

# The Cape Cod Chronicle

Our View: Preserve Sipson Island

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Sipson Island. ED MARONEY PHOTO

In 1974, the Chatham Conservation Foundation purchased Strong Island in Pleasant Bay for \$700,000, saving 46 acres of upland and another 78 acres of marsh from development. A three-acre area was reserved for a house for the previous owner and his heirs, but otherwise the island remains open to the public. It is considered a jewel, and it's hard to imagine today what the bay would be like had the island been developed as planned.

Orleans is being presented with a similar opportunity. At the May 13 annual town meeting, voters will be asked to contribute \$1.5 million in community preservation funds toward an 18-acre conservation restriction to help preserve another of Pleasant Bay's jewels, Sipson Island.

The proposed purchase involves a unique public-private partnership aimed at preserving the island's 24 acres. Twenty-two of those acres will, eventually, be owned by the nonprofit Sipson Island Trust; 18 acres will remain as open space, and eventually a large home on the island will be converted to a nonprofit education and research center. Two acres containing a small cottage will be reserved for use by the couple who, we learned this week, stepped up to sign a purchase and sales agreement to take the island off the open market, Cheryl and Rich Nadler. The year-round Orleans residents will also provide 20 percent of the \$4.9 million total purchase price. The remainder of the funding will be raised through private pledges by the Friends of Pleasant Bay, with the possibility of state grants also thrown into the mix.

What does the public get for its investment? First and foremost, long-term preservation of one of the largest remaining parcels of open space in Orleans. The island's beaches and trails will be available for public use, with access from 15 town landings along the bay, eight of them in Orleans. Use of the funds won't raise property taxes, since community preservation funds come from an existing 3 percent surcharge.

In a letter posted on Sipsonisland.org, Rich Nadler wrote that he understands the island's "unique beauty, historic and environmental significance as well as its fragile vulnerability. Over the years we have seen the character of our community change at an increasing rate, and it was clear to me that at the current asking price, it wouldn't be long before the island was forever changed." This is a "one time opportunity to preserve the island for generations to come and one we shouldn't let pass by."

Much like the preservation of Strong Island, preserving Sipson Island will help protect Pleasant Bay's fragile ecosystem and ensure its enjoyment by the public for generations to come. We commend the Nadlers for their willingness to step up and urge voters to follow their lead and support the conservation restriction funding.