

# Orleans seeks to preserve Sipson Island

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By Ethan Genter

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**Purchase of \$1.5M conservation restriction to go before town meeting.**

ORLEANS — Town meeting voters will be looking to the water with the chance to put a conservation restriction on all of Sipson Island, the last private island in Pleasant Bay, as well as purchase a pond-facing parcel on Lonnie's Pond.

The town is proposing to buy a \$1.5 million conservation restriction, which would preserve the land in perpetuity, from a private benefactor who has a purchase-and-sale agreement for the 24-acre island, Community Preservation Committee Chairman Alan McClennen said.

The committee approved both plans at its meeting Thursday, setting them up to go before the annual spring town meeting.

After the benefactor buys the land, the Friends of Pleasant Bay, a nonprofit conservation organization, would buy all but one of the lots on the island. The benefactor would continue to own that lot, where there currently is a house, McClennen said.

Originally, the plan suggested that the town buy pieces of the island with the Friends of Pleasant Bay, but there were reservations about the town spending money on island land because it may not be accessible to the whole community, he said.

The committee approved the town spending community preservation funds on the conservation restriction, which would stop development on the entire island.

A trust to maintain the island would be created, according to the application for the project from the Friends of Pleasant Bay.

The island is one of the three largest unprotected tracts in the town and “represents a conservation opportunity that is unlikely to occur again for many years if kept in private hands,” the application states.

A purchase-and-sale agreement has been signed, said Moncrieff Cochran, the president of Friends of Pleasant Bay, but the price has been kept confidential at the request of the seller. The island is currently listed at \$7,985,000.

The Friends of Pleasant Bay is working to raise \$3 million to contribute to the purchase, he said, with a closing date in January 2020.

“The town is really buying public access with their dollars,” he said. “There’s never been public access to Sipson Island.”

In his role as chairman of the Open Space Committee, Cochran is also leading the way for the town to buy a small parcel on Lonnie’s Pond.

The lot is just over an acre and has about 60 feet of frontage on the pond and 224 feet of frontage on Herring Brook Road. The town hopes to provide public access to the pond and install a set of stairs and a kayak rack. There would also be a small parking lot.

The cost of the parcel is still under negotiation with the owners, the Herrick Family Trust, but Cochran said he expected the Open Space Committee would be asking for about \$500,000 for the entire purchase.

In a survey done years ago, residents' No. 1 preference in expanding recreation facilities was to add public access to freshwater and saltwater shorelines. Cochran is working to get the word out about the plans and drum up support for the projects ahead of town meeting.

McClennen stressed that the two requests would not raise tax rates, as they come from the Community Preservation Act account, which already has money set aside for these types of projects.