

New Oak Grove Avenue fire station open but not quite finished

By Dave Boyce
Almanac Staff Writer

Firefighters and their fire-trucks moved into the rebuilt fire station at 700 Oak Grove Ave. in Menlo Park on June 20, but the firehouse — Station 6, built at a cost of about \$7.55 million — is not yet fully operational.

By the end of 2018, a ramp should be in place at the rear of the building to complete the drive-through garage/bay and allow firefighters to park trucks in the station without having to back in, Chief Harold Schapelhouman of the Menlo Park Fire Protection District told The Almanac.

For now, firefighters returning from a deployment will continue to temporarily stop traffic on Oak Grove while the driver backs the truck into the bay, the chief said.

Among the features still to come: a detached garage for antique firefighting vehicles, a storage building with solar panels, a diesel fuel station, and a 1918 fire station to be physically relocated from district headquarters and used as a museum for old firefighting equipment.

CJW Architecture of Portola Valley designed the new station, and it was built by general contractor Gonsalves & Stronck Construction Company, Inc. of San Carlos.

In a statement, the chief said the 8,300-square-foot station, replacing one of 3,000 square feet, is “completely noncombustible,” is built to a higher-than-usual seismic resilience standard and, per the district’s buy-American policy, uses framing made from domestic steel and aluminum.

Individual rooms

The new station has two bays, one that is drive-through and the other with parking for one vehicle and with two large offices located behind it.

Also on the first floor are an elevator — included to make trips to the grocery store less onerous — a stairway, a generator, an internet-technology room, bathrooms and a decontamination area, the chief said. The station includes a ventilated room for firefighters to remove and store their firefighting clothing so harmful gasses accumulated while crews are on the job can be

safely emitted.

The station has one fire pole. On-duty firefighters sleep on the second floor in individual rooms and share two common bathrooms. Each room could have had its own bathroom, the chief said, but firefighters asked for common facilities so as to minimize the number of daily cleaning tasks.

The kitchen is also upstairs. In addition to preparing their own meals, firefighters’ daily duties include keeping the station more or less spotless inside and out during their 48-hour shift, the chief said.

The fire district is careful to recruit people who are self-reliant, he said. “They’re responsible for that building.”

Small museum

The small house on Hoover Street in which on-duty firefighters have been sleeping has been torn down. The museum will be housed in a single-story carriage house of about 180 square feet with a gable roof and bell tower and currently located at 300 Middlefield Road. “I’m super stoked about watching that thing being moved,” the chief said.



Photo by Peter Mootz

The new fire house on Oak Grove Avenue is completely noncombustible, built to a higher-than-usual seismic resilience standard, and uses framing made from domestic steel and aluminum.

A detached garage will house two old firetrucks, one dating from the 1930s and the other from the 1950s. Also there: a hose wagon dating from 1899, and old equipment including hose nozzles, fire extinguishers, fire alarm boxes, air-supply equipment and masks. The Jaws of Life, a modern device that firefighters use to pry open the doors of wrecked vehicles, will be there, too, the chief said.

The district’s first drone is a candidate for the museum, the chief said. “Somewhere down the road somebody will say, wow, that was pretty basic,” he said. ☐

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