Wesley Heights Residents Oppose Closure Of Wesley Avenue

BY LORELEI GOFF
STAFF WRITER

Residents of the Wesley Heights area of Greeneville voiced strong opposition Tuesday to the proposed closure of a .25-mile section of Wesley Avenue between Highway 70 and Holston Drive.

The closure plan passed its first reading when the Board of Mayor and Aldermen met on June 20, and received its second reading during a public hearing portion of Tuesday's regular board meeting. The Holston United Methodist Home for Children made the request citing safety concerns for youth at the home.

The Board of Mayor and Aldermen tabled the issue pending further study and discussion.

Bradley Williams, president of Holston Home, said the organization recently purchased property on the opposite side of Wesley Avenue from the main campus and plans to construct a worship center and sports field on it.

While currently only 15 students a day cross the road at that location, Williams anticipates that number will increase to 60 after the construction is completed. He said little traffic traverses the area but also said "many vehicles" don't adhere to the posted speed limit of

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SUN PHOTO BY LORELEI GOFF

Mike Blue, a resident of the Wesley Heights area, spoke in opposition to the closing of a portion of Wesley Avenue. A number of area residents attended the Tuesday Greeneville Board of Mayor and Aldermen meeting to address the closure, which was requested by Holston United Methodist Home for Children.

CLOSURE

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20 mph.

Mike Blue, a resident who opposes the closure, disputed Williams' assertion that little traffic uses the road, saying that much of the community uses it and neighborhood churches would be impacted.

"What about the safety of our neighborhood?" Blue asked, adding that the closure would impede access to the neighborhood for police, the fire department and ambulances. "A life is a life, regardless of age."

He also said the closure would inconvenience residents who drive that route to get to town.

Blue submitted a petition in opposition to the closure to Greeneville Mayor W.T. Daniels. It was unknown at the time how many signatures were on the petition.

Joan Stover, who also lives in Wesley Heights, said, "We're being cut off. When will other streets be cut off? We'll be boxed in."

Williams argued that there are multiple points of access to the community and closing the road will not impact the neighborhood. He also said it wouldn't result in more traffic traveling Holston Drive, a road that Blue pointed out earlier is failing in on one section and would experience heavier traffic volume with the closure.

Second Ward Alderman Jeff Taylor questioned Williams about how many students would be crossing the road and if the closure would affect the response time of emergency services providers to residents in the Wesley Heights community.

Greeneville Fire Department Chief Alan Shipley said it would take longer for the fire department to respond to areas of Wesley Heights, as well as Holston Home itself.

Stover asked the board to consider an alternative that wouldn't negatively impact Wesley Heights.

"Why not just treat it like any other school system?" Stover asked. "Our kids walk across the street all the time. Why not use signs like other school zones?"

Daniels said Stover had a good point and that it would also prevent the loss of access to Highway 70 truck bypass.

Williams responded that there is "a critical difference" between Holston Home and other school zones because the worship center and sports field may be used outside of school hours.

Stover responded with question, "Wouldn't it be the same a Greeneville High School with their sport events?"

Daniels then turned to the question of the road itself, asking Williams if the road bed would be done away with.

"No, we will use it as a private drive," Williams replied.

Gene Maddox, another Wesley Heights residence, asked the board to take some time to consider the request and determine how the closure would affect traffic. Daniels requested a traffic study and tabled the request to close the road.

Second Ward Aldermen Sarah Webster and Jeff Taylor agreed to attend meetings between residents and Williams to get information about several issues that need to be looked at.



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