

CLAPBOARD EAST SUMMARY FOR TOWN COUNCIL

A once-in-a-lifetime opportunity lies before the citizens of Falmouth – to help acquire 15 acres of Clapboard Island for open space. The Land Management and Acquisition Committee (LMAC) has designated the island a “jewel” of a property, and has unanimously voted to recommend that the town contribute at least \$300,000 towards the purchase. The Conservation Commission has also examined Clapboard and voted to commend it to the council for its conservation value. To preserve the island and open it to thoughtful public access, the town’s help is need now.

Clapboard Island is only one mile off the coast of Falmouth. It has been privately owned for 115 years and closed to the public. No roads or power lines cross it, only a path. It is heavily forested. It is one of only 4 islands in Falmouth – the other three are Mackworth, which is a state park and closed to boats, and the two little Brothers, which are a wildlife preserve and not open to human visitors.

Clapboard East is an expression of our maritime character. LMAC has given it a high rating, 75, well within the range of other open space properties recently acquired by the town. It is accessible. Anyone with a kayak or other boat could cross in 25 minutes or less from the Falmouth Town Landing. It would enhance the kayak camps which the Rec Department has run for 30 children annually the last 5 years at Town Landing. It would serve those residents of Falmouth who boat, which is about half the population. And Mainers are boaters. The US Coast Guard Recreational Boating Survey in 2011 found that 46% of Maine residents went out on the water in a boat, the third highest rate in the country.

Community partners working together on Clapboard include the Friends of Clapboard Island, the Falmouth Land Trust, and the Maine Coast Heritage Trust (MCHT). MCHT has a contract on the island for \$1.4 million, due August 15, 2014. The sellers offered it below their appraisal, and made a \$100,000 bargain-sale donation, so it is good value for the town. MCHT, with over 40 years of experience preserving 300 Maine islands, is ready to assume responsibility for maintaining Clapboard East. Stewardship decisions would be made by a committee which would include abutters, the harbormaster, LMAC, the Falmouth Land Trust, users, and MCHT.

Preserving this unique natural habitat and providing for public access and conservation education will cost \$1.6 million -- \$1.4 million for the acquisition, plus \$200,000 for a stewardship endowment. So far, \$200,000 has been contributed, plus \$100,000 challenge grant in matching funds from the Pew Charitable Trust. Up to \$750,000 will come from the sale of a secluded 3-season house on the east end of the island. A vacant lot on Madokawando Landing also comes with Clapboard East; it will be placed under a conservation easement, to be held by the Falmouth Land Trust. What is needed now, is an angel to help us reach the total; the town of Falmouth could be that donor. Depending on how much is received from the sale of the house, a gift of \$300,000 to \$500,000 will be needed to reach the total. We ask for your support.

Susan Gilpin
Friends of Clapboard Island
January 9, 2014