

Laurelton Center deal called off

State to seek new buyer

By Karen Blackledge
The Daily Item

LAURELTON — A spokesman for the state Department of General Services said Friday that the deal for Woodward Camp to expand into the former Laurelton Center complex has been called off.

"We were ready to close on June 30, and they wanted a six-month extension," said Frank Kane, press secretary for the state Department of General Services.

"We offered them a two-month extension. They were unable to settle," Kane said.

Gary Ream, Woodward Camp director and one of its owners, said earlier Friday that Woodward still wants to occupy the Laurelton site.

Ream could not be reached

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"They were unable
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— Frank Kane,
state spokesman
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later in the day for a response to Kane's comments.

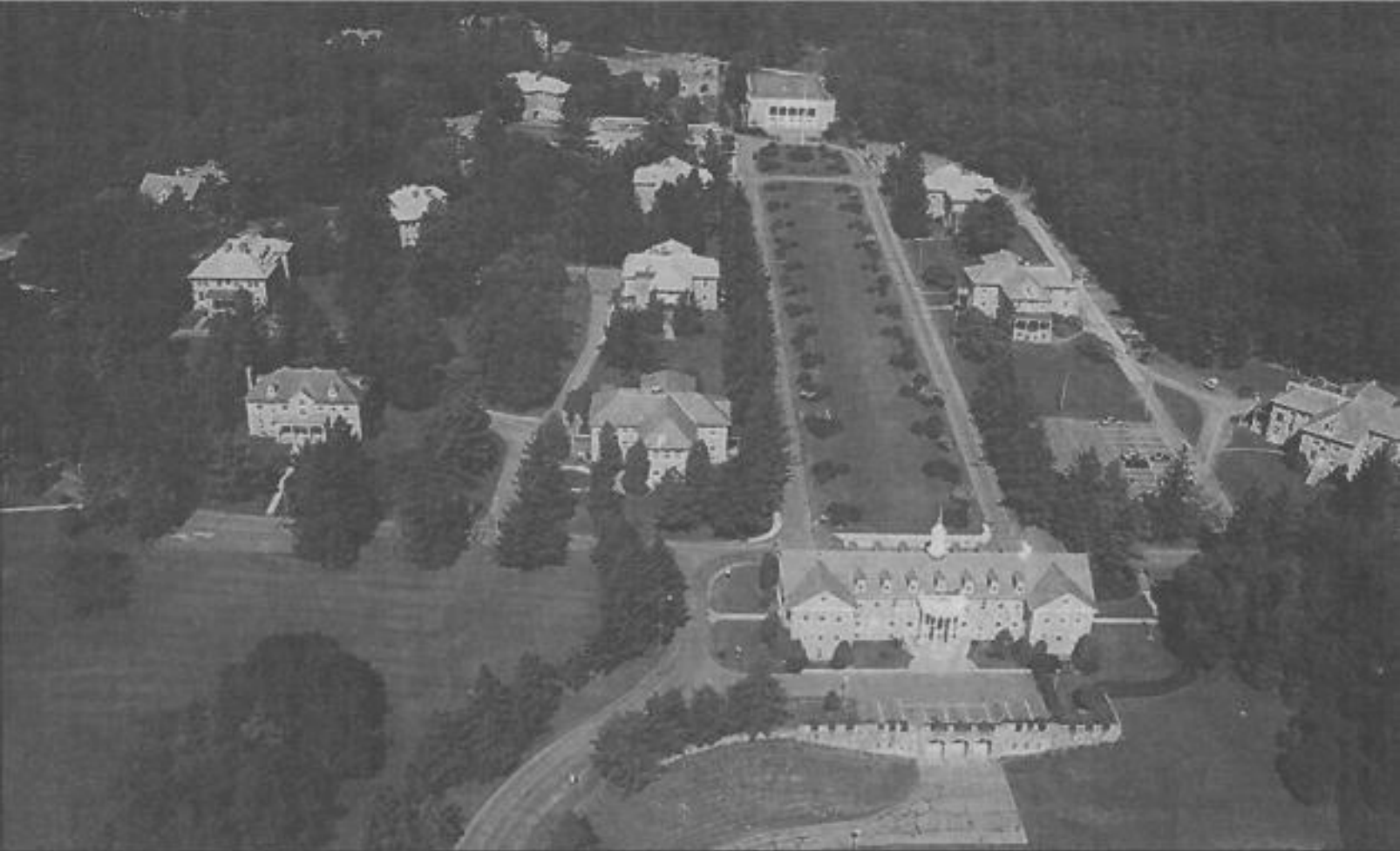
Woodward Camp had hoped to open at Laurelton this year, but Ream told the Hartley Township supervisors in April that it wasn't possible.

Woodward proposed to purchase the property, valued at \$4 million, for \$175,000, then expand its camp to Laurelton, resulting in increased enrollment, employment and taxes for local municipalities.

Kane said that proposal has

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the former Laurelton Center in Hartley Township.

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now come apart.

"We have no reason to believe they will ever be ready to settle," he said.

"We were ready to settle, and they didn't settle," he said. "We offered two months extra with the terms being extremely favorable."

He said the state plans to aggressively remarket the property.

"We believe the property hasn't been marketed widely enough," Kane said.

Ream said the politicians are trying to sort the situation out.

"With the new administration, the door is not as gentle as it was," he said.

Woodward Camp made its deal for the property during the Republican Schweiker adminis-

tration. Since then Edward Rendell, a Philadelphia Democrat, has been elected governor.

"We did everything we possibly could. We want to be there," he said. "Woodward wants to be there. We've tried."

Hartley Township Supervisors Chairman Stephen Buttorff said he understood Woodward pulled out of the deal on Tuesday.

"The township was looking forward to some kind of entity there. We definitely need the jobs and the taxes," he said.

He said he was told Woodward pulled out because of environmental contingencies.

"I don't know what Woodward was waiting for. The township did everything possible to make it happen," he said.

Woodward operates a 14-week summer sports camp that drew 10,000 students from 48 states and 23 countries in 2002. The camp enrolled 714 students a week and employed 750, including 110 from the area.

Woodward was founded in 1970 with gymnastics and expanded to BMX biking, skateboarding and in-line skating. It has a camp in Wisconsin and was to open a camp near Los Angeles this summer.

At the April meeting, Ream said Woodward hoped to partner with an action sports prep school

for 150 students from September through May.

Woodward had planned to lease property at Laurelton for a golf course that would surround the property. Laurelton buildings were proposed for use as lodging for golfers.

The first phase at Laurelton would have involved 300 students and 90 staff members.

The camp signed an agreement in February 2002 and received paperwork Nov. 1 from the

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