

**City of Salem
Traffic and Parking Commission
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, May 29, 2024**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held remotely on Wednesday, May 29, 2024, at 6:00pm, in accordance with Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023.

Present: Acting Chair Jeff Swartz, Commissioner Brendan Casey, Commissioner Erin Turoswki, Commissioner Lt. David Tucker. Also present were Traffic and Parking Transportation Planner Brendan Linard and Transportation Data Analyst Russell Findley.
Absent: Chair Jaime Garmendia

CALL OF MEETING

The meeting was called to order at 6:01pm by Acting Chair Swartz. Mr. Swartz explains how members of the public may participate during the remote meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

NEW/OLD BUSINESS

Director's Update

Mr. Linard, filling in for Mr. Kucharsky, provides updates regarding the Salem Skipper expansion into Beverly and Danvers. Mr. Linard also notes that the Jefferson Avenue/Willson Street project is continuing and that they are waiting for delivery of traffic signal equipment. The Fort Avenue project also has work continuing, pending coordination with work being done by National Grid.

Reserved Roof Spaces at Museum Place Garage

Mr. Linard notes this is a continuation of the discussion from the Commission's last meeting and that today's discussion is regarding whether the reserved spaces should extend beyond the month of October to the second half of September.

Mr. Linard presents garage utilization data for the Museum Place Garage for September and October, showing that max capacity was not met, even with the food truck festival occurring. Therefore, staff recommendation would be not to extend the roof spaces into September. If it were to be extended, staff recommends to add a six-week pass in addition to the four-week pass, which would cost 50 percent more at \$172.50.

Acting Chair Swartz asks if there are any commissioner comments on the matter. Commissioner Casey agrees with the recommendation.

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

Motion and Vote: Commissioner Casey motions to not extend the period beyond October for reserved roof spaces at Museum Place Garage. Commissioner Turowski seconds the motion. **The vote is four (4) in favor and none (0) opposed, the motion passes.**

Tour Bus Parking Fees

Mr. Linard presents research related to tour bus parking fees, noting that the Mayor's office asked Traffic and Parking to look into the possibility of charging for tour buses to park on street during October. Staff looked at potential case studies and comparisons and found some areas where they do charge tour buses to park, but nothing directly comparable to what would occur here. Some had dedicated tour bus parking lots or pre-purchase permits. Mr. Linard states the majority of places reviewed do not charge tour buses to park, and some had free tour bus parking in lots or areas outside of main attraction areas. Mr. Linard explains this would only be viable for short-term tour bus parking spaces in the downtown area. Mr. Linard states that Destination Salem raised concerns, particularly with the difficulties around enforcement.

Acting Chair Swartz agrees with the difficulty of enforcement, and he states that we do not want to discourage tour buses.

Commissioner Turowski asks why tour buses need to park downtown for longer than a drop-off or pick-up anyway. She expresses concerns regarding the intersection outside of the Witch Museum because when attempting to cross, there are visibility issues for pedestrians and drivers caused by parked buses. Commissioner Swartz explains that some of the one- or two-hour parking is so people can use bathrooms, get a meal, or related to cruise ship tours. He notes that many of the tours come in for a single destination, not necessarily for the whole day.

Commissioner Casey asks what the impetus or objective for the idea of a fee was, whether it is to change some behavior or to offset a cost and generate revenue. Mr. Linard states he believes it was thought of as a way to capture some of the costs related to downtown in October. Commissioner Casey states he is generally in favor of charging more for parking in October and other measures, but that he is not convinced fees for tour buses would be a good idea.

Commissioner Turowski notes that some of the fines are rather low, and as an example notes the fee for idling a tour bus engine while waiting is only \$25. She suggests looking at the fines and how enforcement works. Lt. Tucker states calling the police business line is a way to get someone to come enforce something like that.

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

October Order Recommendations

Mr. Linard notes this topic was discussed at the last meeting as well, and that it had to do with a proposed order affecting on-street parking rates on Washington Street from Essex Street to Federal Street during weekends in October. This stretch covers 32 parking spaces, most of which are four-hour meter spaces, with others being two hour, 15-minute, and accessible parking spaces. Mr. Linard explains that the proposed executive order would affect approximately 24 to 26 of the 32 spaces. Signs would need to be updated, and 18 meter poles would need to be bagged. Mr. Linard states pricing was evaluated and compared to other high demand areas in the US and found that the highest rates were between \$5 and \$10 outside of event parking. For these spaces, Mr. Linard indicates staff suggest a fee of \$7 per hour. Payment would be through the Passport parking app. Mr. Linard states Salem residents would only have to pay 25 cents to park. Commissioner Swartz asks if the resident parking would extend to employees of downtown businesses. Mr. Linard states it would be a bigger logistical challenge, but they can look into it more. Commissioner Swartz states he likes the idea, but that there should be a way to exempt employees working downtown from the higher fees.

Commissioners discuss a bit more, and acting Chair Swartz asks if a recommendation were to go forward, if it would be permanent or a one-year trial. Mr. Linard explains it would be a temporary one-year effort as an executive order. Commissioner Casey suggests that the parking for employees may not be as big of an issue as most people would be working longer than the spaces allow, and that given the logistical challenges he would be fine with trying this and moving forward without the exemption for employees at this time.

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

Motion and Vote: Commissioner Turowski motions to recommend the increased rates for on-street parking on Washington Street from Essex Street to Federal Street during weekends in October. Commissioner Casey 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

None.

UPCOMING MEETINGS SCHEDULE

The Commissioners discuss availability for the June meeting.

The next meeting is scheduled for June 26, 2024, at 6:00PM.

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL

April 24, 2024

Motion and Vote: Commissioner Turowski motions to approve the minutes for the April 24, 2024, meetings of the Traffic and Parking Commission as drafted. Commissioner Casey seconds the motion. **The vote is four (4) in favor and none (0) opposed, the motion passes.**

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Commission Lt. Tucker and seconded by Commissioner Casey the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 6:48 PM.