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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Borough of Dunellen and Dunellen Fire Department to Celebrate Grand Reopening and Rededication of George W. Hodulik Firehouse on Saturday, December 7, 2024, at 12:00 PM

November 19, 2024 - Dunellen, NJ - The Borough of Dunellen and Dunellen Fire Department are excited to announce the grand reopening and rededication of the George W. Hodulik Firehouse on Saturday, December 7 at 12:00 PM, following a fire that broke out in October 2021 and shut down the facility for three years.

The fire, which occurred on the afternoon of October 12, 2021, began when the Dunellen Fire Department's Truck 1 caught fire in the apparatus bay of the facility. The blaze resulted in the loss of four apparatus including Truck 1, Engine 3, Fire-Rescue, and the Utility 6 Pick-Up Truck, and caused extensive smoke damage throughout the entire building. Emergency response came from the Dunellen Police Department, Rescue Squad, and OEM, along with the Dunellen, Middlesex, Green Brook, Bound Brook, New Market, River Road, and North Stelton Fire Departments.

In the immediate aftermath of the fire, local fire departments quickly came to the Borough of Dunellen's aid to ensure that fire services to our community remained uninterrupted. The Middlesex Borough and Green Brook Fire Departments played particularly critical roles, with the Green Brook Fire Department loaning one of their trucks to the Dunellen Fire Department and offering their facility as a temporary base of operations for our firefighters until a temporary garage facility was completed behind the George W. Hodulik Firehouse. Fire departments nationwide showed their support, including the Chester Township Fire Department Station 47 in Pennsylvania, who also generously loaned one of their engines to the Dunellen Fire Department to help them continue providing service.

Dunellen Fire Chief Bill Scott expressed his gratitude for the outpouring of support saying, "I want to thank our community, the local fire departments, Mayor Cilento, the Dunellen Borough Council, and everyone who supported us these past few years. Special thanks to the Middlesex, Green Brook, Bound Brook, New Market, River Road, and North Stelton Fire Departments who responded to the initial incident and put out the fire in our building. It's been a long road, but the Dunellen Fire Department is excited to be back home and operating at full power to continue serving our community."

Restoration work on the George W. Hodulik Firehouse began shortly after the fire. Due to smoke damage, the building had to be gutted, leading to a complete overhaul of the structure. While a major

focus was on restoring the basic services and equipment that were lost, all systems within the building were modernized as the building transitioned from its original 1962 construction to a 2024 state-of-the-art facility. Upgrades include new electric, HVAC, and building systems, and the installation of an elevator, full fire sprinklers, display screens, and a PA system to allow enhanced training sessions to be held in the hall.

To replace the vehicles lost in the fire, the Dunellen Fire Department has proudly welcomed brand new Engine 3 and Truck 4, which join the sole survivor of the blaze, Engine 2, which was sent to E-One in Florida to be fully refurbished and has been back with the department since late 2022. All three apparatus were manufactured by E-One in Florida and sold and serviced by Absolute Fire Protection in South Plainfield, NJ.

“We are incredibly excited to officially welcome the Dunellen Fire Department back to the new and improved George W. Hodulik Firehouse. The fire in 2021 was a tragedy, but it has been incredible to see the camaraderie between our first responders, both near and far, and the eagerness of our community to come together and help out in any way they could. This building has been a staple of our community since the ‘60s and now it is set to serve generations of Dunellen firefighters to come,” said Mayor Jason F. Cilento.

The George W. Hodulik Firehouse was renamed to honor lifelong Dunellen resident, George W. Hodulik. George, who is currently 98 years old, has been a member of the Dunellen Fire Department since 1961 and served in the U.S. Navy from 1944 to 1946 in World War II and from 1950 to 1953 in the Korean War.

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