

City of Salem
Traffic and Parking Commission
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, September 23, 2021

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held remotely on Thursday, September 23, 2021 at 6:00pm, in accordance with Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021.

Present: Commission Chair Tanya 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 6:01pm by Chair Shallop. Ms. Shallop explains how members of the public may participate during the remote meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Whitney (no last name or address given) introduces herself and asks how the public can get in touch if issues arise during the busy month of October. She asks if residents should be contacting the Police or Traffic and Parking. Mr. Kucharsky explains that for enforcement issues during the daytime, the Traffic and Parking Department can be contacted at 978-745-8120. Commissioner Lt. Tucker also provides the police dispatch number, which is 978-744-1212, for evenings.

NEW/OLD BUSINESS

Neighborhood Traffic Calming Request: Warren Street

Mr. Kucharsky explains an application was submitted for traffic calming regarding Warren Street from Mr. Durkin. The issues highlighted in the application are excessive speeds and non-compliance with the stop sign at the intersection of Warren and Flint. Mr. Kucharsky indicates other residents have reached out with similar concerns.

Mr. Findley presents the demographic priority data tool which weighs streets based on various criteria. Warren Street shows a high priority of 1 with respect to land use and demographic data. Mr. Findley also presents crash priority data, which is low, and speed data, which reveals 24 percent of drivers going over the speed limit and a high of 53 mph. Most of the traffic is going toward downtown from Highland Avenue. Mr. Findley notes the width of the street is 47 feet for most of the length, but 63 feet at Flint and Warren. Compared to Route 128 North, Mr. Findley explains that Warren Street is 12 feet wider, has no striping, and therefore is more prone to speeding. Commissioner Swartz asks to see the speed data again. Mr. Kucharsky, Commissioner Swartz, and Chair Shallop discuss the speed data results. Chair Shallop asks for more information regarding how the request came in. Mr. Kucharsky indicates Mr. Durkin submitted the petition and that he has had

discussions with other residents as well. The intent is to review the findings to date and provide opportunity for more feedback from the public and the Commission.

Chair Shallop states it is difficult to think about without having discussed the third agenda item to see where we are in terms of bandwidth and finances. She notes that this request does not seem high priority but does not want to dismiss it offhand.

Commissioner Swartz indicates he worked in the area, and currently lives nearby. He suggests the data does not indicate speed is a big issue, but that he would like to hear from other residents. Commissioner Swartz acknowledges that the stop sign at Flint may be an issue. He also suggests adding striping could be a quick solution rather than a full-on traffic calming approach.

Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

William Durkin of 42 Warren Street introduces himself and thanks the Commission for considering his application. Mr. Durkin acknowledges the data presented, but states that looking out from his window he can say that drivers really do speed down the street. Mr. Durkin suggests Mr. Findley's comparison to Route 128 was appropriate, and notes that drivers see a wide-open street and feel inclined to speed up to the stop sign, which they then coast through. Mr. Durkin indicates there are many pedestrians walking in the streets because the sidewalks are so uneven, particularly ones with strollers and children. Mr. Durkin states his street is not safe due to speeding, and that after seeing the traffic calming on Chestnut Street he believes something similar would work for Warren. He suggests striping, speed humps, and an enhanced stop sign at Flint and Warren as initial measures.

Patrice Toomey of 36 Warren Street introduces herself and indicates she lives close to the Flint Street intersection. Ms. Toomey states that the speed data may not capture the whole story if it is for a limited time of observation, as certain days and times of day there are people speeding and running through the stop sign. She says she is in favor of speed bumps, as they have certainly helped on Chestnut Street. Ms. Toomey explains that the stop sign is barely visible, and that there is a giant brick wall on the corner of Flint and Warren that obscures the view. She explains that she often sits on her front porch and cringes watching the near misses. Ms. Toomey contends that even FedEx and Amazon trucks speed down the street as they are always in a hurry. She confirms that people walk in the street because the sidewalks are so uneven.

Whitney (no last name or address given) states she lives two streets over and suggests the speed and traffic data may not be representative as it was from one week in July. She indicates she is curious if traffic calming measures on Chestnut Street have caused people to drive on other streets to avoid the speed bumps.

Chair Shallop acknowledges the commenters concerns and indicates she would love to implement traffic calming on every street. She explains, however, that the Commission has been very focused recently on issues of equity and prioritizing a more inclusive use of limited resources, rather than just focusing on traditionally advantaged neighborhoods.

Chair Shallop maintains that if traffic calming measures are not undertaken for a particular request it is not because the Commission does not care or is not convinced there could be some benefit, but that there are limited resources and many issues throughout the City to consider. Commissioner Swartz agrees.

Lt. Tucker suggests that for Warren Street, a new stop sign should make a big difference. He notes that the data does not address or reflect that particular issue.

Vice Chair Papetti thanks the public for their comments and information. The Commission switches to discuss the third agenda item regarding the Traffic Calming Program update before returning to discuss the issue of Warren Street.

Commissioner Swartz suggest a new stop sign and striping would likely be helpful. Chair Shallop suggests the petition should be a low category and contends that Commissioner Swartz's comments imply the priority should be higher. Commissioner Swartz explains a stop sign could be a quick fix. Lt. Tucker notes that if a stop sign already exists, replacing it would not technically be considered traffic calming, and that refreshing the stop sign would be an easy fix. Chair Shallop states that could be reasonable.

Vice Chair Papetti states he is uncomfortable calling anything "low priority". Chair Shallop indicates the Commission could use another term or phrase that might be more appropriate.

Chair Shallop asks Mr. Kucharsky if staff will move forward with this or not, suggesting that if there is a quick easy fix that would be great, but otherwise there are other projects with higher priorities.

Mr. Kucharsky states he can look into a striping plan and evaluating improvements at the intersection and stop sign.

Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program

Mr. Kucharsky presents a spreadsheet showing the project list and project status. He discusses the active projects, noting this does not include the larger corridor projects that engineering is working on, like Bridge Street and Boston Street. Mr. Kucharsky explains that 90 percent of the projects have come in via applications since the program launched in 2018. There are 18 active projects, and he discusses their priority and speed data, along with additional staff notes. Mr. Kucharsky indicates it is helpful for members of the public to also submit petitions with their applications to get a sense of how many people in the neighborhood are concerned.

Mr. Kucharsky discusses some of the active projects, as well as those that have been completed. Mr. Kucharsky also notes that some of the completed projects will have ongoing maintenance. Chair Shallop asks if there is a way to make the spreadsheet with the projects public, as it would be great for the public to be able to see what is being actively

worked on, what has been completed, and what is still in the queue. Mr. Kucharsky indicates he will look into it.

Vice Chair Papetti thanks Mr. Kucharsky for the update, and requests that staff investigate making the budget, project management, costs, and other details more visible. Mr. Papetti indicates this would be a good way to sell the Traffic Calming Program internally to request more funding.

Commissioner Swartz thanks Mr. Kucharsky for the presentation and states he would love to have access to the spreadsheet to make it public and be able to manipulate it and categorize projects based on various data priority.

Chair Shallop asks if there is a map for the projects. Mr. Kucharsky explains that the priority map tool, along with speed and volume data are all available on the Traffic and Parking website. Mr. Kucharsky explains that to access it, you can go to www.salem.com/traffic-and-parking-department, click on "Traffic Calming" on the left, then click on "Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program", followed by the link on the bottom to explore the Project Prioritization Tool. Mr. Kucharsky demonstrates the tool and its functionality to the Commission and public. Mr. Findley discusses the tool and map in more detail.

Chair Shallop says the tool is great, and that these types of conversations are important so that people are not thinking about their applications in a vacuum. She emphasizes managed expectations based on bandwidth, resources, equity, etc.

Chair Shallop asks about remaining budget, and Mr. Kucharsky states he is waiting to get quotes for several active projects. Once he has further information, he will bring it to the Commission. He also notes that staff is looking into stockpiling certain materials to allow for smaller quick fixes to be implemented more easily.

Vice Chair Papetti suggests staff think strategically about how to turbo charge and accelerate the implementation of these things from a community outreach perspective. While it is great to hear from individuals present, Mr. Papetti opines that one of the biggest barriers is community outreach. Vice Chair Papetti requests that the system work as swiftly for pedestrians, cyclists, and traffic calming, as it does when remedying issues from car accidents, noting that MassDOT replaced a broken guardrail within 24 hours of a truck crashing through the median on the North Street Bridge.

Commissioner Swartz agrees and states he would like to see further staff input on project priority. Chair Shallop reminds all that Conrad Prosniewski is the Traffic and Parking liaison to City Council, and suggests having him present at one of the next meetings to see how we can work together better.

Neighborhood Traffic Calming Request: Raymond Road (from Raymond Terrace to Lafayette Street)

Mr. Kucharsky explains staff received an application from July regarding Raymond Road, citing speeding. He notes that Raymond Road has a limit of 20 MPH and Lafayette has a limit of 25 MPH. The application notes that most cars do not stop at the stop sign, and that there have been numerous crashes over the last 15 years. This is a popular neighborhood to walk, bike, and jog, and the applicants suggest speed bumps and planters at the intersection as a solution.

Mr. Findley presents the prioritization tool and data, noting the area has a demographic priority of 2 and land use priority of 3. The area has seen four crashes in the last five years. Mr. Findley discusses speed and volume data, noting average speed between 25 and 33 MPH. He also notes that there is on average one car traveling the wrong way per day. Mr. Findley discusses the parking conditions, and notes the road is an approved heavy truck restricted roadway.

Mr. Kucharsky discusses the process for designating speed limits and truck restrictions. Mr. Kucharsky explains that the road is a cut-through for many people coming from Loring Avenue and heading to Marblehead. He notes there have been some incidents at the intersection with Lafayette Street. Mr. Kucharsky suggests he would not bump the priority up over other projects, as he does not yet have a sense of the magnitude of concern from residents, just anecdotal evidence from one individual. As the street has heavy volumes daily, staff will keep it on their radar for now.

Chair Shallop indicates she would love more information based on the location, volume, and use as a cut-through. Vice Chair Papetti states that the intersection at Raymond Road and Lafayette is a major blind spot for cyclists traveling Southbound on Lafayette, as there is a brick wall limiting visibility. He suggests flagging that as an issue if staff looks into this further.

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

October Planning

Mr. Kucharsky explains there will be shuttle services provided for the last three weekends in October, running from 10AM to 8PM on weekends. There will be three busses, two operating out of the High School and one out of O'Keefe Center (Salem University). All three busses will stop at the Salem Hospital lot on Jefferson Avenue as well as drop people off at Riley Plaza. Mr. Kucharsky notes the shuttle and parking are free.

Mr. Kucharsky also explains that there are 20 additional streets with parking limited to residents this year. He states that the green signs have been put out, and that additional permits will be received this week. Mr. Kucharsky states staff will seek feedback on the new streets and are looking to further improve the program. He adds that there have been

discussions with DPW regarding permanent signs year-round but notes that it would be a big undertaking.

Commissioner Swartz confirms the hours of the shuttle and Mr. Kucharsky clarifies that the last pickup is at 8PM.

OTHER BUSINESS THAT MAY LEGALLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

UPCOMING MEETINGS SCHEDULE

The next meeting is scheduled for October 21, 2021 at 6:00PM.

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL

August 19, 2021

Motion and Vote: Commissioner Swartz motions to approve the August 19, 2021 meeting minutes of the Traffic and Parking Commission. Commission Vice Chair Papetti seconds the motion. The vote is all in favor. **The motion passes.**

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Swartz and seconded by Commission Lt. Tucker the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 7:34 PM.