

City of Salem
Joint Meeting of the Traffic and Parking Commission and OLLA
Meeting Minutes
Thursday, February 15, 2024

A joint meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission and the Salem City Council Committee on Ordinances, Licenses, and Legal Affairs, was held in-person on Thursday, February 15, 2024, at 6:00pm at City Council Chambers with remote attendance available via Zoom in accordance with Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023.

Present: Traffic and Parking: Chair Jaime Garmendia, Commissioner Jeff Swartz, Commissioner Lt. David Tucker, Commissioner Erin Turowski, and Director of Traffic & Parking David Kucharsky. **Absent:** None.

CALL OF MEETING

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm by Chair Garmendia and City Councillor Morsillo.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Chair Garmendia opens the floor to public comment.

NEW/OLD BUSINESS

Right Turn on Red

The joint meeting of the Traffic and Parking Commission and OLLA is to continue discussion of right-on-red ordinances and State laws for all traffic signals in the City of Salem.

Councillor Morsillo explains that tonight's discussion will focus on Vinnin Square and Highland Avenue. She states they will review individual traffic signals according to the maps presented and information, such as crash data, will be discussed. Councillor Morsillo suggests that if attendees wish to discuss individual signals, they should raise their hands during that particular discussion.

Mr. Kucharsky states there are a total of 18 traffic signals to be reviewed, with 12 of them being under MassDOT jurisdiction and six under City jurisdiction. He first presents a map of Vinnin Square where there are a total of four signalized intersections. Mr. Kucharsky discusses the signal at Vinnin Street and Salem Street where there is one approach with a right turn on red that is currently permitted (not in ordinance and not signed), and no crashes were reported. There are no comments on this signal from attendees.

Next Mr. Kucharsky discusses the signal at the intersection of Route 1A and Vinnin Street, where there has been a total of five crashes. There are three approaches, (east, west, and south bound), and right turns on red are currently permitted. Commissioner Lt. Tucker provides additional details regarding the five crashes, with one of them being related to right on red. Councillor Morsillo asks if there are any suggestions to make the intersection safer. Commissioner Lt. Tucker states that this is an intersection that the City of Swampscott, the government, and police have taken note of, and that the geometry of the intersection would need to be examined prior to any recommendations. Mr. Kucharsky notes that only Salem Street and Vinnin Street are under City jurisdiction. Councillor Harvey asks if his understanding is correct that only one of the crashes was allegedly related to right on red and based on hearsay, and Lt. Tucker confirms. Councillor Harvey suggests only discussing the crashes that directly relate to right turns on red as they are germane to the discussion. Councillor Cohen states that when driving into Swampscott, it appears the left and right lane can both go straight, and that can be an issue because some people speed up. He recommends the left lane being left turn only since there is a lack of significant striping.

Mr. Kucharsky next discusses the intersection at Loring Avenue and Vinnin Street which has one approach with a permitted right turn on red and no crashes. Where Loring Avenue and 1A intersect, there are two approaches where right turns on red are permitted, and there is one crash reported. Lt. Tucker states it was a single vehicle crash that struck a traffic pole (drunk driving incident). Mr. Kucharsky next discusses the intersections at Pickman Road and Harrison Road, with two approaches where right turns on red are permitted. There was one crash in the last 12 months. Lt. Tucker states the crash was a vehicle that was rear ended while stopping for a school bus.

Next Mr. Kucharsky discusses the intersections at Jefferson Avenue and Canal Street with Loring Avenue, which are both under state jurisdiction. These are instances where it is signed but not in the ordinance. There was one crash, and Lt. Tucker explains it was not related to right turn on red. Councillor Morsillo states the way the intersections are signed seem to be working safely, and therefore the ordinance should be updated to reflect the signage. Councillors discuss other safety concerns about the intersection generally.

The next signal discussed is at Salem State University at the intersection of Lafayette Street, Loring Avenue, and West Avenue, which is under City jurisdiction. Mr. Kucharsky explains the intersection was recently redone as part of the Complete Streets project. Three of the approaches are in the ordinance but not signed. One is signed but not in the ordinance. The intersection has zero crashes. Mr. Kucharsky suggests looking into the original justifications for changes in the intersection and the signal plans for potential adjustments. Councillors Cohen and Prosniewski discuss the intersection and additional safety concerns.

Mr. Kucharsky presents the next map of South Salem and Highland Avenue, and discusses three intersections with zero crashes, all under MassDOT jurisdiction, with right runs permitted. He next discusses the intersection of Highland Avenue and Swampscott Road, which is under state jurisdiction, has had one crash, and two instances of no turn on red being signed, but not in the ordinance. Commissioner Lt. Tucker explains the crash was a

sideswipe after the turn. Councillor Morsillo suggests updating the ordinance to match signage. Mr. Kucharsky next discusses Traders Way and First Street, which is under City jurisdiction, with right turn on red allowed at all approaches, and one reported crash. Lt. Tucker indicates the crash data actually shows two incidents, but neither seem to have been related to right on red. Mr. Kucharsky also discusses the intersection at Highland Avenue, Traders Way, and Marlborough Road, which is under state jurisdiction. Right turn on red is permitted at all three approaches, and there have been five reported crashes in the last 12 months. Commissioner Lt. Tucker discusses the crash details, noting that one may have been related to a right turn on red. Councillor Morsillo suggests looking at the signal timing as she has heard many instances of people turning left on red at Traders Way because of the green time being so short. Mr. Kucharsky states that MassDOT is looking at the entire corridor as part of the Route 107 Project. Councillor Harvey notes the signal timing there has been adjusted, and it has been difficult to find the appropriate balance. He suggests the issue may be enforcement for some of these intersections. Councillor Jerzylo asks if there are statistics about traffic volume and provides her own experiences with the intersection. Councillor Prosniewski notes that the ripple effects from changes here include people cutting through Witchcraft Heights and also increased travel times to get from Salem to Peabody. Mr. Kucharsky states there have been full traffic counts for the entire corridor this year, and the information is being used by MassDOT to evaluate each intersection. There is a brief discussion of video enforcement and privacy concerns. Mr. Kucharsky discusses the intersection at Marlborough Road and Osborne Hill Drive, noting zero crashes, with right turn on red permitted at all approaches. He also discusses Hawthorne Square and Highland Avenue, with zero crashes, three approaches all permitting right on red and under state jurisdiction.

The last intersection Mr. Kucharsky discusses is at Willson Street and Highland Avenue, under state jurisdiction, where there are two approaches that are signed but not in the ordinance, with a right turn onto Willson Street allowed on red. There were two crashes reported at this intersection. Commissioner Lt. Tucker provides crash data, noting only one may have been related to right turn on red. Councillor Morsillo notes a constituent submitted a letter regarding this incident, and she reads it aloud. The letter expresses concerns for pedestrians relating to the right turn on red onto Willson Street. Lt. Tucker discusses the intersection and Mr. Kucharsky recommends keeping the no turn on red from Willson Street onto Highland Avenue. Councillor Jerzylo suggests placing the sign across the street on Cherry Hill for better visibility. Councillor Hapworth also suggests better infrastructure and sidewalk improvements in the area, particularly for children walking to school. Councillor Harvey speaks in favor of a no turn on right from Highland Avenue onto Willson Street and echoes Mr. Kucharsky's observation that it would likely not impact traffic.

Councillor Morsillo opens the floor to public comment, but there is none.

OTHER BUSINESS THAT MAY LEGALLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

None.

UPCOMING MEETINGS SCHEDULE

The next joint meeting is scheduled for February 29, 2024, at 6:00PM to discuss the Northwest section of Salem.

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL

None.

ADJOURNMENT

On a motion duly made by Commissioner Swartz and seconded by Commissioner Tucker the joint meeting of the Traffic and Parking Commission and OLLA was adjourned at 7:05 PM.