

**City of Salem  
Traffic and Parking Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, May 3, 2018**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held on Thursday, 3, 2018 at 6:30pm at 98 Washington Street, Salem, MA. Present were Commission Chair Tanya Stepasiuk, Commission Vice-Chair Eric Papetti, Commissioner, Jamie Metsch, Commissioner Lt. Robert Preczewski, and Commissioner Robin Seidel. Director Matthew Smith and Assistant Director Nicholas Downing were also present.

**CALL OF MEETING**

The meeting was called to order at 6:34pm. Assistant Director Downing noted audio of the meeting was being recorded to assist with notes.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

No members of the public wished to provide public comment.

**DIRECTOR'S MONTHLY UPDATE**

Director Smith provided his monthly update, and began by noting this will be his last meeting as Traffic and Parking Director. He has taken a position with Nelson\Nygaard and his last day with the City will be May 16. He also noted he is going to save the discussion on Parking Benefit Districts for later in the meeting when we discuss South Harbor Garage pricing.

On the issue of parking meters vs. kiosks, Director Smith noted that the plan is to eventually transition all parking meters in the City to kiosks. We have begun this with some of our lots already. We have funding for 2 new kiosks each year, so it will take between 5 and 10 years to move everything to kiosks. Kiosks are cheaper to install than meters to cover the same number of spaces, have lower maintenance costs, provide better data, and allow for more flexible pricing structures, such as a resident rate vs. out of town rate.

On the issue of March revenue and parking utilization, we had a good month. Overall revenue was down 3% but non-fine revenue was up 4% with most of that increase coming from Museum Place. Museum Place garage revenue was up 30% year over year, and South Harbor garage revenue was up 58% year over year. On-street revenue was down 20% which correlates to the bad weather we had. Vice-Chair Papetti asked if violation revenue includes all types of tickets. Director Smith answered yes, but approximately 75% comes from downtown time enforcement. Generally, we should look at ticket prices. A ticket on campus at Salem State costs \$35 but on the city streets nearby costs \$15. We also generally need more

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enforcement and have requested 2 full-time and 3 or 4 part-time enforcement staff in the budget. Vice-Chair Papetti asked if when we look at fine revenue decreasing, can we tell if the cause is fewer violations or less effective enforcement? Director Smith answered that you can look at the number of tickets each enforcement officer issues, but this is also likely a result of the Passport Parking app. The app reminds people when their time is up so they can electronically feed the meter.

On the issue of heavy commercial vehicle exclusions, the Mayor emailed the Department about these and asked if they had been brought to the Commission for consideration. Director Smith spoke with Chief Butler who indicated the exclusions were a public safety issue which is why they were sent directly to the Council. Chair Stepasiuk agreed that the decision made sense, but suggested adding a box to the form the Lieutenant uses to indicate the issue is a matter of public safety and hence didn't come through the Commission. Assistant Director Downing noted he will work with the Lieutenant about adding that information to the form.

On the Local Transportation Improvement Plan (LTIP), Director Smith noted he doesn't have a full update as the meeting with DPS had to be moved. Assistant Director Downing noted there will be some work beginning on Essex Street Pedestrian Mall that is a continuation of the work from last year. We are working with DPS to make sure the staging of the work and the work itself doesn't impose unnecessary access issues for the businesses. Vice Chair Papetti asked when we meet with DPS to ask about deadlines for the Complete Streets funding program. Director Smith responded that we can't reapply this year because our project isn't finished yet.

Assistant Director Downing reported back to the Commission about 2 items the Department was asked to seek input on from the City Solicitor. First, on Brown Street and Washington Square, we have determined the legal status of the roads around the Roger Conant Statute. Per the City's street director – a document the Department wasn't aware of until recently – we determined that the roadway to the north of the statue is in fact Washington Square North and the roadway to the south of the statue is Brown Street. This means the traffic patterns recommended by the Commission will require Council orders to go into effect. We will bring those language recommendations to our meeting in May 17. Second, on the issue of bicycles being allowed on the Essex Street Pedestrian Mall, the City Solicitor didn't necessarily agree that the state law would supersede the local ordinance because the street is a public way, but is a limited access public way. She suggested that an ordinance allowing bicycles on the Pedestrian Mall could be written to delineate where exactly on the mall bicycles would be allowed (e.g. not within 10 feet of the buildings). Vice Chair Papetti commented that this issue was discussed at the Bicycle Advisory Committee, and the Committee was somewhat split, but generally would support a trial period. Lt. Preczewski noted he would be supportive of a trial so long as we had more chances to discuss it at a public hearing. Chair Stepasiuk suggested an agenda item for next meeting of laying out a schedule to discuss this idea at subsequent public meetings. Commissioner Metsch asked if this effort could

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somehow be incorporated into the work that is beginning on the mall soon. Director Smith responded that it could not be, as the work that is set to begin is to repair/replace based on the existing design. Chair Stepasiuk added that it might make sense to consider this issue at the same time as the issue of skateboards.

Director Smith provided an update on the conceptual idea to use the sidewalk on Bridge Street beginning at Ayube Memorial Drive as a shared use path. The path is 10 feet wide, and the work is simple enough that it could be done in house with striping and signage. Especially important would be signage as path approaches the MBTA asking riders to dismount. This would create a substantial off-street bike connection to the MBTA. Vice-Chair Papetti suggested the proposal be sent to the Bicycle Advisory Committee. Assistant Director Downing agreed and noted once the Department has conceptual plans, he will present them to the Bike Committee and the Commission.

Chair Stepasiuk asked that the next Monthly Update include a presentation about budget line items and CIP requests, as well as an update about the Commission's proposed regulations.

### **NEW / OLD BUSINESS**

- Removal of Handicap Parking Space – 83 Ocean Avenue

A resident of Ocean Avenue has requested, through Councillor Turiel, the removal of the handicap parking space at 83 Ocean Avenue. The resident who previously lived here passed away, and the space is no longer needed.

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Seidel and seconded by Commissioner Metsch the Commission voted unanimously to recommend to the City Council the removal of the handicap parking space at 83 Ocean Avenue.

- New Handicap Parking Space – 3 Plymouth Street

A resident of 3 Plymouth Street has requested, through Councillor Turiel, a handicap parking space in front of her home. The resident has difficulty walking long distances and has a handicap placard but no off-street parking available.

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Seidel and seconded by Commissioner Metsch the Commission voted unanimously to recommend to the City Council the addition of a handicap parking space at 3 Plymouth Street.

- New Handicap Parking Space – 20 Forest Avenue

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A resident of 20 Forest Avenue has requested, through Councillor Turiel, a handicap parking space in front of her home. She has a handicap placard and no available off-street parking.

On a motion duly made by Vice-Chair Papetti and seconded by Commissioner Seidel the Commission voted unanimously to recommend to the City Council the addition of a handicap parking space at 20 Forest Avenue.

- New Handicap Parking Space – 58 Moffat Road

A resident of 58 Moffat Road has requested, through Councillor Dibble, a handicap parking space in front of her home. Her brother has to use a wheelchair, and while she has off-street space available, she will be using that space to build a ramp to allow her brother to get into and out of their home, so she will need a parking space nearby.

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Seidel and seconded by Vice-Chair Papetti the Commission voted unanimously to recommend to the City Council the addition of a handicap parking space at 58 Moffat Road.

- Resident Parking Zone Extension – Federal Street

Residents at 59 Federal Street have requested, through Councillor Madore, the extension of the Zone C Residential Parking Zone on Federal Street. Currently, the City's ordinances for Federal Street between Washington Street and North Street do not align with the signs that are on the road. The western half of the southern side of the street is signed as "Resident Sticker Only – Tow Zone" but in the ordinance, that section of the street is designated as a 4-hour parking meter zone. This means residents at this end of the street are not able to acquire resident parking permits, despite the signs in front of their home indicating that they should be able to do so. The Commission discussed some of the other issues with the ordinances that pertain to this section of the street, but chose to first address this request for an extension of the residential parking zone in ordinance to bring it in line with what is signed on the street.

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Metsch and seconded by Vice-Chair Papetti the Commission voted unanimously to recommend to the City Council the extension of the Zone C Color Green 24 Hour Residential Parking Zone on the southerly side of Federal Street beginning at a point 305 feet from the intersection of Washington Street in a westerly direction to the intersection of North Street.

- Sewall Street Lot

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Assistant Director Downing gave an update about some changes to spaces in the Sewall Street lot. With the moving of City Hall Annex from 120 Washington to 98 Washington, the City needed to find parking spaces for Health and Building Inspectors. The old annex had underground parking for this use. We will be marking 11 total spaces in the Sewall Street lot to be used by Health and Building Inspectors. The spaces would be reserved for this use during City Hall business hours but open for other use outside of City Hall hours. These inspectors have contractual requirements about spaces being available near City Hall to allow them to go to inspections as need. Vice-Chair Papetti asked what the exact contractual requirements were and how many times inspectors come and go per day. Director Smith responded that he's fairly confident the requirement is a space within a certain distance, and that generally the inspectors come and go between 5 and 10 times per day. The Commission asked if other alternatives were available such as on-street spaces or the MBTA lot. Director Smith responded that on-street spaces would not provide the guaranteed parking that is needed, and the City's MBTA lot is too far from the Annex to make the frequent trips workable. The Commission asked that staff report back this summer to monitor the use of the spaces and any issues.

- South Harbor Garage Pricing and Parking Benefit District

Director Smith noted he would fold in his thoughts on the Parking Benefit District into this agenda item. Currently parking at the South Harbor Garage is the best deal in town at \$0.25 per hour. We actually received a letter from a British tourist last year thanking us for having the cheapest parking she has ever seen in America. The 2010 parking study proposed lowering the price at South Harbor from \$1.50 per hour to the current rate because of the low utilization and the garage's location at the "edge" of downtown. No 8 years later, our downtown has changed and is more active and has expanded, and there is much more activity near the South Harbor garage. The garage is regularly 80-90% full on weekends indicating it is heavily used by visitors rather than residents. The current rate does not cover the maintenance or staff costs for the garage, so we need to consider a rate increase.

Commissioner Metsch indicated his support for a price increase and asked if it was possible to somehow shift some of the use of South Harbor to Museum Place. Director Smith responded that pricing changes are the best way to manage or change the demand. Vice-Chair Papetti asked for clarification on what the Commission is being asked to recommend, as the ordinance that established the Commission says the Commission sets rates with the approval of the Mayor and Council. Director Smith responded there is some confusion with the Commission now, but yes that reading the ordinance indicates all those entities have to agree. We are seeking a recommendation to change the rates at South Harbor Garage, either via an order or ordinance as determined by consulting with the City Solicitor.

The Commission had general questions about looking at pricing overall, and Director Smith responded saying those discussion lead into the idea of a parking benefit district (PBD). In Salem and elsewhere, overall infrastructure investment is

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down. We have downtown parking facilities that need millions of dollars of investment to maintain the coming years, as well as sidewalks, roads, lighting, etc. The PBD concept has been successful in other places, and other municipalities in Massachusetts are considering it and Salem needs to as well. Our economy has transitioned into a tourist economy centered around our downtown. Parking revenue brings in over \$3 million annually, but then we have to negotiate for the portion of that our department gets every year, and maintenance requests end up needing special orders to use free cash. By directing an increment of the parking revenue toward a PBD, we can begin to get at these systemic issues of deferred and underfunded maintenance, as well as needed improvements. With over 1 million visitors per year, we should take advantage of the City's desirability, but also look to protect residents through reinvesting that revenue and potentially setting residential vs. visitor rates. We should take advantage of the number of visitors we get and use that to make improvements that support the economy and make quality of life improvements for residents. Small price increases won't discourage visitors. A PBD in Salem could lead to substantial improvements in terms of accessibility and maintenance.

Commissioner Metsch voiced his support for the PBD concept and the issues Director Smith mentioned. In terms of South Harbor, Commissioner Metsch noted that he wants to make sure the pricing changes don't push too much demand on-street. Director Smith responded the goal would be to have the garages at a lower or same rate and keep the concepts of the parking study intact.

Vice-Chair Papetti suggested that any recommendation for pricing changes at South Harbor should include total maintenance costs for South Harbor as well. Further, Vice-Chair Papetti noted the idea of a PBD has some merit but he also has some concerns. He stated that he does not feel a PBD would create any new revenue as the City Council could offset any increases by directing funds elsewhere and that using this source for capital muddies the waters in terms of capital planning.

Chair Stepasiuk stated that she understands the philosophy behind the concept but thinks funneling tourism dollars into projects to benefit tourists doesn't make sense. Commissioner Seidel commented that those areas see more wear and tear, but are also used extensively by residents, so it isn't just for tourists. She continued that she would support certain percentages of incremental revenue being directed to certain projects/types of investments. Director Smith responded saying that is it important to remember that right now all parking revenue goes to the general fund and funds things across the City and the Department sees some of that come back for projects or maintenance, but not enough. We would never want to decrease the amount of general fund revenue that parking generates, just direct any incremental increases to a fund.

Vice-Chair Papetti commented that if the Council doesn't want to fund this, they won't fund it. Chair Stepasiuk added that she does not think we can get the Council to agree to this. Director Smith responded that he thinks that is too pessimistic a

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view to take, and if we put forth a positive vision of how this could work, it can succeed. We need to think holistically. The parking study recommended the creation of a transportation fund, and the best revenue to direct to that fund is parking revenue. Investments that improve our tourist economy will also be quality of life improvements for residents.

Commissioner Metsch commented that he agrees 100% with Director Smith and Assistant Director Downing about this idea and the need for investment in our economy. The PBD can be sued to invest in the creation of a safer, attractive, comfortable, well-lit downtown that will create economic benefits. Director Smith agreed, and admitted that while the political aspect is difficult, we need to make sure we invest enough in our main economic driver and we need to find creative ways to generate the revenue we need.

The Commission agreed to discuss downtown pricing recommendations at the next meeting, as well as creating a schedule for public meetings on these ideas.

- Riley Plaza October Carnival Use

Director Smith led a discussion on this issue. With the development of the park at 289 Derby, the carnival needs a new location for 2 weeks in October. Riley Plaza has been identified by the operator as a potentially suitable location. There is an ordinance that bans carnivals and related uses in Riley Plaza, so this would require a temporary order if it were selected as the best location.

Lt. Preczewski commented that he was asked by Chief Butler to draft a report on this, and from his perspective it doesn't work. It isn't safe to have this use next to such a large, major road; it would require shutting down many major streets through the City; and it is outside of the long-used 5 zone plan the Police sue to divide up the City for October. Locations that could potentially host the carnival within the existing zones would be the Common, Church Street lots, or Front Street.

Chair Stepasiuk asked who ultimately decides. Director Smith responded no matter the final location, it will require a council order.

The Commission agreed with Lt. Preczewski's comments, and asked staff to share that information with the appropriate City departments that are looking into this issue.

## **MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL**

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Metsch and seconded by Vice-Chair Papetti the Commission voted to approve the minutes from the April 5 meeting, with Lt. Preczewski and Commissioner Seidel abstaining.

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On a motion duly made by Vice-Chair Papetti and seconded by Commissioner Seidel the Commission voted to approve the minutes from the April 19 meeting, with Commissioner Metsch abstaining.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Metsch and seconded by Commissioner Seidel, the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 8:52pm.