

**City of Salem**  
**Traffic and Parking Commission**  
**Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, January 18, 2023**

A meeting of the Salem Traffic and Parking Commission was held remotely on Wednesday, January 18, 2023, at 6:00pm, in accordance with Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, and as amended by Chapter 22 of the Acts of 2022, and a Special Act extending remote participation meetings until March 31, 2023.

**Present: Traffic and Parking:** Commission Chair Tanya Shallop, Commissioner Jeff Swartz, Commissioner Jaime Garmendia, Commission Lt. David Tucker, Director of Traffic and Parking David Kucharsky, and Traffic and Parking staff member Russell Findley.

**Absent:** Commission Vice Chair Eric Papetti

**CALL OF MEETING**

The meeting was called to order at 6:00pm by Chair Shallop. Ms. Shallop explains how members of the public may participate during the remote meeting.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Commission Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Jeff McNally of 48 Gallows Hill Road introduces himself and states he has comments on the Valley Street speed bumps. Mr. McNally asks how many speeding tickets and accidents have been reported in the last two years. He also notes that when drivers attempt to avoid them, they usually go towards the right of the bump toward the sidewalk which results in some close calls. He suggests the speed bumps not be reinstalled.

**NEW/OLD BUSINESS**

**Director's Update**

Mr. Kucharsky explains garage work was completed last week at the Museum Place Garage that was intended to be done this past summer but was delayed due to contractor issues. Access to the third and fourth levels is open again, and while there is still some remaining work to be completed, the upper levels are open to the public again. Phase three will focus on the second and third levels and look at the outside of the facilities as well, including the vertical wooden beams. Mr. Kucharsky next discusses work on the Fort Avenue project, stating there will be plans presented over next couple of months. Mr. Kucharsky also notes the City was awarded a Community Connections Grant to purchase three additional blue bike stations, and staff are working with Lyft to coordinate the locations. This will bring us to a total of 18 stations throughout Salem come spring. The overall bike rack inventory is also being updated according to Mr. Kucharsky, with the goal of identifying gaps in order to purchase additional racks. Mr. Kucharsky states they are also working on a Community

Development Block Group Grant for Salem Street, adjacent to the Saltonstall School, with the goal of crosswalk and sidewalk enhancements. Lastly, Mr. Kucharsky notes Governor Baker signed a law before leaving office regarding protection for vulnerable road users, and staff will present on that at one of the next meetings.

### **Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program 2022 Evaluation**

Mr. Kucharsky explains that Jessica Mortell is present from Neighborways to discuss the before and after data collected on the 2022 Neighborhood Traffic Calming for the remaining locations, namely Proctor Street (from Mansell Parkway to Highland Avenue) and Valley Street.

Jessica Mortell introduces herself and provides an overview of the Traffic Calming Program, similar to the prior meeting. The program goals are to slow and calm traffic, test ideas, collect and evaluate data and feedback, and ultimately pilot solutions that can become permanent. She discusses safety statistics, noting the increasing danger associated with higher speeds. Ms. Mortell also discusses the program history, starting with the 2011 adoption of the Complete Streets Policy and the 2018 launch of the Traffic Calming Program, with Shared Streets pilots beginning in 2020.

Ms. Mortell next presents a map showing the relevant area of Proctor Street, along with photos showing conditions prior to striping, as well as after striping and intervention installation. Ms. Mortell indicates some of the feedback and comments received related people speeding and driving over flex posts, and drivers swerving around cushions onto the sidewalk. The public feedback survey is open until February 15, 2023. Ms. Mortell presents the average daily traffic data, noting that volumes decreased slightly with speed cushions and striping, with additional decreases seen after January 2023 with striping only. With respect to speed, Ms. Mortell demonstrates that the speed cushions and striping saw large decreases in the percentage of cars going over 20MPH and 25MPH, with only striping being minimal to no decreases. The average speeds with cushions and striping in the area decreased to 20MPH, down from 29MPH with no calming measures. There was also a 93 percent decrease in drivers going over 40MPH in the area, and sidewalk parking was eliminated or reduced.

Ms. Mortell next presents a map showing Valley Street from Highland Avenue to Gallows Hill Road, along with photos showing conditions before and after interventions. Some of the comments received regarding Valley Street include concerns about wear and tear on vehicles, drivers swerving around speed cushions, continued speeding, as well as requests for more enforcement and removal of the speed cushions. Ms. Mortell notes there were also requests for a speed cushion at the corner of Parlee Street and Valley Street and some reports of people parking on the sidewalks. With respect to speed analysis, Ms. Mortell indicates there were minor decreases associated with the initial striping and posts installed in June 2021, and more significant decreases associated with the cushions and striping installed in May 2022. Recently, with striping only, speeds have increased once again. With cushions and striping, average speeds were 23MPH. Regarding average daily traffic,

volumes decreased a bit. Ms. Mortell encourages public feedback and notes the survey is still live and open until February 15th at [www.publicinput.com/salemtrafficalming#1](http://www.publicinput.com/salemtrafficalming#1).

Mr. Garmendia states the numbers seem to be significant with huge decreases in speeds, and that this shows how successful these tools can be. He acknowledges comments about people trying to circumvent the measures and engaging in even more unsafe behavior and suggests looking at ways to mitigate such behavior.

Commissioner Swartz echoes Mr. Garmendia's sentiments, and thanks staff for the presentation. He also suggests further data comparing the impact of poles and flex posts versus speed cushions.

Commission Lt. Tucker states the treatments do bring the average speeds down significantly, and thanks staff for the presentation. Chair Shallop agrees. The commissioners generally discuss the data and success of the program.

Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

David Gauthier of 56 Valley Street introduces himself and applauds the work and responsiveness of the Commission. Mr. Gauthier also acknowledges that some of the interventions have not been popular with people who live outside the neighborhoods and suggests most of that has to do with convenience. He further suggests that the comments and concerns regarding wear and tear on vehicles are farfetched, and that some of the other concerns may be exaggerated as well. Mr. Gauthier asks that the speed humps come back, noting the goal of improved safety is achieved. He also asks that the Commission not be swayed by those opposed simply for convenience reasons and not wanting to slow down.

Peter Morgan of 25 Valley Street introduces himself and states the speeding goes right back to normal once the interventions are removed. Mr. Morgan also notes he has seen cars with wheels not touching the ground because they went over the speed humps at high speeds. He has also seen cars drive up on sidewalks to avoid the measures and has seen motorcycles ride down the middle stripe to avoid them. Mr. Morgan suggests having more enforcement, noting there are cars going above 50MPH at times. He suggests having permanent speed bumps that go the whole width of the street.

Stephano Cornelio of 63 Valley Street introduces himself and echoes the comments of Mr. Gauthier. Mr. Cornelio states the people who are opposed to the measures are not those that live in the neighborhood, but rather those who feel inconvenienced by needing to slow down on streets they use as cut-throughs. Mr. Cornelio also agrees that as soon as the interventions were removed, speeds shot back up again with drivers going upwards of 50MPH. He suggests having more enforcement, particularly during the transition periods and when the measures are removed, as the program is only helping for part of the year.

Jeff McNally of 48 Gallows Hill Road introduces himself and states there does not seem to be a lot of public feedback and suggests spreading the word more. Mr. McNally suggests

speeding interventions on other roads such as Highland Avenue and Gallows Hill Road, noting that at the end of his street there is a stop sign that is routinely ignored. He also agrees with other commenters suggesting a need for more enforcement. Mr. McNally also contends the speed data may not be reliable or accurate if it is only taken in one location rather than several. He also asks about where the data can be accessed by the public.

Mr. Kucharsky states all the data is available on the City's webpage under the Traffic and Parking Department, in the traffic calming section. He notes that Valley Street was one of the first streets examined and that it was prior to the prioritization spreadsheet (discussed next) being completed. The plans for Valley Street were shared with the Commission in March 2021 and showed both flex posts and speed cushions as potential options. At the time flex posts were recommended and installed and evaluated over the Spring/Summer/Fall of 2021. In September 2021 a meeting with the Ward Councilor, Mayor and residents took place at the intersection of Valley and Parlee. Based on collected speed data and public comments received staff move forward with installing the cushions in the Spring of 2022. . The goal is to get overall speeds between 20 and 25MPH.

Commissioner Garmendia responds to the comment regarding Highland Avenue, noting that it is a state-owned road, and therefore there is a limit to what the City can do there. He adds, however, that the state is looking at Highland Avenue and recently conducted a walk audit of the area.

Ward 4 Councilor Lev McClain of 21 Albion Street introduces himself and states he travels on Valley Street regularly. Councilor McClain also indicates he has received lots of feedback after the measures were installed. Most of the comments from residents of Valley Street were positive and the reductions in speed were noticeable. Comparatively, comments from those in the surrounding neighborhoods were negative for many of the reasons already mentioned, according to Councilor McClain, namely due to matters of convenience. He also notes that other residents in the ward who live more than a neighborhood away have made requests to have speed humps and measures installed in their neighborhoods. Councilor McClain suggests the data collection is not specific enough, noting that in other areas there were multiple points of collection including abutting streets, whereas here there is a single data collection point. He notes that the roadway changes and that driver behavior can vary along different stretches of the street, and therefore multiple data points would be more helpful and informative. Councilor McClain also suggests there is a need for more crosswalks on Valley Street, noting there are three between Parlee Street and Gallows Hill Road, which is more than exist on the entire rest of the street. He stresses the need for safe crossing for pedestrians, particularly in areas where they are lacking and where sidewalks are also missing. Regarding damage to vehicles, Councilor McClain explains he has heard from individuals who are concerned with their vehicle alignment, and a number of people who were unsure of what speed is appropriate for the cushions. He observes seeing people going too fast over the cushions initially, as well as people who were going as slow as 5MPH as if they were traditional speed bumps and causing congestion. Councilor McClain states eventually people realized the appropriate speeds around 20MPH but indicates it would be helpful if the speed humps themselves indicated the appropriate speed to minimize confusion. Regarding the minimal impact of striping and poles on Valley Street, Councilor

McClain states long stretches of road do not get narrowed by striping, as it does not change the actual width of the road and does not encourage changed behavior. He again stresses better data collection. When considering permanent solutions, Councilor McClain suggests integrating them with crossings, such as raised crosswalks.

Ward 3 Councilor Patti Morsillo of 53 Broad Street introduces herself and comments on the significant difference the program has made on Proctor Street. While not perfect, Councilor Morsillo notes a huge difference just from striping, including getting cars to park on the street again instead of the sidewalk. Councilor Morsillo asks if there is a policy for how often the stripes are redone on the road, noting that all over the City there is an issue with paint simply fading away. She also asks if this could be moved forward on other streets, starting with painting to slow down traffic since it made a big difference on Proctor Street. Councilor Morsillo notes the crosswalk at the intersection with Highland Avenue made a huge difference as well, with people feeling safer in the area. She indicates some comments regarding Proctor Street indicate drivers move to the left and toward the sidewalk to avoid the cushions, which is alarming and defeats the purpose. While not all cars, even a handful getting in the habit can be dangerous, and she suggests creative solutions to prevent such behavior for this street and others moving forward. She echoes Councilor McClain's comments regarding feedback from those living on these streets versus those who feel inconvenienced, and the additional requests in other areas. Councilor Morsillo also suggests listening to the complaints from those who feel inconvenienced. She also wonders if there has been an increase in traffic on Witch Hill Road.

Jeff McNally introduces himself again and contends police vehicles avoid Valley Street because they cannot get to accidents and other destinations quickly enough. Commissioner Lt. Tucker states he has not heard that himself and suggests emergency vehicles going down Valley Street would most likely be going toward the Witchcraft Heights neighborhood. He indicates he has gone down the street multiple times with the cushions and had no issue. Commissioner Lt. Tucker also notes that the cushions were designed so that fire trucks can pass over them easily, while ambulances may have to slow down briefly, but it should not affect response times. Mr. Kucharsky adds that the cushions allow emergency vehicles with wider axles to pass through unimpeded.

Councilor McClain introduces himself again and responds to Councilor Morsillo regarding Witch Hill, stating that he has not received comments regarding diversion of traffic from Proctor Street to other areas. The majority of the feedback he has received from the area has related to construction related parking.

### **Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program Prioritization Spreadsheet**

Mr. Kucharsky explains that last year there were several meetings to come up with a better way of prioritizing the streets we look at, and ultimately, which we allocate resources to. The analysis was initiated by staff member Russell Findley, primarily using GIS data and mapping tools. The goal is to look at things objectively and arrive at weighted scores for individual streets in the City. Mr. Kucharsky states that while there are other factors

considered, this is one of the primary tools that help staff identify which areas and streets are top tier for consideration.

Mr. Findley introduces himself and shares the traffic calming priority tool, which he explains is one element used by the Department to help determine how City funds and resources are allocated. Mr. Findley indicates the tool is split into four different categories: demographics, land use proximity, crashes, and speed/volume. Each street segment in Salem is given a weighted score for each category. Mr. Findley explains that areas with the largest amount of people and widest variety of transportation use are prioritized, as well as areas with vulnerable populations, including older adults, children, high minority populations, people experiencing food insecurity, and those experiencing poverty. Mr. Findley indicates additional prioritized areas are those with high pedestrian use, including schools, parks, and tourist locations. For neighborhood streets with high number of crashes and/or speeding, the priority tool includes crash locations, speed and volume data, as well as lane widths. He next presents the demographic priority tool and data and shows a map of Salem streets with color-coded scoring. Mr. Findley also shares the land use proximity tool and map with the data considered and color-coded streets. The crash priority tool and data are shared next, along with the speed and volume priority tool. Mr. Findley explains the data collection process, noting that it is mostly based on census data. Mr. Findley presents various examples of data points and staff analysis across several categories. He notes that for more information about the process, data sources, and street segment scores, individuals may visit the traffic calming priority tool hub site at <https://traffic-caliming-1-salemma.hub.arcgis.com>.

Mr. Findley next discusses the traffic calming priority spreadsheet, which ranks every street in Salem based on the average priority scores across all street segments, and he goes through an example with Boston Street. Mr. Findley presents the spreadsheet demonstrating the ranking results and also demonstrates how the public can access the spreadsheet and prioritization tool through the Traffic and Parking Department website. The highest ranked street in the City is Ward Street. Mr. Findley also notes that Fairfield Street was one of the first streets examined for traffic calming prior to the tool and spreadsheet being complete, and the results show that it ranks high at number nine. Mr. Findley provides other examples and walks through the spreadsheet data.

Chair Shallop thanks staff and states she is very excited about the prioritization tool and spreadsheet. She provides additional information regarding the history and background of the Traffic Calming Program, and the progress to date. The program began with neighborhood applications, but Chair Shallop notes that some of the streets initially examined were those where residents have more means and are more vocal, which is why staff and the Commission were thinking of different ways to prioritize and examine which streets need interventions. Commissioner Swartz and Commissioner Garmendia echo Chair Shallop's comments and thank staff. Ms. Mortell thanks staff and the Commission, and notes that there are many communities looking to Salem as a model in regard to making streets safer and allocating resources.

Chair Shallop opens the floor to public comment.

Ward 5 Councilor Jeff Cohen of 12 Hancock Street introduces himself and thanks staff for the incredible work and commends the Department for being so responsive. Councilor Cohen expresses concern regarding additional requests and those made by resident signatures and how they are balanced within the prioritization. He also notes that Lafayette Street ranks highly in most segments, except for the portion from Loring Avenue to Marblehead, which may be the most dangerous section, noting that crossing in this area is difficult. Councilor Cohen states that while the prioritization tool is great, it can be important to take into account anecdotal information as well.

Chair Shallop asks Ward Councilors that are present to not guarantee to their constituents that just because they have a petition with signatures, that this will result in intervention because there are a limited number of resources and there are lots of needs. This is the basis for the prioritization tool. Mr. Kucharsky adds that staff are looking at various data points and elements, including the prioritization tool, and considerations of accessibility.

Ward 2 Councilor Caroline Watson-Felt introduces herself and agrees with Councilor Cohen's comments regarding Lafayette Street. Councilor Watson-Felt thanks staff for their hard work, and emphasizes how important it is, particularly since it is data-driven. Councilor Watson-Felt notes that Chair Shallop included Chestnut Street and Federal Street in the same category of streets, but that Federal Street had its first installation recently. She also acknowledges that the issue the Commission and Department faces now is that there are repeated temporary installation in places that were early adopters of the program, and that there can be a challenge with finding the resources to make permanent installations while also attending to the new prioritized locations based on data. She states she would love to understand the plan for budgeting to address these needs, including for areas like Chestnut Street which will now see its third or fourth year of temporary/seasonal measures.

Chair Shallop explains that the Commission is not involved in the budget process, but that rather the City Councilors are. She requests that Councilors work on this precise issue because all of these installations and measures take time and money, and that permanent installations require even more resources. Ms. Shallop indicates the budget for this project is relatively small compared to the City's budget, and that if councilor's want to see more projects and more permanent installations, she asks that they work with the new Mayor to figure out how the budget might be increased.

Mr. Kucharsky adds that even if unlimited funds were available, there are only four staff members and the Department relies on other departments for implementation. The goal is to test, refine, and look to permanent solutions. He notes that permanent solutions for Chestnut Street are being examined and considered as well.

Councilor Watson-Felt states she would love to get a better understanding of the holistic process, and how long the process is to get to a permanent solution. Ms. Watson-Felt suggests there may opportunities for more information or transparency and setting expectations. Chair Shallop states that each street and project is different, with different

needs, data, and interventions, so there is no set schedule or timeline. Mr. Kucharsky adds that there are other departments working on various streets as well and that sometimes delays can be related to utility work and other needs.

#### **OTHER BUSINESS THAT MAY LEGALLY COME BEFORE THE COMMISSION**

None.

#### **UPCOMING MEETINGS SCHEDULE**

The next meeting is scheduled for February 8, 2023 at 6:00PM. Mr. Kucharsky notes there will be an SRA meeting that same night, and the firm hired to conduct the parking study will be giving an overview, so it may be a joint meeting between Traffic and Parking and SRA.

#### **MEETING MINUTES APPROVAL**

**December 14, 2022**

**Motion and Vote:** Commissioner Swartz motions to approve the minutes from the December 14, 2022, meeting as drafted. Commissioner Garmendia seconds the motion. **The vote is all in favor, the motion passes.**

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

*On a motion duly made by Commissioner Swartz and seconded by Commissioner Garmendia, the Traffic and Parking Commission meeting was adjourned at 7:45 PM.*