

## Plans for first Montauk public pool finally taking shape



Sarah Iudicone, Montauk Playhouse Community Center Foundation president, and East Hampton Town Supervisor Peter Van Scoyoc stand on the grounds where officials say Montauk's first public pool will be constructed.

By Joe Werkmeister  
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Learning how to swim in Montauk soon could be a little less salty

East Hampton Town officials and the nonprofit Montauk Playhouse Community Center Foundation plan to break ground early this summer on a state-of-the-art aquatic center that will become the oceanfront community's first public pool.

Swim lessons for Montauk residents in the past often meant chilly dips in the ocean or bay.

"It's challenging, between the crabs nibbling on your toes, the colder water, the choppiness," said East Hampton Town Supervisor Peter Van Scoyoc, recalling how he taught his children to swim.

### POOL PLANS

- Project groundbreaking scheduled for early summer
- East Hampton Town will bond \$5 million for the project, which donations also will support
- Facility could open in late 2024 or early 2025

The center will feature a four-lane, 25-yard pool for swim lessons, lifeguard training and lap swimming, along with a smaller "wellness" pool, officials said.

The aquatic center will occupy the other half of the Montauk Playhouse Community Center, which opened in 2006 at 240 Edgemere St. under a public/private partnership.

The center features a gymnasium for basketball and other sports and also is home to a day care center, a senior nutrition center, a town clerk annex office and the fitness gym Body Tech.

East Hampton Town acquired the property in 1999 and the foundation formed the same year to convert the building that dates to the 1920s into a community center.

The goal of adding a pool to the facility began in 1999, officials said. Grassroots fundraising for it has included "bake sales and movie nights" over the years, according to Van Scoyoc.

"As far as fundraising, you'd be really hard pressed to find anybody who lives in Montauk who hasn't contributed to this over the years," he added.

The town plans to bond \$5 million toward the project while the foundation's ongoing fundraising will cover the remaining costs. Foundation officials declined to disclose how much the nonprofit has raised to date, but noted there are enough funds to cover the aquatic center's completion.

A community cultural center will be added to the facility's second floor during the construction project's second phase.

Van Scoyoc said there still are "a lot of moving parts" in terms of calculating a final price tag and the next step will be requesting bids for construction with an eye toward a facility opening in late 2024 or early 2025.

Right now the nearest public pool is the East Hampton YMCA, about 16 miles west.

Officials said the new facility also will offer aquatic fitness and rehabilitation programs.

Sarah Iudicone, the foundation's president and a part-time Montauk resident, detailed plans for the aquatic center project at an East Hampton Town Board meeting on April 11.

Officials said a New York City-based swim instruction school known as Imagine Swimming could be the facility's operator, since neither the town nor the foundation wants that job.

Lars Merseburg, the company's CEO, told board members last week that he believes his business can "build this program for decades to come."

A former German Olympian, Merseburg said he is optimistic residents will be swimming laps inside soon.

"We have so much momentum now," he added. •