

Auspicious Beginning for New Fire House

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It was an auspicious day for the Norfolk Volunteer Fire Department last Saturday when it broke ground for its new fire house on Shepard Road. A project 15 years in the making, the new fire house will replace a 50-year-old structure that the department has long-since outgrown.

A good-size crowd filled the old fire house where speakers described the long process that brought the plan to fruition. Fire House Committee member Matt Ludwig said the groundbreaking was “more than a ceremony, it’s a reward for everyone. We look at this site and see more than dirt and equipment. We see a future for us for generations and decades to come.”

Ludwig, a 29-year veteran, said, “Building a fire house is about people, patience and a whole lot of teamwork. It’s not the result of one person’s or one group’s effort, but of the community coming together.”

Fire Chief Brian Hutchins added that the new fire station “reflects the trust the town puts in its volunteers to be ready, dependable and there when someone needs us. ... Today isn’t about turning soil—it’s about strengthening our ability to protect the people who live in, work in and are connected to Norfolk.”

The new structure will nearly triple the space the firefighters have to work in and is expected to be completed next December. “A fire house is so much more than a place to house our trucks,” said

department president Paul Padua. He reported that volunteers put in 5,500 documented manhours at the old fire house this year. “We do a lot of things here and we do them for you,” he told the crowd.

Volunteers who served on the committees over the years were introduced, but special praise was reserved for former first selectman Matt Riiska, who shepherded the effort over the last five years. Emcee Jon Barbagallo termed him “the person who probably got us to where we are today,” and U.S. Congresswoman Jahana Hayes said his “robust” application made it possible for her to make the case for \$500,000 in federal funding.

Thanks were also extended to the Capital Campaign Committee, which has so far has raised more than \$3 million toward the \$9-million-plus cost of the building.



The Norfolk Fire Department broke ground for its new fire house last Saturday. Top, town, state and federal officials join the Fire House Committee members to ceremonially break ground.

Above left, Fire Chief Brian Hutchins and U.S. Congresswoman Jahana Hayes address the crowd.