



Four Win East Hampton Town Water Grants

By Christopher Walsh

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As it was expected to do, the East Hampton Town Board awarded grant funding for four water quality improvement projects last Thursday, following a recommendation made last month by the Water Quality Technical Advisory Committee. Two of the funding recipients are in Springs, and two are in Montauk.

The committee had issued a request for applications in June. Ten were received and reviewed by a subcommittee, said Mellissa Winslow of the town's Natural Resources Department, who serves on the committee. Four applications were approved, five were deemed incomplete, and one was deemed ineligible, Ms. Winslow said.

Grant recommendations are based on the 2019 community preservation fund water quality budget of \$1.25 million, as well as the flow rate of applicants' sanitary systems compared with an average single-family residence's 440-gallon daily flow.

Up to 20 percent of community preservation fund money can be allocated to water quality improvement projects.

The committee assigned a score to each application, and the Springs School received the highest. The board awarded \$227,272.72 for the project to upgrade the school's failing septic system to an innovative alternative system that will include an advanced leaching system. Existing flow is 5,000 gallons per day, Ms. Winslow said, and the school, near Pussy's Pond and Accabonac Harbor, is in a high-priority area. The anticipated effluent nitrogen concentration of the new system is 5 milligrams per liter, representing a 92-percent reduction. A New York State grant will pay for much of the \$1.65

million total cost of the project. The new system has been installed and is expected to become operational during the Thanksgiving recess.

The Springs General Store is also planning an upgrade from a failing conventional septic system to a low-nitrogen system approved by the Suffolk County Health Department. The project will cost \$155,430, and the request was for engineering, excavation, and installation. Based on the structure's existing sanitary flow and equivalence to 1.99 single-family homes, the committee recommended a \$23,990 award.

In Montauk, the West Lake Inn, near Lake Montauk on West Lake Drive, applied for and received funding for engineering, excavation, and installation of a low-nitrogen septic system upgrade. Based on existing flow of 2,641 gallons per day, the committee recommended awarding \$120,045 of a requested \$156,180.

Lastly, the board awarded Concerned Citizens of Montauk \$25,211 to fund a floating wetlands project in Fort Pond, which has experienced blooms of toxic cyanobacteria, or blue-green algae, in recent years. The pilot project, which has not been conducted in the town to date, will see vegetation affixed to floating mats drawing nitrogen and phosphorous out of the water. The mats are then removed, the vegetation is sent for composting, and the process is repeated.

Ms. Winslow said that the anticipated nutrient reduction in one year is calculated at almost 28 pounds of nitrogen and around 15 pounds of phosphorous, "a pretty good amount of nutrients being removed from Fort Pond, which is a stressed water body." The project's cost is \$36,000.

"It's a closed system," Laura Tooman, C.C.O.M.'s president, said of the pond, "so we can have a much better idea of how effective this project will be," though "a multifaceted, comprehensive, watershed-driven approach" will be necessary to achieve measurable improvement. "The town has been really great, pursuing an active land acquisition program in the Fort Pond watershed," she said, and C.C.O.M. is working to incentivize property owners within the watershed to upgrade their septic systems.

"I think the projects that you're seeing are really great recommendations that are going to have measurable improvements," Ms. Tooman said, "being so close — either in or immediately adjacent — to waters."