

Southern Dutchess

Vol. 73, # 47 75 cents

Fishkill, East Fishkill, Wappingers Falls, Town of Wappinger, Town and City of Poughkeepsie

Groundbreaking for 80-foot flagpole in East Fishkill



Members of the East Fishkill Town Board, Council members Tom Franco, Marianne Flores and East Fishkill Supervisor Nicholas D'Alessandro dig with shovels during the ceremonial groundbreaking for the flagpole at Rotary Park, off Route 82, in the hamlet of Hopewell Junction in East Fishkill on Nov. 10.

-Photos by Kristine Coulter

By Kristine Coulter

A groundbreaking ceremony was held at the future flagpole at Rotary Park in East Fishkill recently. The park is located off Route 82, near the Acme and Chase Bank.

The location is in the center of Hopewell Junction, said Patrick Manning, "and it is indicative of the transformation of Hopewell Junction." Manning is the economic developer for the Town of East Fishkill. He said the goal is to have the hamlet continue to have more walkability, shopability and

local businesses.

In fact, it was a local business owner in Hopewell Junction that mentioned the idea of having a flag in the center of the hamlet.

Christine Bellizzi, owner of Bouquets by Christine, mentioned the idea, less than a year ago, explained Manning.

Town of East Fishkill Supervisor Nicholas D'Alessandro said the flag and park are "going to be wonderful."

"It shows what a tremendous community we have here," said D'Alessandro.



A rendering of the American flag and flagpole at Rotary Park in East Fishkill.

During the remarks he made at the ceremony, the supervisor said, "When Patrick told me about it (the flag) I couldn't have been happier." He stated, "When people drive by here and finally see that 80-foot tall flagpole and flag here ... it means freedom, unity, service to our country." D'Alessandro added: "We want to try and help these business owners come and invest in these facilities."

Councilman Tom Franco noted the

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motto for the Town of East Fishkill is 'East Fishkill ... it's a great place to live.' "We love our veterans, we love our first responders, and we love our country," said Franco. He mentioned Veterans Park that is proposed for across the street from the East Fishkill Town Hall, on Route 376. He said the future park is just under 4 acres and will have a Memorial Garden, Memorial Plaza, Gold Star Plaza, water features, and a space for flag burning ceremonies. Earlier this year, he said, the clearing of trees began.

Manny Bacon American Legion Post 1758 Commander James Reynolds noted that Air Force Veteran Johnny Cash released a song "Ragged Old Flag" in 1974. "The lyrics were powerful," said Reynolds. Some of the lyrics include:

"He said, 'I don't like to brag, but we're kinda proud of that ragged old flag

And the government for which she stands

Has scandalized throughout out the land

And she's getting thread bare, and she's wearin' thin

But she's in good shape, for the shape she's in

Cause she's been through the fire before

And I believe she can take a whole lot more."

The flag, said Reynolds, "not only symbolizes what our country means but what it can be." He added: "When tested - America always passes."

Virgil Capollari, on behalf of Assemblyman Anil Beephan Jr., who was previously on the East Fishkill Town Board, said, "Seeing this [flag] on one side of the road and then the impending Veterans Park-this is how you do it."

Manning thanked the East Fishkill Highway Department for going "above and beyond" with the work for the future flagpole. He also thanked the town engineer Scott Bryant, the Town Board and the secretary to the supervisor, Gina Grippo.

The East Fishkill Memorial Bench will be placed in the area near the flagpole, it was stated.

The \$30,000 needed has mostly been raised, said Manning. At the time of the ceremony, \$2,850 was still needed.

Local jewelry store owner James Bellizzi, who is married to Christine Bellizzi, read "Old Glory."

A portion of it states: "My name is



Rotarians from the Rotary of East Fishkill take part in the ceremonial groundbreaking for the flagpole at Rotary Park, off Route 82, in the hamlet of Hopewell Junction in East Fishkill on Nov. 10.

-Photos by Kristine Coulter

Old Glory.

I fly atop the world's tallest buildings.

I stand watch in America's halls of justice.

I fly majestically over institutions of learning.

I stand guard with power in the world.

Look up and see me.

I stand for peace, honor, truth and justice.

I stand for freedom. I am confident.

I am arrogant. I am proud."

Nicole Magro, president of the East Fishkill Rotary Club, said, "Here is a big example of what we can do together as a community."

The flag is expected to fly on the new flagpole in early December.