

## INDIAN RIVER SHORES

# Town Council OKs islands purchase

A public hearing on Indian River County's part in the purchase is scheduled for Sept. 3.

By James Kirley  
staff writer

The Town of Indian River Shores Thursday became the second of three local governments to approve a contract destined to become an official offer to Lost Tree Village Corp. officials to buy the company's Indian River islands.

The Town Council expressed no qualms when anteing up \$1 million, its share of the proposed \$15 million public purchase.

But council members expressed surprise at a provision in the contract for the town to pay one-third the cost of restoring native vegetation and maintaining the

six islands. County Commission Chairwoman Ruth Stanbridge told them the expense might add up to a three-way split of another \$1 million during the next 20 years.

The state requires a management plan before it will contribute its \$4,875,000 share towards the islands purchase, she said.

"We don't have anything on that," Town Attorney Chester Clem told council members when Stanbridge mentioned the cost of managing the islands.

"The plan itself and the town's participation in that hasn't been the subject of negotiations."

Mayor Tom Cadden urged the council to keep maintenance costs in perspective.

"It's not intended that we're going to make Coney Island out of those islands," Cadden said.

What is intended is a joint

buy of the private islands by Indian River County, Vero Beach, the Shores and the Florida Communities Trust.

Vero Beach approved its \$1 million share Tuesday night.

Indian River County plans to contribute \$8 million from bonds approved by voters in 1992 for buying environmentally sensitive land.

Stanbridge said a public hearing on the county's part in the purchase is scheduled for Sept. 3.

The islands have been the center of contention since the late 1980s, when the developers of John's Island first proposed to build bridges and homes on the three so-called inner islands closest to the main barrier island.

Other plans, proposed by Lost Tree to the state in

early 2001 and later withdrawn, included a golf course on the larger, outer islands.

Most of the island real estate, including all of the inner islands, is inside Shores town limits.

But Vero Beach took a disproportionate role in the building controversy by banning bridges from its rights or way to undeveloped coastal islands.

The only practical place to put such a bridge to the Lost Tree's islands is at the west end of Silver Shores Road, partly inside city limits.

Both Vero Beach and the Shores are defendants in two lawsuits filed by Lost Tree Village. The lawsuits allege unlawful zoning restrictions and, together, demand at least \$172 million in damages.