

Former cemetery a concern as old GHS demo set to begin

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Concern has been raised about the demolition of the old Galion High School with respect to the history of the site on Church and Union streets — Union Green Cemetery. Stories have circulated concerning bones and stones unearthed over the years. Other sources state that all the bodies were moved to Fairview Cemetery before construction on the 1917 building began.

The Galion board of education and Gilbane Construction released

information yesterday that will hopefully set minds at ease.

In a statement from the superintendent's office Kathy Jenney states: "With regard to our procedures: Ohio law requires that, when anyone does a project in which human remains are unearthed, all work is stopped and the police are notified. At that point the police would direct further steps.

"We would also notify the Ohio Historic Preservation Office who are typically involved in any archaeological finds in the state of Ohio.

"We have also contacted

CTL, the company who conducted the environmental studies. They can conduct a geological study to provide us with historical and literature-based documentation of additional information related to the history of this site which enables us to have all available data in hand as we proceed with demolition."

Jenney goes on to say, "Please keep in mind that the demolition process requires weeks of work on the actual building before the contractor begins any work on the foundation or the footprint of the building. In other words, any excavating of the foundation or ground beneath the building will be later in the project, well after the overall structure has been torn down."

Union Green Cemetery was owned by the First Reformed Church of Galion and the Christ English Lutheran Church of Galion, the German Peace Evangelical Lutheran Church of Galion and St. Joseph Church. According to historic sources the cemetery was bought by the board of education, the contents graves were removed and then reburied at the Fairview Cemetery.

The CTL Engineering Inc., Columbus, Phase I study (2005) states: "The cemetery poses a recognized environmental condition based on the the historic verses the modern boundaries of the cemetery, the release of synthetic organics or toxic pollutants, and the microbiological contami-

nants including viruses, bacteria and pathogens."

In that same environmental study CTL states: "At the time of the site investigation, no plaques were noted in the cemetery denoting a history of the place or of historic boundaries. However, vigilance should be taken during excavation of the subject property. If any unmarked graves are uncovered, the local law enforcement unit will need to be notified to investigate and all construction activities will need to halt. At the time an unmarked grave is uncovered, the site is considered officially a crime scene until it is further evaluated.

A representative of AJ Riley, the contractor for the demolition, was unavailable for comment.