

Great Island Now Bought for \$85 Million, Darien's Biggest Real Estate Closing

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Tagged as : [Great Island 2023](#)

Date : May 5, 2023

Ownership of the 60.81-acre Great Island parcel on Long Island Sound officially passed into the town government's hands for \$85 million, First Selectman Monica McNally said Friday.

The purchase will be financed with municipal bonds.

"I want to say to our Darien residents: Congratulations — we did it!" McNally said in a news release emailed shortly after 4 p.m. "When this fabulous property became available, right in our back yard, it became my dream to make owning it a reality for Darien residents."

McNally then thanked a long list of town officials, elected and appointed, who helped with the acquisition.

An advisory committee is still being selected, McNally said. The committee's task will be to prepare the property to open to the public.

While there are plenty of ideas to be considered for what facilities and programs may be used on the now-public property, those decisions haven't been made yet, McNally said. "We will be careful and deliberate in defining our mission for Great Island. We must have the patience to get acquainted with the island before we make irreversible steps."

The announcement concluded: "Until safety protocols are completed and roads and walkways modified, vehicular, pedestrian and cycling traffic is restricted to island residents and town personnel only."

Full Text of the Announcement

The Town of Darien, CT announced today, May 5, 2023, that it has closed on the purchase of Great Island a 60.81 acre parcel located on Long Island Sound. The purchase price of \$85 million, amended from an original price of \$103 million, will be financed by the Town using municipal bonds.

Structures on the property include equestrian facilities, a deep-water dock, 13,000 square foot manor, 3-bedroom stone house, farmhouse, beach cottage and a seaside bungalow. Monica McNally, Darien's First Selectman made the following statement:

"I want to say to our Darien residents: Congratulations — we did it! When this fabulous property became available, right in our back yard, it became my dream to make owning it a reality for Darien residents.

"We worked so very hard to make the dream come true, but today is only Chapter One on our road to both preserve and revive Great Island. I would like to thank all our town department heads and employees who contributed their work and extensive personal time and ideas to complete the marathon studies and negotiations to make this land, its wildlife, and its peaceful and tranquil views, accessible to our residents.

"None of this could have happened without the willingness of the Steinkraus family, Ned, Eric and Philip, who were open to an offer from the town for their childhood home. Their family's legacy with this property will live on forever in Darien's heart.

"Our Selectmen, Jon Zagrodzky, Mike Burke, Marcy Minnick and Sarah Newman provided valuable advice and counsel throughout the process. Our Board of Finance and our Representative Town Meeting (RTM) were incredibly helpful and supportive, of such a large undertaking.

"In particular, I would like to thank Jim Palen, Board of Finance chairman, for his advice and counsel over many months. Wayne Fox, our town counsel, was our direct contact with the previous owners, and maintained cordial relationships through some tough negotiations. It takes a team, and what a team we have.

“While we are all looking forward to a walk beneath the beautiful tree canopy of the island, we must now work to make Great Island safe and accessible before public access can be granted.

“Our first step in this process is the seating of the Great Island Advisory Committee, tasked with preparing the island to open to the public. We are exceedingly grateful for the enthusiastic response from so many interested residents.

“We will be working on the interview process over the next several weeks. The Island’s potential to serve the needs of Darien forever is the reason we purchased it. We will be careful and deliberate in defining our mission for Great Island. We must have the patience to get acquainted with the island before we make irreversible steps.

“Today, with our Great Island, Darien became a place for all of us to love just a little bit more.”

The town also announced that until safety protocols are completed and roads and walkways modified, vehicular, pedestrian and cycling traffic is restricted to island residents, and town personnel only.