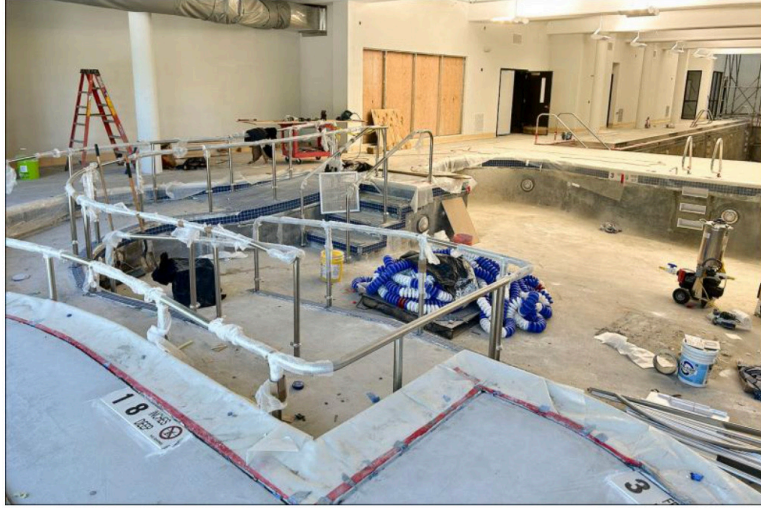


Montauk Playhouse Renovations Are Almost Done

Aquatic and cultural center could open this summer



At the Montauk Playhouse's new aquatic center, a ramp leading into the therapy pool allows easier access from the pool deck.

Denis Hartnett

By Denis Hartnett

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"This is a town project that's on time and under budget," said Maureen Cahill, a board member of the Montauk Community Playhouse Foundation, where a new aquatic and cultural center is on track to open before summer's end. "It's a really good model of town, state, and private funding that put this together. Without those three it doesn't work."

Ms. Cahill, alongside her fellow board member, Jennifer Iacono, led a tour of the space Monday morning. While the aquatic and cultural center should be complete this summer, there is no definite opening date. The biggest wild card, board members said, is the pool area, where there is a fair amount of work to go before it can be opened to the public.

Much has happened since early October, when the first loads of dirt were removed from the raw space inside the playhouse that would become the aquatic center.

A four-lane lap pool and a therapy pool, featuring a ramp that leads into the pool from the deck, are in place, but the decking itself needs to be installed, as does the tiling. "I've got to get the epoxy down first," said Terry Revere, owner of Crossroad Construction and the general contractor on site, "without the dust, without the water, without the humidity."

When that is completed, "The next thing that has to happen is the aquatic center operator has to be able to take over the space and get it working, get the water going, and staffing," Ms. Iacono said. "They need some time to do that and whatever kind of Health Department permits are needed."

The roof of the original playhouse was entirely glass, letting light shine down onto the indoor tennis courts once located where the pools are now. Part of the roof above the pool deck is styled like the original, allowing natural light to flood the pool area.

Aside from the pool, the largest parts of the project are almost complete. "And then you have the things that you don't see," Mr. Revere said. "You have fire alarms and fire marshals and the Health Department."

What was once an open construction zone on the first floor has now been shaped into two locker rooms, with showers and doors that open onto the pool deck. There is also a separate family changing area accessible from the other side of the pool deck.

On the outside a new parking lot has been paved on the west side of the building, with a renovated entrance featuring a handicapped-accessible elevator that also functions as a freight elevator. There's stadium-style seating built in next to the right side staircase.

On the new second floor, carpet was being installed Monday in the vast new event space, which has two motorized foldable walls so it can be split up in three separate rooms when needed.

Ms. Iacono said the Playhouse Foundation has collaborated with Chris Pfund of Quantum Sound Systems and Jason Nower of LTV Studios to ensure the space had all the needed technological infrastructure. And a six-foot walk from the space is a warming kitchen with four ovens, two professional refrigerators, and a full sink with three stations.

The vision for this space is grand. When it's finished it will be one of the largest meeting spaces in Montauk, let alone the East End, and the board would like to see it used for all kinds of programming all year long.

"You know in November when we all want to get together and we've got our friends at the firehouse and everybody else right around here to all collaborate together," Ms. Iacono said, "I'm excited about that."

Down the hall there is a small corner sitting area, with windows and a view out onto Fort Pond Bay. Next to this is a conference room with glass windows, also with a foldable wall so it can be split into two spaces if needed.

The foundation is hopeful that it will be able to provide the needed furnishing for the space, but it is still raising the money to do so. "It all depends on the fund-raising," Ms. Iacono said. "We would like to be able to provide chairs, absolutely chairs, tables hopefully, but storage is also at a premium here."