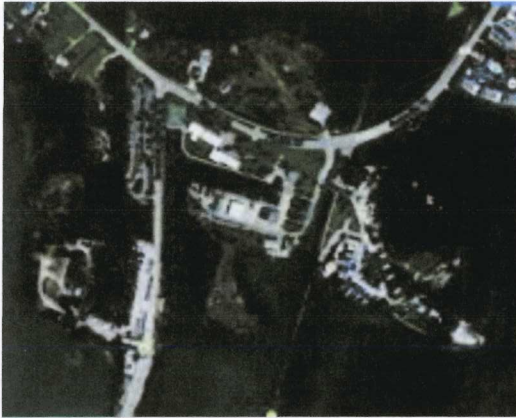




\$16 million raised in two weeks for Mercabo purchase

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When our community comes together, we come together in a big way. As of our press date the Gasparilla Island Conservation and Improvement Association has raised more than \$16 million dollars in two weeks' time toward their goal of \$20 million to purchase the old Mercabo facility at the entrance to the Boca Grande Causeway.

"We are extremely pleased to report that we have received pledges for over \$16,000,000 toward the \$20,600,000 purchase of Mercabo," said Misty Nichols, executive director of the GICIA. "There have been well over 100 donors who have supported this important effort."

To acquire the 30-acre property, the GICIA will need to raise an additional \$4,500,000. To assist with the task, two anonymous donors have pledged to match the next \$1 million in pledges received on or before December 10.

The Mercabo property, situated right at the "Gateway" to Boca Grande, is located on the left (east) side of the entrance to the causeway. Charlotte County is currently working to

amend the Charlotte County Comprehensive plan in several ways, but most importantly, to relax protections within the Coastal High Hazard Area. This could ultimately increase density from 3.5 units per acre to up to 65 per acre.

The GICIA has proposed to buy the property, remove the buildings and create a “preserve” with more than 4,700 feet of frontage. It will provide critical habitat for native birds and wildlife on Gasparilla Sound, and will be added to the almost 250 acres held in the GICIA conservancy.

The GICIA will convene on Friday, Dec. 11 to decide whether to proceed to closing on January 15, 2016.

To make a pledge, call the GICIA office, 964-2667 or stop by for a pledge form. You can visit their website at thegicia.org to print a pledge form. Donors will be asked to honor their pledges in early January 2016. All donations will be tax deductible in the year 2016.

A custody account has been established to accommodate donations of appreciated stock.

“The GICIA staff and board wish to thank the Boca Grande Community for their tremendous support of this very important acquisition,” Nichols said.



POSTED BY **MARCY SHORTUSE**

Marcy Shortuse is the editor of the Boca Beacon, and has been with the paper since 2007. She is also editor of the Boca Beacon's sister publication, Gasparilla Magazine. She has more than 20 years of experience writing and editing local newspapers and is originally from the Chicago area.

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