with a safety update regarding these incidents and discuss ways to address them systemically. Vice Chair Papetti states that humans are fallible, and that infrastructure should be designed in a way that accounts for that. He indicates there has been a national uptick in pedestrian fatalities, up over 50 percent from all-time lows in 2009. Vice Chair Papetti questions why people cannot wear dark clothing, and why certain areas are not adequately lit. Regarding the crosswalks, Mr. Papetti states it is important to understand why a pedestrian chose not to use one, perhaps because the closest one is too far away or inconvenient. Vice Chair Papetti also notes a fatality on Highland Avenue and another on Fort Avenue, stating that no follow up from the state police has been received. He suggests creating a spreadsheet to document incidents and escalate issues where we have not heard back. He emphasizes the need to address safety issues.

Vice Chair Papetti next discusses items that have come in front of Council recently. He explains there was a recent joint meeting of the Planning Board and City Council to discuss the green infrastructure ordinance, and that there are elements related to electric vehicle charging and bike parking requirements. Vice Chair Papetti contends these are important ordinances, and that he hopes at some point it will be helpful for the Commission to weigh in on the electric vehicle topic. He stresses that there were only two people at this public meeting, and that more engagement is important. Vice Chair Papetti asks Mr. Kucharsky about budgeting for speed humps in North Salem and the downtown parking study.

Mr. Kucharsky explains that he asked Council for short-term CIP funding of \$250,000 to install speed humps in North Salem, and after requesting a bid, one came back around \$100,000. Neighborways will be back next month to present designs for the streets. He also states he met with DPS to see what they can do and what needs to be outsourced. An additional \$90,000 was requested to conduct a parking infrastructure study, specifically looking at the parking garages, Church Street Lot, Klop Alley Lot, and Front Street Lot to determine the best approach for these facilities long-term.

UPCOMING MEETINGS SCHEDULE

The next meeting is scheduled for March 23rd, 2022 at 6:00PM.

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL

February 9, 2022

Motion and Vote: Commissioner Papetti motions to approve the February 9, 2022 meeting minutes of the Traffic and Parking Commission as drafted. Commissioner Swartz seconds the motion. The vote is all in favor. **The motion passes.**

ADIJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Swartz and seconded by Commission Vice Chair Papetti the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 8:19 PM.