

**City of Salem
Traffic and Parking Commission
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, February 9, 2022**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held remotely on Wednesday, February 9, 2022 at 6:00pm, in accordance with Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021.

Present: Commission Chair Tonya Shallop, Commission Vice Chair Eric Papetti, Commissioner Jeff Swartz, Director of Traffic and Parking David Kucharsky, Assistant Director of Traffic and Parking Brendan Linard, and Traffic and Parking Staff Russell Findley **Absent:** Commission Lt. David Tucker

CALL OF MEETING

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

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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

NEW/OLD BUSINESS

Washington Street Sidewalk Extension Project

Landscape Architecture firm, Crowley Cottrell, will review and discuss options to extend the sidewalk along the east side of Washington Street from Front Street to Follet Way. Mr. Kucharsky explains that landscape architecture firm Crowley Cottrell has been working with the City to look at expanding sidewalk areas along the east side of Washington Street from Front Street to Follet Way. Mr. Kucharsky states that Naomi Cottrell is here to present a few options and get feedback.

Naomi Cottrell introduces herself and presents existing conditions in the area, noting the outdoor dining tents erected in front of Ledger Restaurant over the last couple summers and autumns. Ms. Cottrell also notes the existence of angled parking along this side of Washington Street, and explains her firm was tasked with revitalizing this section and creating a more permanent solution for more outdoor dining. The tent, when up, takes up six spaces. Ms. Cottrell indicates they first considered keeping the 45-degree angled spaces and building up the sidewalk in front of Ledger, with a few spaces lost. This option would only benefit Ledger, but not other businesses. Parking angled at 60 degrees was also considered as an option to lose fewer spaces. Ultimately, after discussions with City staff, the preferred plan removes angled parking altogether, and creates a parallel parking lane to mirror the opposite side of Washington Street. This plan only results in the loss of one parking space and provides extra sidewalk space for the businesses in the area, which could be used for outdoor dining if desired. Ms. Cottrell also notes there are suggestions of

a temporary loading zone, which could be signed for use as drop off and pickup during certain hours. Next, Ms. Cottrell presents options for paving and space zoning that incorporate the Complete Streets mentality. The first option extends the curb, with the remainder of sidewalk being concrete, and leaves in the band of existing plantings, and fills in plants where they are currently missing. The second option uses more brick, allowing the planted strip to be moved if needed, providing flexibility for future improvements. The third option moves the band of trees to a ten foot strip between the curb to allow for a future bike lane and zones for pedestrian traffic. This option would allow for outdoor dining from the tree line in toward the buildings. Ms. Cottrell indicates she is seeking comments on these options from the Commission, and approval to go ahead with a parallel parking scheme and survey the area.

Mr. Kucharsky explains that the discussion of a loading zone is another item on the agenda, and that there will be further discussions in the future with other committees regarding the potential for bike lanes.

Chair Shallop states she is generally in favor and likes the idea of more permanent outdoor dining, but states that from a Complete Streets perspective, she would like to make sure bikes and pedestrians are focused on, not just cars. Chair Shallop indicates she is glad that the plans evolved beyond just extending space in front of Ledger from an equity standpoint, and that she likes the idea of more curb space for circulation. She raises concerns about loading elements, and notes that this is a very active strip and asks consultants to be very thoughtful about the changes and improvements. Chair Shallop indicates she has no objection to the parallel parking scheme.

Ms. Cottrell explains her firm was initially tasked with just solving the immediate problem of the tent in front of Ledger, but that they pushed for something more equitable, and arrived at the preferred scheme. Ms. Cottrell explains existing conditions with respect to accessibility, noting a small curb cut, poorly done asphalt ramp, and one accessible spot. She notes another curb cut down by Oak and Moss. She also explains space limitations, and shows how the planted strip, sidewalk extension, and bike/pedestrian lane would be laid out.

Vice Chair Papetti thanks Ms. Cottrell for her presentation and states he would like to encourage everyone to think about redesigning this street with the entire cross section in mind, thinking about aspect ratios, existing trees, as well as other elements, and to not be afraid to think about how radically different it could be in the future. Mr. Papetti suggests eliminating the center median entirely could also be considered to have larger buffers on the edges, and acknowledges while that may not be the right solution, he encourages imagining how different the area could look as a whole. He suggests that we are beyond the point of considering designs that don't preclude bike infrastructure, and that if the plan is to move the curb we should get it right. Vice Chair Papetti notes there are other places in the city where the curb was moved and no one advocated for it to be done correctly, and now will need to be rebuilt at the City's expense to accommodate bicycles. He opines that if done correctly, we would already have protected bike lanes in Salem.

Commissioner Swartz thanks Ms. Cottrell for her presentation and asks Mr. Kucharsky what kind of outreach was done with the businesses on this stretch and around the corner. Mr. Kucharsky explains the project has been working closely with the Mayor's office and other departments, and that all abutters were invited to this meeting. Some are in attendance, but overall, there have not been any complaints about the loss of parking according to Mr. Kucharsky. Mr. Swartz encourages getting the businesses involved in the planning process.

Ms. Cottrell again explains that the project began with a different charge, namely looking at how to build out temporary dining facilities for any restaurant that wanted to be part of the program. During the evaluation, it became clear it would be more expensive to create these temporary solutions than redoing the sidewalk. Because of the large tent in front of Ledger that area was examined first, and then the plans extended to the larger stretch. Ms. Cottrell indicates the angled parking was deemed inefficient as it takes up more space, and that they are in the process of understanding the needs of the businesses and restaurants on the corridor. She indicates the next step would be conducting a topographic survey. Ms. Cottrell also states that she is on the City Tree Commission, and so she is keenly aware of the trees in the area, and discusses the various existing trees, and potential options if the plantings are to change going forward.

Vice Chair Papetti thanks Ms. Cottrell for her explanation regarding trees. Regarding outdoor dining, Mr. Papetti also notes that Washington Street has few places where you can just sit without having to buy something first, and he encourages everyone to think of this as a public space first. He states he loves the restaurants in the area but suggests thinking about flexible areas that serve what exists now and the future, including the potential for areas to sit and people watch. Ms. Cottrell agrees and indicates she will look at options.

Commissioner Swartz asks about zigzagging lines on the map being shown, and Ms. Cottrell explains they are topographic lines, showing one-foot changes in grade elevation. She indicates the slope is not currently accessible as there is a six percent grade change along the street, and there is not a way to solve it at present.

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

Chair Shallop asks what the next steps would be. Mr. Kucharsky states a topographic survey will occur, overseen by engineering, and that he intends to bring back to engineering and consultants the comments from tonight, particularly with the goal of incorporating bike lanes into the design and considerations of planned work on Essex Street. After that, Mr. Kucharsky indicates there will be more outreach and discussions, and that no timeline has been set.

Salem Loading/Service Zones and Essex Pedestrian Mall Deliveries

Mr. Kucharsky explains that a business survey was conducted in the area and data was collected, with the goals of creating, relocating, or removing service zones for better efficiency and to better serve the businesses. This topic was raised last year in June, and

this update presents analyses of ordinances and the survey results. Mr. Kucharsky notes additional goals include identifying parking dimensions for certain vehicle types, determining hours of operation and enforcement, and developing standard signage that is reconciled against existing ordinances. Mr. Kucharsky explains that current ordinance dates back to the 1950's and allows for the creation of service zones in the city, but the ordinance and signage do not always match. Additional concerns this project hopes to address are those related to safety and accessibility, as trucks often double park and create obstructions.

Mr. Kucharsky discusses feedback from parking enforcement, and notes discrepancies between signage and existing ordinances. Based on the business survey, which included 16 questions and had 36 respondents, staff were able to determine frequency and time of deliveries, size of vehicles used, etc. Mr. Kucharsky indicates the most common deliveries seem to be between the hours of 9AM and 4PM. Most staff and customers park in metered spots in the area, with some businesses having on-site parking. When asked if adding commercial parking separate from loading zones would be valuable, 76 percent of respondents said "yes". Mr. Kucharsky discusses vehicle dimensions, and shows images and lengths of trucks, most ranging between 45 and 55 feet long. Most are semi/large commercial and FedEx or UPS trucks, with a decent number of vans as well. Mr. Kucharsky presents a map showing clusters where deliveries currently happen. For recommendations, Mr. Kucharsky suggests creating two different types of zones: a 24-hour, 7-day a week zone; and a temporal zone from 8AM to 4PM, which would be open to parking outside those hours. Other recommendations include increasing and augmenting the number of zones in the downtown area and spacing them out to improve coverage. Mr. Kucharsky also discusses ordinance cleanup efforts, including removing zones not currently signed or needed, and formalizing zones that are signed and used but not in the ordinance. Service zones outside of the downtown area would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Mr. Kucharsky states the Essex Street pedestrian mall would restrict vehicles of a certain size, and formalized loading zones would be introduced at the entrances to divert demand away from the mall.

Mr. Kucharsky discusses conditions and recommendations for the following locations:

- Essex Street at Washington Street, Lappin Park North
Currently no service zone, but Essex Street will be reconstructed, and there are discussions of implementing a loading zone along this southern stretch of Essex for deliveries. This would likely be a temporal service zone that opens to public parking after.
- Essex Street at Washington Street, Lappin Park East
Currently a 20-foot-long service zone exists, but there is an opportunity to extend it to 40 feet. The recommendation would be to change this service zone from 24 hours to temporal.
- Washington Street at Essex Street, Follet Way
Currently angled metered parking exists here, and as part of the sidewalk extension there is a recommendation for a loading zone
- Washington Street at Essex Street North

- Currently angled metered parking exists here, and as part of the sidewalk extension there is a recommendation for a loading zone. If the sidewalk extension and service zone are not possible, it is recommended that three spaces be converted to a temporal zone.
- New Liberty Street
Currently no parking but has been used as curbside pickup for the PEM. This area could become a 24-hour service zone for vans, trucks, and semis.
 - Essex Street Pedestrian Mall
Here the recommendation is to establish and expand formalized loading zone at entrances to divert traffic from traveling down.
 - Essex Street at North Street
Currently there is a ten-foot zone on the northern side, and the recommendation is to introduce a 20-foot temporal zone.
 - Federal Street
Currently there exists a 20-foot service zone, but staff are looking to extend it forward through the “no parking this side” zone as far as the crosswalk, leaving an appropriate buffer.
 - Church Street
Currently a no parking zone with a fire hydrant, there are frequently trucks parking on the sidewalk. The sidewalks here are wide, and the recommendation is to remove a portion for a loading zone, which still allows space for pedestrians. Currently the sidewalks are cracking due to trucks parking on top. This would be a 70-foot, 24-hour loading zone.
 - New Derby Street at Artists Row
Currently metered parking, but staff recommends creating a 20-foot, 24-hour zone for artists/tenants. This would be signed for Artist Row use only.
 - Derby Street at Daniels Street
There is no parking on northerly side, but engineering is looking into bumping out the sidewalk for outdoor dining. There is a possibility to create a 25-foot service zone east of Palfrey Court, and a 20-foot service zone in front of 140 Derby Street.
 - Congress Street Bridge
Currently a 35-foot zone exists to service the marina, and the recommendation is to extend it to the south to make it 55 feet.
 - Lafayette Street at Ward Street
Currently a 20-foot zone exists, but staff are still examining this location so recommendations are still to be determined.
 - Central Street
Currently a 60-foot zone exists, and more information from local businesses is incoming to help with final recommendations.
 - Harbor Street
Currently a 70-foot service zone/combination 15-minute parking zone exists in front of Marc’s Market. Staff intend to discuss needs with the business.
 - High St
A 30-foot zone exists here but is not signed, although it is being used appropriately.

- Norman St
Metered parking exists here currently, but Verizon asked for a potential 24-hour loading zone of 80 feet.

For next steps, Mr. Kucharsky states the goal is getting feedback from the Commission, businesses, and public, and eventually confirm final design plans. Once that is complete, ordinance changes can be submitted for the Commission to vote on.

Chair Shallop thanks Mr. Kucharsky for the presentation.

Vice Chair Papetti also thanks Mr. Kucharsky and notes the importance of enforcement. Mr. Papetti recounts instances of multiple delivery vans parked in crosswalks and bike lanes, next to open spots, etc., and that there must be a larger discussion about the resources needed for proper enforcement. Commissioner Swartz agrees with Mr. Papetti and offers that it is great businesses are being consulted in the decision making.

Chair Shallop echoes the comments of other commissioners and suggests providing maps of service zones with tickets as part of enforcement to help with education.

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

Request for Traffic Ordinance Recommendation

North Street Parking Regulations

Mr. Kucharsky explains there are proposed amendments to City Traffic Ordinance pertaining to the North Street Safety Enhancement Project. He indicates that the latest plans were discussed at the joint commission meeting with the Bike Advisory Committee, and this work will be in tandem. Mr. Kucharsky states he sent around an amended version of the ordinance and presents aerial views/plans to demonstrate what exists in the ordinance that will be repealed, what will be repealed and replaced, and a view of what the area will look like at the end from a regulatory perspective. The ordinances requiring changes because of the project are identified. Mr. Kucharsky discusses additional ordinance changes, and the moving of a handicap accessible space, as the residents at 180 North Street indicated they do not use that space and moving it will allow for protected bike lanes for the whole stretch.

Mr. Papetti asks about issues regarding moving violations and cars parked in bike lanes and recalls an instance where a ticket could not be issued unless caught in the act. Mr. Kucharsky states he will investigate the issue further.

Mr. Kucharsky discusses other ordinance changes to accommodate parking changes with the proposed corridor updates, repealing 4-hour parking zones, and creating areas of no parking.

Vice Chair Papetti notes a topic from the joint bike committee meeting, regarding taking a left from Mason Street onto North Street. Mr. Papetti contends it is impossible at any hour of the day to make that left-hand turn, and that the way it is programmed now and the discussions of temporal allowance of the left turn do not seem to be workable. Mr. Papetti suggests the signal timing would need to be changed to accommodate any kind of left turn there.

Mr. Kucharsky presents a map identifying how the corridor would look with all changes implemented and identifies the time-limited parking spaces and two relocated accessible spaces. He also points out service zones and tow zones on the map.

Vice Chair Papetti expresses concern regarding the loading zones, noting that with big truck deliveries they will certainly end up parking in the bike lane. He suggests refining the plans as much as possible, and perhaps creating time limited spaces to assist with loading. Vice Chair Papetti also suggests there may be an opportunity to help the local business at the corner of Mason and North Street, perhaps with a 30-minute parking space along the western side of the street.

Chair Shallop thanks Mr. Kucharsky and suggests the recommendations thus far seem reasonable.

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

Traffic and Parking Commission Regulations

Mr. Kucharsky explains that he, Chair Shallop, and Vice Chair Papetti met to review the language submitted by Councilor Hapworth in April 2020, which was discussed at the commission level, submitted to Council, and never taken up for discussion. He indicates they met to review and tweak what was submitted, and to add language from the City of Somerville regulations and existing ordinances. Mr. Kucharsky states staff reached out to the Mayor, chief of police, Lt. Tucker, and the City Solicitor to assist with further language revisions.

Chair Shallop states she hopes the TPC liaison on City Council, Caroline Watson-Felt, will bring the ordinance recommendations to the full City Council. The general idea is to move out of the ordinances that the council receives, and into the rules and regulations, which the ordinance that created the Commission enables.

Mr. Kucharsky presents the language changes to Division 12 of the ordinance which established the Commission. The changes remove language about “recommendations” to the Council and Mayor and replaces it with “develop regulations relative to traffic and parking”, and indicates that the Commission may adopt regulations. The changes would be in affect after a week, unless Councilors request a hearing held to deny the change, which would require a simple majority of six City Councilors.

Chair Shallop suggests focusing on the big question of whether the section to allow Council veto power is necessary. She states it might make sense to go in without the language and allow Council to add it in if they feel strongly about having that power. Regarding the language inspired by Somerville about moving over regulations individually, she states she does not want it to add confusion to who has what role and what is currently under the Commission versus what is under Council.

Commissioner Swartz suggests the approach seems balanced given the sentiments of Council, and that if they would be willing to accept the language without the veto power that would be fine, but if they also want it, he opines that a week is an appropriate period to act.

Chair Shallop and Vice Chair Papetti discuss concerns about complications if every regulation gets pulled from City Council individually rather than as a whole. Commissioners and Mr. Kucharsky discuss excluding the language regarding the piecemeal approach.

Commissioner Swartz asks if the veto language was introduced by Councilor Hapworth originally, and Chair Shallop indicates it was. She explains it originally had a 48-hour window, but that the language regarding the piecemeal approach is new, as the original just contemplated changing all ordinances to regulations under the Commission, rather than having Council vote on moving over each as issues came up. Chair Shallop suggests a lot of decisions would rest with City Council until the Commission could work on them and bring them over and wonders whether it would just be better having them all under the Commission and be a bit messy for some time.

Mr. Kucharsky clarifies that as written, ordinances will still go up before the Council until the Commission adopts them as regulations. The Commission would still need to provide recommendations that would go through two passages in Council for anything not yet under the Commission's oversight.

Chair Shallop suggests removing the Somerville language to streamline the process more. Mr. Kucharsky presents the original language submitted by Councilor Hapworth to show how the new language compares.

Vice Chair Papetti agrees with Chair Shallop and suggests converting everything to regulations immediately rather than keeping two sets of books. He acknowledges that in some ways it may be nicer to clean things up before they become regulations, but that in this case he would prefer to move them all over. Commissioner Swartz agrees.

Mr. Kucharsky presents a cleaned-up version of the ordinance language.

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

Motion and Vote: Commissioner Swartz motions to recommend the proposed ordinance language in essence, to be further worked by the working group and Councilor Watson-Felt

and submitted to City Council. Commissioner Papetti seconds the motion. **The vote is three (3) in favor and none (0) opposed. The motion passes.**

2022 Commission Goals

Chair Shallop suggests a brief discussion as it is getting late, and more at a future meeting. She indicates one of her main goals is the ordinance language changes, and that she is excited to move forward with that.

Commissioner Swartz suggests a goal should be to review regulations and ordinances to see what needs updating.

Vice Chair Papetti states that if the ordinance proposal passes through Council, there will be a lot of work ahead for the Commission and that it might make sense to spend some time focusing on digging into the refinement of regulations. Mr. Papetti suggests looking at the yearly calendar to figure out what topics need to be looked at various times of year.

Chair Shallop asks Mr. Kucharsky when items need to be in for capital planning and he responds that it was sent out at the end of last week.

OTHER BUSINESS THAT MAY LEGALLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION

None.

UPCOMING MEETINGS SCHEDULE

The next meeting is scheduled for March 9, 2022 at 6:00PM. Mr. Kucharsky suggests also meeting on the 23rd if the agenda is full.

MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL

January 12, 2022

Motion and Vote: Commissioner Swartz motions to approve the January 12, 2022 meeting minutes of the Traffic and Parking Commission as drafted. Vice Chair Papetti seconds the motion. The vote is all in favor. **The motion passes.**

January 26, 2022

Motion and Vote: Commissioner Swartz motions to approve the January 26, 2022 meeting minutes of the Traffic and Parking Commission as drafted. 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 Vice Chair Papetti the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 8:10 PM.