



May 13, 2011

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State and Local Officials Join in Edward M. Kennedy Community Health Center Groundbreaking

Construction at new site to begin in June

FRAMINGHAM -- Local and state leaders, including Lt. Governor Timothy Murray and U.S. Rep. James McGovern (D-Worcester), joined Toni McGuire, President and CEO of the Edward M. Kennedy Community Health Center (EMKCHC) on Monday, May 9th, as they marked the official start of renovations to the new health center site at 354 Waverly St.

Through a combination of federal and state funds, along with a \$1 million grant from the Metro West Community Health Care Foundation, the \$12 million renovation project will transform the existing office building into a comprehensive community health center with 14 exam rooms, a medical lab and ample administrative space for offices and meeting rooms.

Lt. Governor Murray noted that he “was pleased to join the groundbreaking ceremony for the Edward M. Kennedy Community Health Center,” adding that “the center will provide needed health care services for this region, while also honoring the legacy of the late Senator Kennedy, who accomplished so much for Massachusetts.”

Saying that “it takes a village” to jumpstart a project of this size, McGuire thanked the town of Framingham for its support, in addition to the work of state and federal officials who helped secure the necessary financing. McGuire also singled out the members of the Metro West Community Health Care Foundation, particularly President Martin Cohen, who have been longtime supporters of the community health center.

Before a crowd of 100 people who packed the first floor of the new health center site, McGuire said that the Edward M. Kennedy Community Health Center, which includes a large facility in Worcester, currently employs more than 350 people. “We are an economic engine for the region,” she said, noting that most EMKCHC employees are local residents. “Our new location

will bring construction jobs to Framingham, as well as additional jobs when the Waverly Street center is open.”

EMKCHC-Framingham opened in 2004 with a leased storefront in downtown Framingham. There are currently two storefront locations at 19 Concord St and 72 Union Ave., in addition to a dental office. When the Waverly Street facility is completed in late spring, 2012, the two medical clinics will be closed and the dental office will remain at 32 Concord St.

Since 2004 when the first health center opened, through June, 2010, EMKCHC-Framingham has provided more than 67,000 medical visits to nearly 10,000 patients. The health center provides primary medical care, preventive care, acute care and care for chronic diseases. Many patients at the EMKCHC, McGuire explained, are at high risk for many chronic diseases, including diabetes, hypertension, asthma and depression. “The primary and preventive health care we provide in our community health centers helps to keep patients seeking non-acute care out of the emergency rooms, which is a much more expensive alternative,” she explained.

Congressman McGovern, who has been a longtime supporter of EMKCHC-Worcester, said the community health center that bears the name of the late Sen. Ted Kennedy, is a fitting tribute to the man who helped create the national community health center movement. “This health center is exactly what Sen. Kennedy envisioned more than 40 years ago.” Congressman McGovern said. “He would be so proud of what this health center has accomplished and what it has meant to the people of Framingham and Worcester.”

At the conclusion of the ceremony, attired in hardhats and safety goggles, McGuire, along with EMKCHC executive director Paula Kaminow, medical director Dr. Deval Shah-Canning, board chairman Matt Hogan, Congressman McGovern, Lt. Governor Murray, State Sen. Karen Spilka, State Representatives Tom Sannicandro and Chris Walsh, executives of Erland Construction, general contractors for the construction project, grabbed sledgehammers and took a swing at a dividing wall that will be removed during construction. Construction will officially begin in early June with renovations completed by late spring, 2012.