

The following is the complete letter written to the editor of the Farragut Press, with 2 additional post submittal updates provided at the end related to Use-On-Review case 6-B-24-UR [1025 Concord Rd.].

"Good evening, Editor Sloan:

...

As I explained in the presentation that I gave to the representatives of the proposed Concord Road EZ Stop facility during the June 20, 2024 town hall held at our Lodge fellowship hall, my intent as a current Lodge member was to provide a historical perspective to the development discussion from a long-standing member of the Concord community.

Chota Lodge #253, F&AM, was Chartered by our governing body, The Grand Lodge of Tennessee F. & A.M, in October 1856. Our current building was dedicated and occupied by us June 24, 1870. We have been Concord community members for almost 168 years and have occupied the current building for 154 years. It is our hope to remain a valued and integral part of this historic community far into our common future.

My presentation included aerial photos of the cemetery that we are stewards of, a very old cemetery map (that you took pictures of), comparisons of the proposed development boundary line adjacent to the cemetery property boundary, some old survey records and a series of area TVA maps showing changes in the community land use and physical features (roads, rail, water, etc.), observations about some potential property line inconsistencies based on KGIS data and the proposed development information that was provided, historical photos of the property showing the location of the old Cumberland Concord Presbyterian Church building (long since demolished) and the footprint of the same that was resident adjacent to the cemetery grounds and is now within the current cemetery boundaries, an example of the Lodge's official record books (example covered the 1856 to 1887 time period) was displayed (as shown in your photo of me with the book along with the related lodge building and old cemetery property map), and I provided some information related to known unmarked graves along the cemetery access lane (along the west edge of the cemetery).

This unmarked graves discussion was followed by a discussion about the high potential for additional undiscovered and unmarked graves that are suspected to exist over into the current forested area. An area that is outside of our property and control.

Most importantly, the fact that unmarked graves do exist alongside the west access road within our current cemetery and there are long standing tales of other unmarked graves to the west of the access road (in the proposed development area), begs the question as to why this concern has not been further studied and put to rest.

A further perspective as provided by another person who has assisted our cemetery committee for many years relates, --

"One thing you might want to point out as a fact checker: How do we know we have unmarked graves?

Well of course, old records show unmarked graves. But, due to modern technology and online information, we occasionally find on findagrave.com or ancestry.com, obituaries and/or death certificates that state "and John Doe was buried at Concord Masonic."

A check of our records does not show these people. We are left to surmise that they are indeed there or the records would not state that they were, but it leaves us scratching our heads as to where they are buried.

Another incident, some well-meaning soul (circa 1950's) took it upon themselves to move some loose stones so that he could mow.

In the 20 years that I have served on the cemetery committee, I remember looking through the woods for a Dixon grave that was alleged to be there. Never found a stone.

So there you have it. I feel that these developers need to proceed with caution."

As indicated in the TN code, there are strict guidelines as to how historic cemetery preservation is to be addressed. In addition, there are specified guidelines and laws related to this:

<https://www.tn.gov/historicalcommission/state-programs/tennessee-historic-cemetery-preservation-program/guidelines--laws--and-frequently-asked-questions.html>

In addition to the above, the Knox County planning guidelines related to the Old Concord village historic area includes the following clause: "Every reasonable effort shall be made to protect and preserve archeological resources affected by, or adjacent to any project."

Further, regardless of the eventual outcome of the Knox County Planning commission "use-on-review" decision related to this potential development, respect for the existing historic cemetery, the nature of the Concord Historic Village designation, and the character of the community that those of us who are directly adjacent to it is of prime importance to us all. We fully expect for the county and state ordinances, guidelines, and laws applicable to this historic community and to the cemetery in this area be fully respected.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this input.

We look forward to working closely with all of the interested parties to come to an appropriate path forward.

If you have questions or desire further details about the presentation provided, please contact me.

Respectfully,

James K. (Jim) Yoder,

Member of Chota Lodge #253, Chota Masonic Cemetery committee and Lodge Building Committee  
Trustee, working under the Grand Lodge of Tennessee F. & A. M.

Additional information:

Our Surveyor, Howard Dawson is working with the developer survey team toward addressing a property description inconsistency and overlap that has been identified as needing to be resolved along the western edge of the cemetery property which abuts the proposed development. This property line issue is still in dispute.

To our knowledge, no TDEC or other evaluation of the proposed development site has been undertaken to validate that no unmarked graves exist within the planned development site.