Wesley Avenue Resolution Reached



SUN PHOTO BY LORELEI GOFF

Holston United Methodist Home For Children President/CEO Bradley Williams talks with a group of Wesley Heights residents Thursday.

Holston Home Drops Bid To Close Part Of Road

BY LORELEI GOFF
STAFF WRITER

A verbal agreement reached Thursday evening during a meeting between a group of Wesley Heights residents and the Holston United Methodist Home for Children resolved contentions surrounding the proposed closure of a portion of Wesley Avenue.

The agreement was reached while Holston Home President/CEO Bradley Williams fielded questions from the community about Holston Home's request to the Greeneville Board of Mayor and Alderman to close a quarter-mile section of Wesley Avenue between Highway 70 and Holston Drive. The meeting

SEE **WESLEY,** PAGE 7A



SUN PHOTO BY LORELEI GOFF

A group of Wesley Heights residents attend a meeting to discuss the prospect of closing a road in the neighborhood.



SUN PHOTO BY LORELEI GOFF

Holston Home President/CEO Bradley Williams speaks to residents of the Wesley Heights neighborhood at a meeting Thursday to discuss the prospect of closing a road in the neighborhood.



SUN PHOTO BY LORELEI GOFF

Greeneville Mayor W.T. Daniels addresses a group of Wesley Heights residents and Holston Home officials Thursday night.

WESLEY

FROM PAGE 1A

was at Tate Chapel United Methodist Church.

Williams began his comments noting that Holston Home and the Wesley Heights community have been good neighbors for many years.

As residents pressed Williams with questions and comments about impacts of new traffic patterns on the safety of children and elderly residents of the neighborhood and alternative options such as speed bumps and caution lights that Holston Home could pursue, Williams asked who in the audience was against the closure of the road.

After all hands were raised, Williams said, "I think there are other alternatives."

He acknowledged legitimate concerns raised by residents over traffic and pedestrian safety within the neighborhood and said that those considerations had moved him toward reconsidering the proposed closure in the weeks following the initial request.

He then said that if residents would help hold their neighbors accountable for driving safely, Holston home would abandon its request to close the road and pursue other alternatives.

"I think we have the making for some middle ground here," he said.

Joan Stover, a community leader who organized the meeting, said Williams' proposal, which was met with applause, was acceptable.

Greeneville Mayor W.T. Daniels pointed out that because the meeting wasn't an official board meeting, nothing could be voted on at that time by aldermen present. Holston Home will follow up with the agreement at the next BMA meeting on Sept. 5.

Daniels also noted that there has been no support on the board to close the road, indicating that the request would likely not have been approved.

Gene Maddox, another prominent member of the Wesley Heights community and president of the George Clem Multicultural Alliance, addressed the need for a traffic study to determine the need for caution lights, speed bumps or other measures along the length of Wesley Avenue.

Resident Dale Stewart noted that the community has made requests for such measures for years.

Daniels said that the street belongs to the people and is the responsibility of the city.

"We have a lot on our plate," he said. "We don't have so much on our plate that we can't do something."

He added, "This is an opportunity for all of us to come together. We are here to do what's right."

Daniels said he would have Town Engineer Brad Peters look into the need for additional measures on Wesley Avenue, as well as Davis Street, which is lacking any traffic control measures at an intersection with Summer Street. Cars parking in the roadway at a business on the corner and blocking visibility makes it a dangerous intersection, he said.

Peter Higgens, an activist who was a candidate to replace former 1st Ward Alderman Brian Bragdon when he resigned after moving out of the ward, reminded the officials present about a grant for road projects that was discussed at the last board meeting on Tuesday.

"I would remind the board that just a couple days ago we were looking to find a way to spend $75,000 in road money," Higgens said.

Prior to the question-and-answer period, Williams said there was a misconception that Holston Home wasn't making an effort to meet with the community. He explained that after he spoke with residents following the public hearing about the proposed closure, he attempted to contact Mike Blue, another community leader.

Because Blue and Stover were working on the issue separately, Stover was unaware that Williams had reached out to the community. Williams was eventually able to contact Stover and stressed that he intended to follow through with his promise to meet with the community but was delayed by the communication snafu.

Following the meeting, 1st Ward Alderman Jeff Taylor said he was thrilled with the outcome.

"We live in a great community and with good communication it will be even better," Taylor said. "This is small town America at its best."

Both Stover and Blue said they were pleased with the results and with the community's involvement in the issue.

Williams said he feels great about the decision and finding a solution that works for everyone.

About three dozen people attended the meeting, including all Greeneville aldermen and City Administrator Todd Smith.

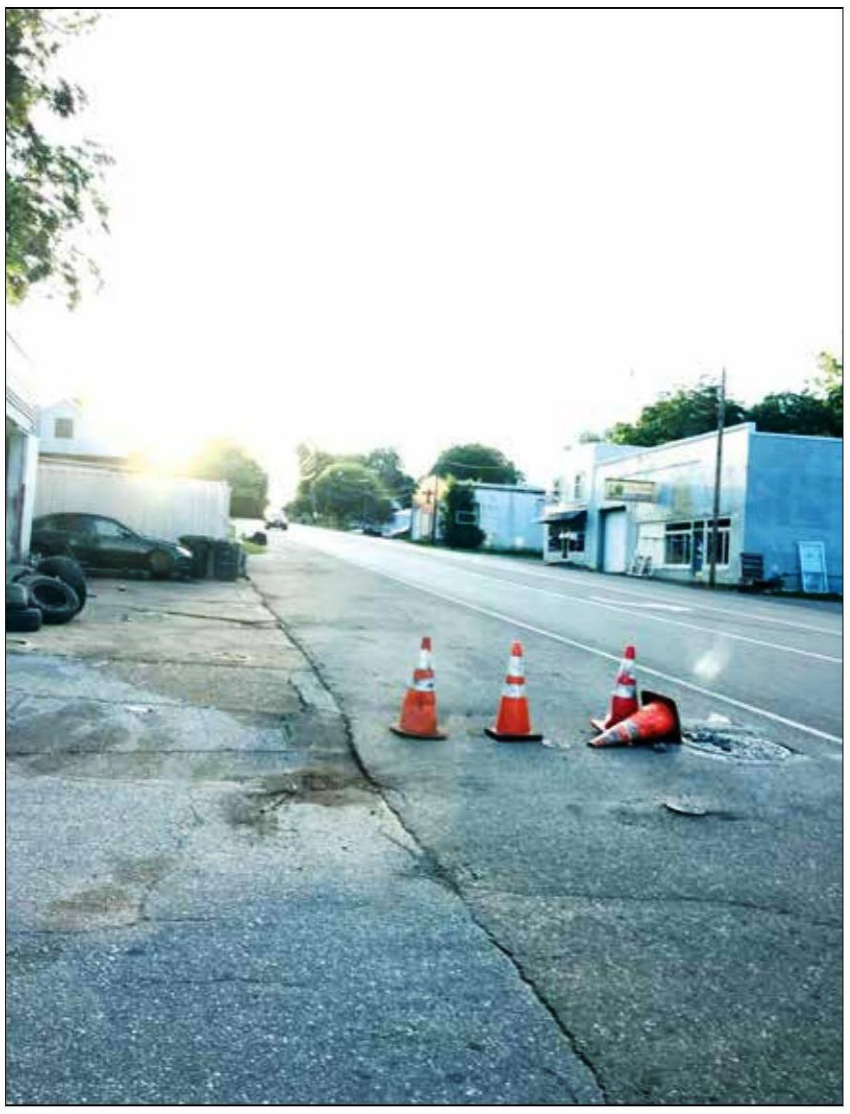


PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE SUN/KEITH PAXTON

This intersection at Davis and Summer Streets came under discussion at the Wesley Heights community meeting Thursday evening. Visibility at the intersection is blocked by cars parking in the roadway behind the orange cones. Residents asked city officials present at the meeting to address the problem.