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# Effort to preserve Laguna property

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In an odd pairing of opposites, a conservative, pro-growth Sebastopol real estate agent is joining forces with an ardent environmentalist to try and raise \$1.5 million to keep property next to the Laguna de Santa Rosa from being developed.

Bill Halgwood, a Realtor and newspaper columnist who has been critical of the city for "stopping" new construction and business, and Juliana Doms, a passionate environmentalist who helped shape Sebastopol's slow-growth policies, have formed a committee to try and buy the property known as Palm Terrace.

The committee was formed after George Young, one of the principal owners of Palm Terrace, agreed to sell the property for a wildlife refuge and perhaps a Native American cultural center if the \$1.5 million can be raised by Christmas.

Young said Thursday if the funds cannot be raised he plans to begin construction of 18 homes on the land by spring.

This week Halgwood and Doms informed the City Council of a citizen's committee they created

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COUNCILMAN KEN FOLEY

to raise money to buy Palm Terrace, which has been the subject of debate for more than a dozen years and is finally on the verge of approval for construction of the 18 houses.

"Frankly, Juliana and I never anticipated working together on a project, considering the wide gulf between our respective political and philosophical beliefs," Halgwood told the council.

But he said the importance of the Laguna as an economic, environmental and educational resource and its importance to the Native American community "far transcends personal differences."

Doms acknowledged Thursday the alliance "is sort of humorous," given our differences of opinion. But she added "we can prove we can attempt to get along when it

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warrants it." Sebastopol Councilman Ken Foley called it "a sweet irony," in that "everyone is working toward a common goal rather than fighting, delaying and arguing. I'd write them a check."

Mayor Bill Rowentini called it "an ambitious project that deserves community support."

Halgwood believes it is crucial Palm Terrace principal owners George Young and Yolanda Ghitotti be compensated fair market value for the property. If it is to be preserved as open space with the possible addition of an Indian educational and cultural center. Both Halgwood and Doms know

it will be a challenge to raise the funds to buy the 8.25 acres. They are hoping the Sonoma County Agriculture Preservation and Open Space District will be more receptive to contributing now that litigation surrounding the property has been settled. Besides the contributions of private citizens, they also hope to get money from foundations and government agencies.

The open space district has already agreed to contribute matching funds toward a conservation easement on the adjacent Saddleburr property, so Doms said the possibility of preserving Palm Terrace "ties right into that."

Palm Terrace has been the site of various proposed condominium, housing and office proposals over the years. In the late 1980s after one project was approved by the City Council, it was stopped by a

lawsuit brought by environmentalists who demanded further studies be done.

Last year, the City Council turned down yet another version of the development, prompting a lawsuit by the property owners against the city.

A negotiated settlement resulted in the city essentially agreeing to allow 18 homes on the property. That settlement has been the subject of ongoing public meetings.

In the meantime, Native Americans complained the homes were going to be built in an area that could contain relatively recent Indian graves.

A search for graves turned up no human remains, but did result in the discovery of an archeological site with fragments of obsidian, mortars, pestles, hammer stones and projectile points.