



## WE MADE IT! GICIA moves forward to close Mercabo on Friday

The News January 29, 2016



SUBMITTED BY THE GICIA – The Gasparilla Island Conservation and Improvement Association (GICIA) is extremely pleased to announce that they are proceeding to close on Friday, Jan. 29th, 2016 on the 30 acre Mercabo site located at the entrance to Gasparilla Island.

“The Community of Boca Grande and residents from the surrounding areas have been exceptionally supportive of this initiative” said

GICIA President Bayne Stevenson. “There have been over 1100 contributors to this effort, which is the only way we could have succeeded in reaching the cash closing goal of \$20.6 million,” he said.

GICIA is thrilled about this addition to our Land Conservancy, but it is important that everyone understands that there is still much to do. It is critical to initiate the restoration efforts as soon as possible, which will begin with the demolition of the buildings. The reason this is time critical is related to the Charlotte County property tax exemption.

On January 1st, 2017, the site needs to be restored so that it meets the land conservancy mission of the GICIA, which in turn meets the requirements for property tax exemption.

“This is why it is critical for interested residents and those who have made pledges to continue to support our effort so that we can finalize the \$22 million goal we have set,” said Misty Nichols, GICIA executive director.

The 30-acre Mercabo site is located at the entrance to the Boca Grande Causeway. With Charlotte County in the process of amending their Comprehensive Plan in a way that significantly weakens protections against high density development within the Coastal High Hazard Area, it is vital that we are able to acquire the property to ensure its protection.

The GICIA's vision for this property is to create a preserve by removing the buildings and creating and enhancing much needed habitat for native birds, animals and marine life.

The goal for the property is to officially add it to the GICIA Land Conservancy holdings and protect it into perpetuity.

To make a donation, stop by or call the GICIA office, 964-2667. All donations will be tax deductible in the year 2016. The GICIA Board and Staff thank the Boca Grande Community for their tremendous support of this very important acquisition.



## 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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