

For as long as I can remember, the community of Old Concord has been a quiet, peaceful place where one can sit out on their porches in the cool of the evening, walk their dogs, and generally just enjoy the beautiful, historic, area where they have chosen to live. It has been one of the best kept secrets in the Concord/Farragut area. With today's hurried-up lifestyle, to have these amenities is certainly a privilege. But this privilege did not happen by accident. Over the years, the good people of Old Concord have made the choice to maintain this environment by voting to not incorporate in the Town of Farragut and that new buildings and modifications are in keeping with those of the surrounding homes in this historic area. Now, once again, they are being faced with the possibility of more traffic on Concord Road and now this brand spanking new development which has the possibility of severely altering the facade of the area to the opposite of how it has been preserved for years.

I can concur with their sentiments in that while they recognize the property can be developed, it is their hopes that those doing the development will be respectful of the people in the adjacent homes. It is their wish that noise and traffic be kept to a minimum and that their peaceful existence be maintained. It is not their desire to have yellow lines and stop lights along their streets. One could surmise that to accept these development plans might be yet a slippery slope towards such undesirable features in years to come.

In addition, the proposed EZ Stop development will be adjacent to yet another historic area, the Concord Masonic Cemetery and the Chota Masonic Lodge #253. The oldest grave in the Cemetery is 1865 and the Lodge itself was chartered in 1856. Many loved ones are incurred there, and it is an active cemetery where funerals are still being held. Many local families own grave plots that are either incurred by loved ones or are being held for use by their loved ones when their time comes. At one time, the cemetery also was the place of the Concord Cumberland Presbyterian church in 1870 and the Lodge was a one-room schoolhouse and meeting hall for the community. Because of the age of the cemetery, we know that there are over one hundred unmarked graves that reside there. The names of some of those interred in the unmarked graves are known but they do not have stones that mark the graves. However, we are aware that there are names of individuals whose death certificates and/or obituaries state that they are buried at Concord Masonic, but we do not know the location of the grave. As a result, we are fearful that some of those unknown graves reside in the wooded area that is along the border of the new development. We notice that the proposed development maps show an encroachment in that area and that concerns us.

In addition, the cemetery has used a portion of the southwest border to allow ingress and egress of burial equipment when needed. Again, the encroachment in that area is one that we question.

And, not to try to be flippant or funny, the proposed drive thru in the back of the facility raises the following question: If you were having a funeral of a loved one, or perhaps a military funeral is playing taps, would you like to hear them interrupted by a loud speaker asking "Would you like fries with that?"

The cemetery and lodge have been tucked away behind a barrier of trees, not visible from those passing by on Concord Road. I would question to what extent the development will remove that seclusion thus making this area open to visibility and introducing those who would want to vandalize. That is another serious concern.

To prevent the developers from what they feel they are entitled to monetary gain or from what they wish to see developed in that area is not realistic. We only hope that they will consider the implications of their proposal and make amendments to keep this historic area as is for all to enjoy for future generations. As such, our specific requests are that (1) traffic not be averted via Second Drive, (2) the drive thru window not be included as part of the plans, (3) an archaeological study be made of the border along the cemetery area to ensure that no graves be disturbed that are interred in the proposed area, (4) no encroachment on the cemetery grounds be allowed, (5) visibility to the cemetery and lodge be protected by trees and/or fence in keeping with the historic area code, (6) methods be incurred to prevent sound and bright lights upon the Concord Community and (7) the "look and feel" of the new development be consistent with what is currently in the historical area. Thank you for listening.

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