

The Town Council of the Town of Nashville held an Agenda Meeting on Wednesday, September 30, 2020 at 7:00 PM in Town Council Chambers. Members Present: Mayor Brenda Brown, Mayor Pro Tem Kate Burns, Council Member Louise Hinton, Council Member Lynne Hobbs, and Council Member Larry Taylor. Absent: None. Staff Present: Randy Lansing – Town Manager, Lou Bunch – Human Resources Director and Interim Town Clerk, Sherry Moss – Planning and Development Director, Tina Price – Planner I/Code Enforcement Officer, Anthony Puckett – Police Chief, Chris Joyner – Fire Chief, and Lee Brown – Public Works Director

1. Mayor Brown called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM and welcomed those in attendance.
2. Mayor Brown led the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. Mayor Brown led the Prayer.
4. Mayor Brown called for the Public Comments Period. There were no public comments.
5. Mayor Brown called for the Discussion of a Request from Nash County to permanently close Elm Street between Court Street and Drake Street to allow construction of a new jail.

Mayor Brown gave a summary of the issue. The Town of Nashville has received a request from Nash County to permanently close a 200-foot portion of Elm Street between North Court Street and North Drake Street to allow construction of a Nash County Detention Facility on the northwest corner of the Courthouse/Jail property and associated facilities. The Town has water, sewer, and storm sewer lines in the Elm Street right of way. If this portion of Elm Street were vacated, we would need to put utility easements on the land to maintain access to our utilities. Jonathan Boone, Nash County Director of Public Utilities, says no building would be built on the vacated street right of way. It would be fenced with permanent penitentiary fencing and used as a secondary containment area for emergency evacuation of the detention facility. With this portion of Elm Street closed, Elm Street traffic would have to turn north onto Court Street, then west onto Vale Street, and south onto Drake Street to get around the closed street. Court Street is 18 ½ feet wide. Typical residential streets are 24 to 28 feet wide. There are three houses on Court Street, and cars are almost always parked on it. Two-way traffic cannot pass on the street with parked cars. At 18 ½ feet, the street was not designed or built to carry pass-through traffic. The same is true of Vale Street between Court and Drake Streets, which is 18 ½ feet wide, and more often than not has cars parked on it. Drake Street is 24-feet wide. Bobby Liverman with NCDOT has agreed to put a traffic counter on Elm Street between Court and Drake on a weekday for 24-hours so the number of vehicles that would be routed up Court and Vale Streets, if Elm Street were closed, can be known. Mr. Lansing's recommendation is for the Town to work with Nash County on the new detention center by vacating the requested portion of Elm Street, but require Nash County to relocate the closed portion of Elm Street 100-feet to the north, through the County's parking lot, to Drake Street. This will keep the Elm Street traffic out of the Court Street and Vale Street neighborhood.

Mayor Brown then called on Mr. Lansing for the presentation of this request. Mr. Lansing turned the meeting over to Jonathan Boone to present the request.

Jonathan Boone first thanked the Mayor and Town Council for allowing him to speak and then introduced Nash County Manager Zee Lamb, Nash County Board of Commissioners Chairman Robbie Davis, and Major Allen Wilson from the Nash County Sheriff's Department. Mr. Boone gave the following presentation on Nash County's request to close a portion of Elm Street.

Mr. Boone stated that this request is for the Nash County Detention Facility (NCDF). The facility is located within the block of Washington Street, with Drake Street to the west, Elm Street to the north, and Boddie Street to the east. The entrance to the facility is located behind the new courthouse. As of late 2019, the NCDF is approved to house 259 inmates (223 male, 36 female). There are currently 112 inmates housed in the facility. The facility was constructed in three main phases (1977, 1991, and 1998). The west side, or older portion of the facility, was constructed in 1977 and holds 88 beds; it was expanded in 1991 and added another 56 beds; and in 1998 during the last expansion it took the capacity to 300 beds for inmates. He noted that since that time they have decreased the number of beds to 259 due to operational needs identified by the Sheriff's Department. During the past fifteen months, Nash County has invested approximately \$1.1M in the facility to renovate some of the existing dorms and address some security needs. As a result of that work and periodic inspections by the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, the County commissioned a Jail Needs Assessment in fall 2019 in order to look at the facility and determine the long-term needs of the facility for the next 20 years.

That report was received by the County in February 2020, and was presented to the Commissioners in March. There were two main recommendations as a result of the study: 1) to retrofit one of the existing male dorms on the east side of the facility to provide a 27 bed lockdown unit, and 2) to consider a 94 bed addition to the existing facility to accommodate fluctuations in the inmate population and anticipated growth over the next 20 years. The County Commissioners agreed to appropriate \$10M to renovate the facility, retrofit the dorms for the 27 beds, and to construct the addition which will be a two-story structure. As a result of that recommendation and the appropriation by the County Commissioners, an RFP was issued for an architect to assist with that work. Moseley Architects, who also completed the Jail Needs Assessment, was selected; they began on that work in May 2020. Mr. Boone shared the conceptual plans for the facility and stated that they are now moving into design development. The design is an open concept and will reduce the 40 bed capacity down to 20 beds; they will retrofit that with isolation cells to accommodate 27 inmates. The addition will be placed in the existing northwest quadrant. They are also looking at some renovations to accommodate a revised intake booking area at the jail. The two-story addition has two separate isolated sections; each side will hold 47 beds and most of those units will be locked containment cells that can accommodate two inmates. One unit will also be on each side to comply with ADA requirements. He commented that this project is what is driving the request regarding the closure of Elm Street between Court Street and Drake Street. He noted that they are using almost all of the available real estate in that quadrant of the facility. Mr. Boone then shared some examples of the façade and stated that they are trying to maintain some architecture that is somewhat harmonious with the existing building.

Mr. Boone reported that the project architect has completed the conceptual design and is working on design development plans to be submitted to NCDHHS, NCDOT, and local agencies for review and approval in January 2021. Assuming an 8-10 week turnaround on project reviews, the project is expected to be bid in April 2021. The project is anticipated to be awarded by the County Commissioners in May 2021 with construction to begin shortly after and completed in 18 months (November 2022).

The gross dimensions of the proposed building addition are 70 feet by 150 feet (10,500 square feet on the first floor). The total building will be a little less than 20,000 total square feet. One of the issues that the addition creates is access to the loading dock behind the kitchen. The width of the access to the loading dock located at the rear of the kitchen is 17 feet and will require a tractor trailer to back onto the site approximately 100 feet. Tractor trailers will be required to enter on Elm Street from the east, come back behind the jail, turn into the parking lot that the County owns at the corner of Court Street and Elm Street, and then back up 100 feet through a 17 foot wide access to reach the loading dock behind the kitchen. Based on the existing curb line at the intersection of Elm Street and Drake Street, the proposed building is expected to extend within 5 feet of the existing curb. The addition will displace about 15 parking spaces, the emergency inmate evacuation area, and the solid waste containment area. It will also impact some off-street parking (about 28 parking spaces) at the corner of Court Street and Elm Street. He noted that they currently receive 5 to 6 deliveries a week at the loading dock.

Mr. Boone stated that one of the things they are looking to do in addition to expand the capacity of the facility is to provide for some additional secondary containment. He mentioned the two inmate escapes last spring and stated that providing the additional secondary containment area is a priority for the County. He stated that without the closure of Elm Street if they were to push the secondary containment fences as far as they could towards Drake Street and towards Elm Street, it would end up being about 4 ½ feet offset from the face of the building to the fencing at the closest point. He emphasized that this is one of the issues driving their request. Mr. Boone shared several sketches of the proposed area to be closed, along with the turning radius needed in order to safely back tractor-trailers into the loading area. He noted that the tractor-trailers would need to pull 150-feet into the current 28-space parking area in order to back through the parking lot, across Elm Street to the dock behind the kitchen. Mr. Boone stated that if approved, they propose to extend the secondary containment fence north along Drake Street on the east side of Drake Street, across Elm Street and following the existing property line along the right of way, enclosing the 28-space parking area, continuing along Elm Street, and then turn along Boddie Street to tie into the existing fencing.

Mr. Boone stated that the County has identified the following advantages of the Elm Street Closure: It allows for the loading dock and existing area in the northwest quadrant of the facility to be located within a secure fenced area; it allows the area to the north to be secured and controlled with a gate that will be remotely operated by facility officers in the main control in the main facility; it will expand the security fencing which reduces access to the rear of the facility, helps reduce contraband risk, and provides an additional barrier in the event of an escape attempt. He noted that they are experiencing issues with contraband being passed back and forth from family members that approach the rear of the facility from Elm Street and attempt to pass contraband into the exercise yard behind Dorms 1, 2, 3, and the Special Housing Unit. The closure also provides additional room for mechanical, electrical, and plumbing equipment required for the new 94-bed addition. It will allow the fencing to extend further away from the building and provides for a "buffer" zone between those two elements. The expanded "buffer" zone

provides for an emergency evacuation area and an inmate assembly area within the limits of a secured perimeter. If a situation occurred where they had to bus the inmates offsite, this area could be used to bring buses in, load the inmates, and transport them away from the facility. Without the closure of Elm Street, it would be a little more problematic. The disadvantages of closing Elm Street would be that access to private property located north and west of the jail will be less direct from points east of North Court Street, emergency response times for units responding from the east will increase potentially up to 20 seconds, some utility relocation may be required, geometric improvements may be required at the intersection of Elm Street and North Court Street, and additional County owned parking spaces will be displaced. The length of Court Street from Elm Street to Vale Street is about 280 feet; Vale Street between Court Street and Drake Street is about 230 feet. Mr. Boone stated that in terms of emergency response, the worst case scenario leaves an additional 560 feet of travel distance at 20 mph, and would add an additional 20 seconds to the response time.

Mr. Boone stated that the County is requesting that the Town Council approve a Resolution of Intent to vacate the portion of Elm Street between Drake Street and North Court Street in order to accommodate the proposed expansion of the Nash County Detention Facility and to enhance security measures.

Council Member Taylor asked Mr. Boone if there has been any consideration to try to open up additional parking for the County employees on the Cobb Hill property that the County purchased a few years ago. Mr. Boone replied that the County has acquired a couple of additional lots, but they have not programmed any funds in the current Capital Improvement Plan for that expansion; the long term plan is to provide for additional off-street parking for County employees. Council Member Taylor stated that he asked because the County will be losing parking with the expansion. He added that he is in support of doing all we can to help the County with the jail situation, but he is concerned about detouring the traffic up on the hill because that street is only 18 feet wide and always has cars parked on the side of the street. He stated that he is not in favor of detouring the traffic up to the hill to come around; it will slow the fire trucks down having to make those tight turns. He suggested the County look at parking cars over in the Cobb Hill area instead of routing them through those neighborhood streets. Mayor Pro Tem Burns commented that the fenced in yard will go all the way into that parking lot. Mr. Boone replied that today the main entrance to the Detention Center is on the east and they are looking to relocate the main entrance to the west side of the facility in order to utilize the underutilized parking lot they have on the north side. He commented that while they will be losing some spaces, they will be relocating the main access to the Detention Facility. The long-term intent is to develop off-street parking at the lot that Council Member Taylor mentioned. Council Member Taylor commented that he does not have a problem closing the street down to give them access and the room that they need, but he is concerned about inconveniencing the citizens that live up on the hill.

Mayor Pro Tem Burns asked how far back they are proposing to go into those parking spaces. Mr. Boone replied that the County property at the corner of Court and Elm would be totally enclosed by the fencing; they would retain the parking in the lot beside it. Council Member Hinton asked Mr. Lansing what his suggestion was. Mr. Lansing noted that Bobby Liverman put a traffic counter out through that segment of the proposed road closure and that the traffic count for 24 hours was 304 vehicles. So they do not have to route the traffic back up the hill through the neighborhood, he recommends rerouting that portion of Elm Street up Vale to midblock through the existing parking lot to Court Street. He added that if this were rerouted it would not negatively impact the neighborhood behind it.

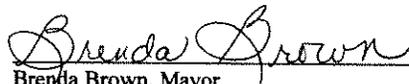
Mayor Pro Tem Burns asked if there was a possibility to cut the fencing back by 18 feet to accommodate a road through there. Mr. Boone replied that they have not had this conversation, but one concern he would have is the movement that the tractor-trailer would have to make and he is not sure how that would work. He added that there would be some expense associated with putting in a 24 foot street, and they would have to work out those logistics; they would need to study that a bit. Council Member Taylor stated that the fencing would actually now be in the street with what they are proposing. Mr. Boone replied that the fencing would extend past through where Mr. Lansing is recommending that the street be relocated to; as proposed, the fencing would cross the existing street. Mayor Pro Tem Burns asked how the tractor-trailer currently gets in. Mr. Boone replied that it backs through the existing parking lot. Council Member Taylor pointed out that the loading dock is currently turned in a different direction. Council Member Hinton stated that she tends to agree with Council Member Taylor and his issue of routing traffic up Court over to Vale and down Drake. She commented that it is a residential section and she has a difficult time going along with that. Mayor Pro Tem Burns added that due to the fact that these streets were not made for that type of traffic or the load, she sees infrastructure problems coming in the future if it does become a high traffic area back there. She commented that we do want to work with the County and asked them to take a look at what it would look like to put a roadway at the north side of the lot by cutting the fence line back a little bit. Council Member Hinton asked if the \$1M stormwater project that we currently have going on with the County that goes from Alston Street down to Stoney Creek has been figured into

their request. Mr. Boone replied that there is no conflict with it and they will be staying away from that area; the fencing will be on the south side of Elm Street. Mayor Pro Tem Burns commented that if they shortened the fence line and moved it more towards the west then it would seem like that could work for the tractor trailers to back in, but they would have to move the entrance. Mr. Boone replied that they can take a look at it; they brought in architects and relied on their experience for the design. Mayor Pro Tem Burns asked what the plans would be for the northwest section beside the lot in question. Mr. Boone replied that it would remain off-street parking. Council Member Taylor asked if the driver would be backing in to through the fence to get to the loading dock. Mr. Boone replied that they would pull up and then back in.

Mayor Brown thanked Mr. Boone. Mayor Brown asked the Council if they wanted to hold off on a decision until they see what kind of a design for the street the County comes up with. Mr. Boone replied that he can do that. She stated that the Town wants to work with them but they need something that will work for the Town too. Mr. Lansing added that if the Council is agreeable to this street closure then there is a formal process that they would need to go through. If the County can accommodate relocating that portion of Elm Street so that the traffic is not routed up North Court and Vale, the Council would need to adopt a Resolution of Intent. Notice of the intent and public hearing would need to be published for four consecutive weeks in the paper and all the people surrounding the area that would be impacted would need to be notified as well. Following the public hearing, the Council could vote on an ordinance to close the street, conveying it to Nash County. Mayor Brown thanked Mr. Lansing. Mayor Brown stated that the Council will wait until they hear back from the County and will take the matter up again on October 6<sup>th</sup>.

6. Mayor Brown called for Council Comments. There were no comments.
7. Mayor Brown thanked everyone for coming and commented that they do want to work with the County to benefit the entire area.
8. There being no further business, Mayor Brown called for a motion to adjourn.

Council Member Taylor made the motion, seconded by Council Member Hinton. There being no discussion, Mayor Brown called for a vote. The motion was unanimously approved (4-0). Mayor Brown declared the meeting adjourned at 7:38 PM.

  
Brenda Brown, Mayor

ATTEST:

  
Lou C. Bunch, Interim Town Clerk

