

**City of Salem
Traffic and Parking Commission
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, March 1, 2018**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held on Thursday, March 1, 2018 at 6:30pm at 120 Washington Street, Salem, MA. Present were Commission Chair Tanya Stepasiuk, Commission Vice-Chair Eric Papetti, Commissioner Jamie Metsch, and Commissioner Lt. Robert Preczewski. Assistant Director Nicholas Downing was also present. Commissioner Robin Seidel and Director Matt Smith were absent.

CALL OF MEETING

The meeting was called to order at 6:31pm.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Joyce Kenney of 285 Lafayette Street spoke to the Committee and indicated she had been told by the MBTA that due to the bus stop being located on a state highway, enforcement would fall to the State Police. Lt. Preczewski indicated that Salem Police could still be of assistance and he would send a patrolman out. Assistant Director Downing added that staff is working with the MBTA to have the signage for the stop clarified and potentially moved to make the restrictions clear.

NEW / OLD BUSINESS

- Gedney Street Area Parking Meters

Assistant Director Downing gave an update on the proposal for changes to parking restrictions on Gedney Street and the surrounding area. Assistant Director Downing and Director Smith attended the Greater Endicott Street Neighborhood Association (GESNA) meeting on February 28 and presented the modified recommendation for Gedney Street based on the feedback from the meeting with businesses in the area a few weeks ago. There was general agreement that this proposal to maintain some of the existing 15 and 30 minute unmetered spaces and introduce new, metered, 2-hour spaces was the right way to go. The main question was regarding the 13 unrestricted spaces on the western end of Gedney Street between Summer Street and Gedney Street Court. Two residents from that area of the street were present, and indicated their desire for resident permit parking to return to the southern side of the street, as they had it years ago but it was taken out and not returned. They felt less strongly about the spaces on the northern side of the street between Summer Street and Holyoke Square, but were curious about spaces that could be both resident permit parking AND 2-hour metered parking for non-residents.

Approved on March 15, 2018

Chair Stepasiuk asked if we went with meters, would we be using kiosks or regular meters? Assistant Director Downing answered for this area, we would use meters. We are implementing kiosk systems more in our municipal lots, and while further down the road we will likely consider moving on-street spaces to kiosks as well, for now it will still be meters.

Commissioner Metsch asked about the installation process for meters – is it anything beyond digging the hole and adding the meter? Asst. Director Downing answered for this location, some more work might be needed – on the southern side of Gedney at the unrestricted parking, there is a good amount of overgrown vegetation that would need to be cut and removed.

Commissioner Metsch asked about retaining the 15 and 30 minute unmetered spaces – is that a critical component of the neighborhood and businesses support for this proposal? Ass.t Director Downing answered yes – given the history of the parking restrictions in this area, one of the main reasons it has reverted back to what it was before the 2010 parking study is because the businesses felt the lack of those “drop-in” spaces hurt their business. We think this is the right mix of unmetered, very short-term parking and metered, medium term parking, and moving those 15 and 30 minute spaces to 2 hours would likely result in a loss of support for the overall proposal.

There was a general conversation about overall parking inventory management – prompted by Vice-Chair Papetti’s comment from last meeting about being cautious to add parking capacity merely opportunistically as opposes to in a balanced, thoughtful way that might see parking added in one area so it could be lessened elsewhere. Staff looked at the potential idea of diagonal parking along Holyoke Square, and while it could fit in the given space, we did not hear at GESNA that the area lacked sufficient parking, merely that the current restrictions did not allow for the right mix and appropriate turnover.

The Commission expressed general support for the spaces on the western end of Gedney Street to be a mix of resident only and time-restricted spaces, and asked staff to work with Lt. Preczewski to draft an ordinance rewrite that would cover the whole area, rather than make one recommendation tonight for one end of the street and another at the next meeting for the other end.

- Motorcoach Parking

Assistant Director Downing gave a brief update on motorcoach parking in the city. We had hoped to have a specific recommendation to vote on tonight, but in looking into the ordinances for bus spaces, we found some issues that we think should be addressed altogether to clarify things and make sure the ordinance is accurate. Tonight, it would be helpful if we discussed general issues and questions around bus parking in advance of a more thorough conversation with Kate Fox from Destination Salem. Some ideas we have begun to consider are shifting the existing

Approved on March 15, 2018

bus spaces on Congress Street south off of the bridge and potentially looking at adding one or more spaces there if there is sufficient room, reintroducing bus spaces on the triangle at the intersection of Derby, Hawthorn, and Congress, and seasonal spaces on Derby Street along the cemetery wall.

Lt. Preczewski expressed some concern with any spaces on Derby Street along the cemetery wall. Those spaces had been used previously, but the Police Department had safety concerns with people stepping out from behind buses.

Vice-Chair Papetti wants additional enforcement of the existing bus parking spaces, especially those designated only for pick-up/drop-off as they often get used for long-term parking. If these spaces are always filled instead of acting as just pick-up/drop-off, buses will have to circle to look for spots.

Commissioner Metsch echoed the Vice-Chair's comments, and shared experiences of seeing multiple buses discharge and pick-up passengers at the Charter Street cemetery, causing serious congestion due to the narrow roadway.

There was a general conversation about long-term bus parking in downtown, and whether it should only be available for a fee, whether that fee be the equivalent of metered parking for multiple paces per bus or something higher, and whether all the downtown bus spaces should be designated pick-up/drop-off to keep bus traffic flowing more smoothly, and use an area like the Willows for all long-term parking.

The Commission suggested the following questions should be answered before final recommendations are made, and should be shared with Kate Fox from Destination Salem in advance of her attending one of the Commission's next meetings:

1. What is the overall need for bus parking in Salem, both year-round and in the peak demand times? Is this need primarily for pick-up/drop-off or for long-term parking close to downtown?
2. Should the city maintain long-term bus parking in downtown, or should buses park long-term elsewhere?
3. Is there an opportunity to reconsider all of our bus parking to consolidate it and simplify the system?
4. What routes do the buses take to enter and leave Salem now, and what routes should they be taking?
5. How do other municipalities manage bus parking?

We will invite Kate Fox to a meeting in the near future to discuss these questions, and work to form a final recommendation at that time.

- Mill Street Tactical Bicycle Infrastructure

The Commission continued to consider options for short-, medium-, and long-term fixes to the issue of the Canal Street Multiuse Path ending abruptly at Mill Street. The

Approved on March 15, 2018

Commission engaged in a general conversation about how to address the safety concerns. There was general agreement that short-term fixes are complicated by the nearby street geometry. The general idea of taking space on Mill Street for some type of bicycle facility would need to be studied in terms of gathering traffic counts before and after any change. These traffic counts would be based on using barrels to remove the right-turn lane from Mill Street to Canal temporarily. However, any resulting proposal to actually use that space would be a medium-to-long-term solution, in conjunction with the proposed two-way Margin Street pilot.

Commissioner Metsch expressed some concern with removing a turning lane, and the impact it could have on traffic and congestion in the area generally. Vice-Chair Papetti responded that he thinks projects like two-way Margin Street and the conceptual ideas of extending Gedney Street would alleviate some of that, and we shouldn't be dissuaded to try and come up with a short-term solution if possible. He added that something major like taking a lane to create a multi-directional bike facility is something the bike master plan will look at, so we should try to focus on any possible short-term solutions.

Lt. Preczewski asked about using the existing sidewalk on Mill Street. Some cyclists will use the sidewalk regardless of what other options are available, but it is not sufficiently wide at that point to act as a multiuse path.

Vice-Chair Papetti commented that this is a situation playing out elsewhere in Massachusetts as cities try to determine how to connect rail-trails to other bike infrastructure. It is never easy, but we need to keep thinking it through. Commissioner Metsch commented that signage may be a very easy addition here, to instruct cyclists to get off their bikes and walk them to the Mill/Washington/Canal intersection and then connect to the forthcoming bike lanes on Washington Street or continuing into the Point.

Lt. Preczewski asked about using some of the existing right-of-way on Mill Street for a bicycle facility going in an easterly direction without removing a travel lane. Assistant Director Downing comment there may be sufficient space to do this, but Vice-Chair Papetti added that you can't have a bike facility of any type to the right of an exclusive right-turn lane, so the bike lane would need to be between the straight-only lane and the right-turn lane.

There was general agreement that cyclists leaving the multiuse path and turning left face numerous challenges, and any improvements to the Margin/Mill intersection are more in the medium-to-long-term category, so efforts in the short-term likely need to focus on getting cyclists from the path to the Washington/Mill/Canal intersection.

Vice-Chair Papetti suggested a conceptual idea of moving the stop-line for Mill Street behind where the path ends, and designing some type of bike box that would allow cyclists to enter the intersection and prepare for either take a left or continue

Approved on March 15, 2018

straight. This would shift the queue back but not necessarily cause additional queuing time. Commissioner Metsch added we could have some type of mid-block box but allow cars to queue before and after it.

Staff are going to get traffic counts for the area in the near future, and coordinate with Lt. Preczewski and the Police Department about how to test the removal of a traffic lane to do continued counts as well. These counts will inform the long-term solutions for the area. In the short-term, staff will explore potential use of right-of-way along the bike path and Domino's parking lot, and work on developing signage to direct cyclists to the intersection.

- Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program

The Commission discussed an updated memorandum regarding the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program. Assistant Director Downing explained the changes as being in response to the comments from the last meeting about simplifying the process and giving Traffic and Parking department staff the ability to initiate projects as well as have projects proposed by residents and neighborhood associations. At last night's GESNA meeting, the group was very excited about this project, specifically to address some concerns about traffic patterns on Winthrop Street. Earlier this month, Director Smith met with residents in North Salem and they are also eager for the program to be formally launched. Assistant Director Downing also noted that one comment from the Councillors present at the GESNA meeting was to include Ward Councillors in this process, and that is absolutely the intent, thought it may need to be added specifically to this document.

Vice-Chair Papetti commented that there is a lack of clarity in terms of who the intended audience is for this memo. The previous memo seemed more internally focused within City departments, whereas this seems more for the public, but it seems to be somewhere in between. He suggested that what would help would be 2 separate documents – one that is more a program summary and introduction for the public, and a second that is an internal document that lays out how the Traffic and Parking Department will interact with the public, the Commission, the Police Department, Councillors, and other related parties as projects move through this program.

Lt. Preczewski shared comments both from himself and the Chief of Police. They are concerned about the new memo lacking police and public safety involvement, and a lack of specificity in the existing memo. The previous memo included more City departments being involved, and Lt. Preczewski feels the new memo excludes important parties. Assistant Director Downing responded the intent was not to cut any parties out, but that in reviewing this memo, it does seem more geared toward the public side of introducing the program, rather than the nuts and bolts of how the program would function within City government.

Approved on March 15, 2018

Lt. Preczewski commented further that his concern is the police not being made aware of projects and only finding out from residents or Councillors and that these projects will all need a Council order. Assistant Director Downing commented that the Department would inform the police about these projects as they are proposed, but clarified that not every project would require Council action, as many would not change the ordinance, but that the department would work with the Lieutenant and the Police Department to ensure everyone knows about what projects are happening.

Staff is going to further develop the two documents suggested by Vice-Chair Papetti, the one being a public summary of the program, and the other being the internal document that lays out the steps the Department will take in terms of working with the appropriate Councillors, Police Department staff, and other City personnel as projects are proposed and implemented. Staff will also begin developing the form residents and neighborhood associations will fill out to apply to the program.

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Metsch and seconded by Lt. Preczewski, the Commission voted unanimously to approve the minutes from the February 15, 2018 Traffic and Parking Commission meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Lt. Preczewski and seconded by Commissioner Metsch, the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 8:28pm.