

The Town Council of the Town of Nashville held an Agenda Meeting on Thursday, January 2, 2020 at 7:00 PM in Town Council Chambers. Members Present: Mayor Pro Tem Kate Burns, Council Member Louise Hinton, Council Member Lynne Hobbs, and Council Member Larry Taylor. Absent: Mayor Brenda Brown. Staff Present: Randy Lansing – Town Manager, Lou Bunch – Town Clerk and Human Resources Director, Marguerite Bishop – Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources Director, Anthony Puckett – Police Chief, Lee Brown – Public Works Director, Sam Sanchez – Finance Director, Otis Chancey – Library Assistant, Tina Price – Planning Technician, Chris Joyner – Fire Chief, Lee Coppedge – Battalion Chief, Andy Joyner – Fire Lieutenant, Douglas Garciga – Fire Engineer, Harrison Lancaster – Firefighter, and Matt Bailey – Firefighter. Other(s) Present: Thomas Gillespie – Nash County Parks and Recreation Director.

1. Mayor Pro Tem Burns called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and welcomed those in attendance.
2. Mayor Pro Tem Burns called for Public Comments.

Dr. West Bishop, 114 E. Church Street, Nashville, NC, approached the podium. Dr. Bishop said, "I've been a resident here for over nine years now and I appreciate you guys' time this evening. I want to talk to you a little bit about some of the sports in the town if that is okay. Is this a good time for that? Awesome. So I have had the great opportunity to be a volunteer coach for the Town of Nashville for approximately four years and it has been an amazing opportunity. I have gotten to know a lot of the kids. They see me at church or at school or different community events and they say 'hey coach, how are you doing?' It is a great feeling. I got to coach a lot of these kids year after year – get to know them really well or see them, even if I am not coaching them, see them on the field, how they have grown up, how they have really advanced in their skills. It's been a really great experience. This year I got to co-coach with Coach Amanda (Clark) there and our team took down the championship for the 8U Soccer Team. So, again, great memories, a fun season, and certainly a season the kids won't forget in the near future. But there are a lot of things I have seen in my tenure volunteering with the Town here that are not ideal in terms of the sports scenario. So for example, very small girls having to play against much larger, older boys. A very different skill level. They often get pushed down. Lots of times the coaches don't play them near as much as they should play them or they are pushed in these obscure positions because they can't compete at the same level. So, not enough kids to make different teams so we have to play co-ed; so that is not ideal. Some of those people that get pushed to the side like that unfortunately end up quitting, which only propagates less numbers per team. Lots of times these teams don't have enough to field a team. They forfeit week in and week out or they have to play a person down or they don't have any substitutes and the kids are running the entire time. It's, again, not ideal to have those low numbers on a per team basis. Even with age groups with the same sex, like softball for a team to make they often have to squish a lot of different age groups together. So you have girls that are four or five years older than other girls playing with them. Again, more demoralizing for the younger ones that can't play up to that level unless they are some sort of superstar. So, very difficult there. This past year, there was in one age group there was only two teams they were able to make; so week in and week out the same two teams had to play each other – these two teams. And one team was a little better than the other and just beat them week in/week out. The team that lost, you know on game days they weren't excited – 'Hey, you know, I get to play a game today.' No, they were a little more demoralized – 'We've got to go. We've got to get beat again and again and again.' It was just disheartening to them. They didn't want to come. They weren't having a good time and a lot of times they ended up falling, pushing kids on the field, got violent on the field just because they thought that was the only way they could compete. Again, not ideal scenarios that I have seen unfortunately at a lot of sporting events here at the Town, unfortunately. The benefits of team sports to the children, they are not realizing them here. It is just unfortunate that the kids in the Town are hurting from these types of scenarios that they have to play. You see, I have also had the opportunity to coach for the County and the County teams – a lot more age groups, a lot tighter age groups. You've got boys playing with boys, girls playing with girls, and I have seen some great camaraderie, some team work, some leaders being formed. Young girls being leaders of a team, which is very hard for them when they are playing with much older boys on the same team. It is really neat. They have a unique selection process where it makes the teams more fair, so most teams win a couple games, lose a couple games."

Mayor Pro Tem Burns informed Dr. Bishop that he reached the time limit and asked the Council if they wished to give extra time. The Council consented.

Dr. Bishop continued, "So in summary, I think by not merging with the (County) you are doing the kids in this town a disservice. They are not getting the benefits of team sports they should be getting and could be getting with the County. I know we have other factors in your decision, but I urge you to heavily

weight that factor for the kids. I mean, that's the whole reason we do the sports, for the kids. That's why I am here to talk on behalf of the kids. So, the benefits of team sports to the children, I urge you to weight that more than all these other factors put together. By not combining, I think you are doing them a great disservice. Thank you for your time. That is all I've got."

Mayor Pro Tem Burns thanked Dr. Bishop.

There were no other Public Comments.

3. Mayor Pro Tem Burns called for Consideration of an Inter-local Agreement between Nash County and the Town of Nashville for the delivery of athletic programs at Glover Park.

Mayor Pro Tem Burns called on Mr. Lansing to give a summary of the issue. Mr. Lansing stated that this proposal has been discussed at both the staff level and the Council level since the beginning of November. The proposal is to allow Nash County to utilize Glover Park for the delivery of field athletics sports for Town and County participants. Currently, the Town of Nashville provides field athletics sports at Glover Park for Nashville residents free of charge and for non-residents for a \$10 fee. He noted that they are aware that the number of children that we have participating in those programs has declined over the years and it is not at the level it was twenty years ago. This is due to the Rocky Mount Sports Complex and Nash County's Parks and Recreation Department which provide the same athletic programs that Nashville does. Mr. Lansing stated that he started looking at this proposal after Mrs. Bishop brought it to his attention back in September. He commented that it was very clear to him after looking at it that the County is taxing everybody in the County and part of that tax goes to provide field athletics sports and the Town of Nashville also taxes Nashville residents and part of that tax goes to provide the exact same service for the exact same participants. He stated that it seemed that the duplication was not a wise expenditure of taxpayer money, which is why he and Mrs. Bishop put together the proposal for the Council to consider the Town of Nashville turning over the athletic programs to Nash County. Mr. Lansing referenced Dr. Bishop's comments from earlier, and stated that Nash County has the ability to have more participants, more teams with same gender and same age groups, and that the level of competition is very similar at the County. He noted that the children get a much better experience when they have more participants, but we do not have those participants and he does not know at this point in time if there is any way that we could ever get that back. He commented that when Nashville was the "big dog" there was no other competition and if kids wanted to play then they had to come to the Town of Nashville. He stated that it worked for many years, but that things have changed with Rocky Mount building the sports complex and really providing a marvelous recreation experience and then with Nash County doing the same thing. He asked if we were to charge money once again for our participants and be able to compete with the County's teams, would we have the participation to even fill a team of similar age and gender to be able to compete with any of the teams that the County has. He responded that he does not think that they could.

Mr. Lansing stated that this proposal has been vetted very well within the community since November. There have been five or six meetings open to the public on this matter. He commented that he cannot think of a question that has not already been asked and answered with regards to this proposal, although they may not have been answered to the satisfaction of everybody. He is confident that with this agreement the Town will be able to continue to provide for recreational experiences for the town youth in an age and gender appropriate manner, with the experiences that they have being enhanced over what it is now. He said that in turn, we could concentrate our parks and recreation efforts on non-traditional athletic programs. He added that we know there is a segment of the Nashville population that is looking for that kind of experience. This would allow us with our limited staff and resources to be able to do that.

Mayor Pro Tem Burns called for a motion to discuss the issue. Council Member Taylor made the motion, seconded by Council Member Hobbs. Council Member Taylor stated that he understands where everybody is coming from as far as the participation, but he is still being bombarded by people with concerns about the Town turning the athletic program over to the County. He added that he does not have anything against the County, but there are a lot of kids that have come up through our athletic program and it was just said that we do not know if we can get that level of participation back to what it was 15-20 years ago. He acknowledged that we may not get it all back, but he would like to see us put in another concentrated effort and see what we could bring it back to. He said that personally he is not ready to be in favor of going with the County for several reasons; he thinks we need to look at this a little bit harder and that we should not vote tonight because Mayor Brown is not present, which means that Mayor Pro Tem Burns would not be able to vote. Mrs. Bunch informed the Council that Mayor Pro Tem Burns is able to vote. Mayor Pro Tem Burns stated that we do not have a tie-breaker for a possible tied vote though. Council Member Taylor stated that he has not had any personal conversations with the Council Members and so he does not know where they stand, but he knows where he stands on this decision. He added that if it were to come out to be a tie, then we would not have anyone to break it tonight. He recognized that the County has their meeting Monday morning to determine what they are going to do and stated that they could do a

telephone poll over the weekend to come to a decision, but right now he is not ready to go in that direction; he still has major concerns. He stated that in talking about the cultural arts part of the proposal, that the County has a Senior Center that does all of the programs that Mrs. Bishop is talking about us doing. Mayor Pro Tem Burns asked if it was for people other than Seniors. Council Member Taylor replied that no, he is only talking about the Seniors, but he understands we have a class at the Community Building for Partner Dancing. He asked how many of those people are Nashville residents. Mrs. Bishop replied that half of the participants are Nashville residents, which is in line with much of the participation in any of our programs. Council Member Taylor again stated that he is not ready to hand over the athletic program. He said that he does not have kids in this game currently, but that he did have kids that came up through this athletic program. He reiterated that he is not in favor of this and he does not think the Council should vote this evening.

Council Member Hobbs stated that she would like to address the question of the fact that there are four members of the Council in attendance and if it comes to a split vote then where that would leave the issue. Mr. Lansing replied that a non-decision would be that we continue as always, which means that we need to hire a Recreation Coordinator as soon as possible and get that person in place in order to get registration started for Spring Sports. He asked Mrs. Bishop to expand on this. Mrs. Bishop stated that we would have to rehire the Recreation Supervisor position that has been vacant since November 1st; we have waited to replace this position because if we were to partner with the County then this position would have a different type of job description. She stated that if we stay the course, then the County will open registration on Monday and they will run their current programs at their current parks and the Town would need to get out ahead of them in order to get as many registrants as possible. Mrs. Hobbs stated that from her standpoint, logistically it makes sense to her because she thinks there is a duplication of effort that is taking place. She commented that she has heard from some individuals in the community that they do not want to see this happen for various reasons, but that when you look at the numbers it makes sense. She said that she has also heard people say that they do not understand where the savings is; the money that is in place would then be used to encourage and promote other recreational/cultural resources type of activities. She stated that she would like to see a little bit of direction in where we go with that so that it is not so broad. She stated that she came tonight with the intention of voting in favor of this, even after having spoken with some individuals expressing their continued concerns. She commented that logistically it seems like it is in the best interest of the Town to do this. She added that she believes that with the new County Park opening this spring that we will see a substantial exodus of more participation and it will perhaps bring our numbers lower than they already are. She commented that ideally it would be nice to have a little bit more time to discuss this, but that is not feasible and we are looking at it possibly being a year before we would be able to address the issue again.

Council Member Hinton stated that she has talked to a lot of people and their main concern is where the savings is. She commented that she asked that question one night and was told that there would be no savings. She stated that when you turn over your flagship park to the County, you would expect that there would be some savings and that is a real concern for her. She then asked if the Town has secured a building. Mr. Lansing said that the building they have in mind is still available, but there has been no decision on whether we will go forward with the proposal or not. He added that there is no opportunity to even have a discussion about the savings until we know if it is going to happen or not. He stated that Mrs. Bishop has a number of programs that she would like to try, and most likely she would not try them all immediately; therein would be a savings, but how much is not known at this point. He added that when they crafted this proposal, they were not presenting it as a money saving opportunity or proposal; it was an opportunity to take money that is being spent on duplicate services and to use it for something else. He commented that there will very likely be a savings; he doubts that we will be ready to provide every alternate program that they want to within the first year of the change, so inherently there would be monies that are not spent. Council Member Hinton noted that it is a \$300,000 budget and she is wondering how much of it will be a savings. Mrs. Bishop stated that there would be an opportunity as we go into a budget season for visioning and figuring out how much of a budget Parks, Recreation and Cultural Resources has and the direction in which the Council sees the department going, along with goals and objectives the Council wants the department to meet. Mrs. Bishop said that this decision tonight to partner with the County is the first decision that has to be made in order to possibly see savings and then to be able to redirect where the department is going. She added that when the County started their Recreation Department in early 2000, there was not a lot of conversation about what that would look like in cooperation with the Town; if this proposal goes forward, then written within the Interlocal Agreement it says that the County is not going to offer any duplicating programs within the Town. Mrs. Bishop explained that this begins to carve out our niche of trying to keep relevant and keep the department here within the Town of Nashville so you do not have the County beginning to expand in other program areas within the Town and it gives us a place to begin to find our way. Mr. Lansing added that we will have the Budget Retreat at the end of the month and so before July we will know what that budget looks like and what this all could possibly entail if a decision is made to partner with the County on this.

Mayor Pro Tem Burns commented that she stands where Council Member Hobbs does, that she has looked at this in every different way she possibly could, and that she sees so many benefits to the children of Nashville, to the kids that do not play sports, and to the adults who want to have some sort of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources opportunity. She stated that she thinks it would be extremely beneficial in other ways where we would be able to bring business to downtown from where the County would be hosting tournaments out of Glover Park. She added that she thinks Glover Park would become the vibrant and well-utilized park that it once was and she thinks that will help with the businesses downtown, with any possible hotel coming, and she sees the budget then opening up for us to do activities as a Town coming together in downtown, increasing business. She commented that she came tonight with the intent to vote in favor of the proposal, but she does understand wanting to let Mayor Brown weigh in with her opinion and she also understands about the savings. She stated that the Council Members are the ones who determine what the Parks and Recreation budget looks like, so if they want to see savings, then during budget season they can talk about which programs they want to roll out and which ones to wait on; they benefit all of the citizens that way.

Mayor Pro Tem Burns called for a motion to either approve the recommendation or to table it for Tuesday's meeting. Council Member Hinton made a motion to table the consideration until the Tuesday, January 7th Regular Meeting, seconded by Council Member Taylor. Mr. Lansing said that before they have a vote on this motion, he would like to point out that the County Commissioners meet on Monday and he does not know if they would be willing to have another meeting next week to take up this agreement and that he doubts if Mr. Gillespie can tell us if they would be willing to do so or when they would be willing to address it. He stated that maybe the County would be fine proceeding as if the Town will approve it on the 7th and they already know that so they will just wait until their February meeting to approve the agreement. He added that there are a lot of "ifs" there. Mayor Pro Tem Burns told Mr. Gillespie that they do not mean to string anyone along or push this any farther, but it is unfortunate that the Mayor is not here tonight. Mr. Gillespie stated that he cannot speak for the Commissioners, but they do have a second meeting on the third Monday of the month; they are definitely waiting on the Nashville Town Council to make a decision. Mayor Pro Tem Burns asked him if Tuesday would be soon enough. Mr. Gillespie said if that is the direction that we want to move towards, it would be the second meeting of the month before the County could meet on it. He added that the County wants their registration to begin as soon as possible; the last day for registration for Spring Sports is February 15th and they want to get out in front of the public before Rocky Mount begins their registration. There being no further discussion, Mayor Pro Tem called for a vote. The motion was unanimously approved (4-0).

4. Mayor Pro Tem Burns called for Council Comments.

Mayor Pro Tem Burns called on Council Member Taylor for comments. Mr. Taylor wished everyone a Happy New Year. He was glad to see that we had a safe holiday. He commented that with this topic that they discussed tonight, he has gotten bombarded in the parking lot and on the phone by people, but Dr. Bishop is the first one that kind of pulled him in favor of the proposal. He added that he has so many of his constituents in town that are telling him not to vote for it because we are talking about new programs and new things that we want to get started, but before we get started with new programs we need to see if we can get what we started with back on the right track. He said that if you have something to say about it, good or bad, pro or con, he wants to see you in the meeting to see you face to face and hear what your wants and desires are. He said that he can only go by what he is getting from the phone calls and visits. He stated that when he ran for this position, he said he would be a voice for the people in town and his vote will be what the people want him to do. He stated that so far, 99.9% of the people that have confronted him have wanted him to vote no. He commented that if there would have been a vote tonight, his vote would have been no unless the people want him to vote otherwise.

Mayor Pro Tem Burns called on Council Member Hobbs for comments. Ms. Hobbs thanked everyone for coming out and stated that we do have a public forum coming up on January 14th. She encouraged everyone to come and commented that Mayor Brown asked that we do this so that we can hear from the public about all of the things going on with the Town. She explained that this is an opportunity for the public to speak to the elected officials to express their desires for the Council moving forward, particularly as we move in to the budget season.

Mayor Pro Tem Burns called on Council Member Hinton for comments. Mrs. Hinton stated that something happened the day before that concerned a lot of citizens in Town and asked Chief Puckett to address it. She stated that there was a police action near Mayor Pro Tem Burns' house, with a lot of patrol cars from the Sheriff's Department and the Town, on Virginia Avenue. She noted that two or three citizens called her about it and that she was unaware of what they were talking about. She stated that something like this that happens and draws that many vehicles to an area alarms the citizens. Chief Puckett stated that Nash County had a prisoner in custody who left the Sheriff's Office and took off running with the handcuffs on. Town officers assisted Nash County in setting up a perimeter; the subject was caught a few minutes

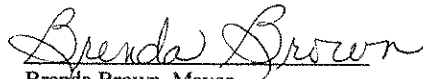
later. Mrs. Hinton said that there were a lot of vehicles involved and a lot of citizens were scared. Chief Puckett explained that it was a perimeter set for a K-9 track, which is set in case the person comes out, which he did and he was apprehended. Council Member Hinton stated that communication is so important, especially when you have that many vehicles on Virginia Avenue and people are scared. She then asked Mr. Lansing if he knew about it. Mr. Lansing replied that he saw it on Facebook. Mayor Pro Tem Burns commented that she lives right there and did not see the cars. Ms. Hinton concluded her comments by saying that she thinks they need to regroup on Tuesday about the agreement with Nash County.

Mayor Pro Tem Burns commented that she thinks in an ideal world, we could have it all – our Parks and Rec Department fully funded, the athletic program of our dreams, and all of the other programs of our dreams - but that requires a really large budget that we do not have. She said that while it is nice to think about if we could get it back, she does not know that they could without expending a lot more money. She said that the majority of the people that she has been speaking with have seen the benefits and they have said that they do want this merger to occur. She commented that she personally has coached and her kids have played on these teams that everyone is talking about, where you have six and seven year olds playing with twelve year olds, and you have a team that loses every single weekend for the entire season, and it is extremely disheartening and it is really sad to watch. She added that it is scary to watch when you have little people on the field that are not the same gender, size, or grade level as their competitors. She commented that as far as safety and athletic experience are concerned, the people that she has spoken with have told her that this is the route they want to go. She commented that she thinks it is a wonderful thing that they are hearing from many different aspects of the community. She is glad that they are all talking about it. She thanked everyone for coming and wished them a Happy New Year.

5. There being no further comments, Mayor Pro Tem Burns called for a motion to adjourn.

Council Member Hinton made the motion, seconded by Council Member Taylor. There being no discussion, Mayor Pro Tem Burns called for a vote. The motion was unanimously approved (4-0).

Mayor Pro Tem Burns declared the meeting adjourned at 7:34 PM.


Brenda Brown, Mayor

ATTEST:


Lou C. Bunch, Town Clerk

