

OPINION

A19 Friday, April 26, 2019 | The Cape Codder |

On Sipson Island and the

The Sipson Island deal

Three Orleans selectmen made a good decision by supporting the purchase of a conservation restriction on 18 acres of Sipson Island, in Pleasant Bay.

The cost: \$1.5 million in community preservation funds.

Town meeting voters will take up the funding article on May 13; it will require a two-thirds approval, and we hope that voters will embrace the chance to keep Sipson Island virtually undeveloped.

We especially liked Selectman Meff Runyon's statement as he voted in favor of the purchase a few weeks ago. He recalled his time on the town open space committee, saying, "I can't think of an open space purchase I look back on and regret. My only regret is the ones that were not made."

Not only is this a major win for preservation overall, it is an opportunity to expand the region's recreational scope to include this pristine island.

With beach erosion an ongoing threat, the mild winter of 2019 aside, and the great white issue looming not so far offshore, it's important that Orleans and other towns take steps, even small ones, to provide alternate forms of recreation and new experiences for the summer visitors who are the backbone of the Cape economy, as well as for local folks.

In our recent report on how the season is shaping up

this year, ["Outlook mostly upbeat despite shark threat," April 5 edition] one long-time summer visitor told our reporter that her family still wants to book vacations here, in their case Wellfleet, but will spend less time in the water and will have to find other attractions.

Most likely, some say most definitely, she won't be alone in looking for other things to do on a hot summer day, since the back shore waters have become shark territory. Kayaking or boating to Sipson Island and walking its trails could be one of those options.

Some disagree with this use of CPC funds, and take issue with the accessibility of the island.

We believe it's a reasonable use of this available funding, and there are a dozen town landings on Pleasant Bay in Orleans, Harwich and Chatham, where people can launch their kayaks, canoes or small boats, and make for Sipson, Mark Robinson, of the Compact of Cape Cod Conservation Trusts, reminded the selectmen.

Selectmen Dave Currier and Mark Mathison voted against supporting the funding, but there have been many local people working behind the scenes to make the Sipson Island deal a reality. Among them are members of the Friends of Pleasant Bay, who have already raised \$1,150,000

and are targeting \$1,750,000 more to help reach the purchase price of \$4.8 million.

Grant money also is being sought.

In the end, a Sipson Island Trust will own the land, and a backer who fronted the money for the sale from private hands will keep one of the island's existing houses. Another existing dwelling is envisioned to become an instructional facility for visitors.

Selectman Alan McClenen said of the proposal: "We have a unique opportunity and should not let it pass."

He's right.

