

\$14 Million for Swimming Pool, Cultural Center in Long-Awaited Final Phase of Montauk Playhouse Rebirth



by Michael Wright
Feb. 14, 2024

The engineering firm overseeing the designs of the new Montauk Playhouse swimming pool and aquatic center has recommended that East Hampton Town and the Montauk Playhouse Community Center Foundation tackle both the aquatic center and the planned second phase community “cultural center” at the same time.

Bids the town and the project managers, Island Structures Engineering, opened in December put the total cost of tackling both phases of the project at once at \$13.93 million.

The bulk of that cost is for the construction of the aquatic center, which will have two swimming pools — one 25-yard, four-lane, lap pool, and a smaller, shallower recreational pool for therapeutic classes and mothers with small babies — men’s and women’s changing areas and locker rooms around the perimeter, and a lounge area in the vaulted entryway that will be open to both the first and second floors.

The foundation has said it plans to contract with Imagine Swimming, a New York City-based swimming instruction program founded by a Montauk resident, to operate the pool facilities and programs when it opens to the public.

The swimming pool has been the ultimate vision for the Playhouse since the cavernous building — originally an indoor tennis arena constructed by Montauk’s visionary developer Carl Fisher in the 1920s — was donated to the town in 1999 and the Playhouse foundation was formed. After the southern half of the building underwent an extensive renovation for a gymnasium and a variety of community spaces from 2003 to 2006, the northern half of the space was left completely unfinished with the future aquatic center use in mind — and on the agenda of the Playhouse foundation’s fundraising campaign.

After more than a decade of fundraising, the foundation announced last year that it felt it had the money — with a \$5 million pledge from the East Hampton Town Board — to build the swimming facilities,

but was careful not to reveal what the price range they could afford was ahead of the competitive bidding process.

The Island Structures report to the town was made public this week ahead of a planned presentation on the project scheduled for Tuesday, which was canceled due to weather and rescheduled for this Thursday, February 15. The firm recommended that the town accept bids on four separate components of the project: construction, HVAC, plumbing and fire sprinklers, and electrical, and that it accept “alternative” add-ons for the second-floor work.

The second-floor plans have been described as a “flexible, multi-use” space geared toward arts and education programs, community events and meeting spaces.

The low bid for the construction work on the aquatic center was from Crossroads Construction, for \$8.36 million, and an additional \$850,000 for the second-floor construction work. The low HVAC bid was \$2.5 million for the aquatic center, plus \$315,000 for the second floor. The lowest plumbing bid was \$825,500 for both floors, and electrical was \$988,505 for both floors.

East Hampton Town Councilman David Lys said that the bids had been about on par with what the town and Playhouse foundation had expected, and that officials were pleased to see that the efficiency savings of incorporating the second phase work into the aquatic center construction had kept the costs for completing the full project in one phase within reach financially.

“I think we’ll be accepting the alternative bids, which is for the second floor, which was an element we weren’t sure we’d have the funding for. But with the economies of scale, the bids for that came in at a very good price,” Lys said this week. “So I think we’re going to be able to complete the entire project at once now, which is a great thing for the foundation board and for the Montauk community.”

Along with the \$5 million the town has pledged for the project aquatic center phase, the New York State Assembly last year earmarked \$1.7 million specifically for the cultural center component of the project.

The total add-ons for the second-floor construction work in the bid package recommended by Island Structures was \$1.525 million.

Playhouse Foundation President Sarah Iudicone offered only that the foundation is looking forward to the forthcoming report from Island Structures and to the town accepting the bids that will kick off the final phase of the project.

Lys said that the bidding process went very smoothly and that the town is happy that the construction costs were within the ranges anticipated.

“Jeanne Carroza and our staff did a really great job with it, and I’m excited to see this project get moving forward,” Lys said, referring to the town’s senior purchasing agent. “We are confident that we’ll be going ahead with these bids and see this project come to fruition.”