

Lost Tree Island property proposed for public purchase



## Two down, one to go for island purchase

Vero Beach and Indian River Shores councils approve the Lost Tree proposal; the county commission votes today.

By Henry A. Stephens  
and Beth Green  
staff writers

The Vero Beach City Council was the first party Monday to approve a long-awaited contract offering about \$15 million to Lost Tree Village Corp. in return for six of its islands in the Indian River and the river bottom around them.

The Indian River Shores Town Council echoed Vero Beach later that afternoon, leaving the Indian River County Commission to consider it at 9 a.m. today as the last party in the three-way offer.

"I feel relieved. I don't think the islands should be developed," Shores resident Brenda Allen said. "We need to keep some things pristine and we don't want to look like South Florida."

Vero Beach approved the agreement in a 4-0 vote and without prior discussion. The Shores approved it in a 4-0 vote with Councilman David Becker absent.

"This is a very happy moment for the staff," City Attorney Charles Vitunac said as he presented the contract to City Council. He asked the members to sign the contract right away so he could take it to the Shores town meeting for approval.

The city, town and county have been trying to buy the islands for 13 years.

"I have a stack of different proposals between the parties that is a foot deep by now," Shores Town Attorney Chester Clem said.

Council members were also excited.

"I can't thank you enough for bringing this to a close," Vero Beach Mayor Craig Fletcher told Vitunac.

"This has been wearing everyone, to say the least," Shores Mayor Tom Cadden said later.

Under the purchase plan, Indian River County will contribute almost \$8.08 million in environmental bond money, while the Florida Communities Trust has pledged slightly more than \$4.87 million if the deal is signed before its Feb. 12 deadline.

See ISLANDS, A2