



PRESS RELEASE - August 14, 2013

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Fort Pond House Saved: 4-Acre Park Spared Bulldozer and McMansion

"Montauk's parks are not for sale to the highest bidder," said Jeremy Samuelson, CCOM's Executive Director, reacting to East Hampton Town officials' decision to stop listing for sale publicly owned parkland.

The 4-acre park known as Fort Pond House was officially withdrawn from the market Tuesday ensuring public access to Fort Pond for future generations. The East Hampton Town Board's action is intended to pave the way for CCOM and Third House Nature Center (THNC) to withdraw a lawsuit opposing any sale as illegal under New York State law. Three members of the Board, Peter Van Scoyoc, Sylvia Overby and Dominic Stanzone, also moved to name the park for Carol Morrison, a founder of both CCOM and THNC.

New York State Assemblyman Fred W. Thiele, Jr. supports the Board's action saying "The decision by the East Hampton Town Board to withdraw Fort Pond House from the market and recognize it as town parkland is to be commended. I applaud the Board members who made this happen and the work of CCOM under the dynamic leadership of Jeremy Samuelson. This is a strong signal that East Hampton is again willing to assert its leadership role in environmental protection. Equally exciting is the fact that the park will now be named after one of CCOM's founders, Carol Morrison. As a municipal attorney for East Hampton and then as an elected official, I had the pleasure to work with Carol on project after project promoting open space preservation. It is fitting that this property be a memorial to her tireless work to keep Montauk a special place."

CCOM has spent nearly \$30,000 fighting to ensure Fort Pond House was not sold and turned into another McMansion. "We have spent three years in State Supreme Court fighting the sale of Fort Pond House to private developers," Samuelson said. "It took time and a lot of work but a majority of the Town Board came to appreciate that continuing to offer the park for sale was wrong for our community and that fighting us in court was wasting tax payers' money."

"Saving Fort Pond House has been worth every minute, every meeting, every dollar we have put into saving this community resource," said Bob Stern, CCOM's President. "I hope public officials will think twice next time before trying to sell protected parkland in Montauk or any other part of East Hampton."

Fort Pond House, now Carol Morrison Park, was purchased by East Hampton Town in 2003 and was used for environmental education and arts classes until the Town Board closed the property in 2010. The Montauk Boy Scouts, Montauk Public School, Third House Nature Center, CCOM, Hampton's Shakespeare and numerous other organizations and groups routinely used the property.

"I hope this resolves the matter once and for all," Samuelson said. "Our environmental attorney will review the Board's resolution to ensure everything is in order. CCOM looks forward to working with the Town and the community to rehabilitate the park and see it opened again to the public."