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FEATURED

Laurelton Center purchased for \$1 million by Juniata County business owner

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Photo of a building on the campus of the former Laurelton Center in Hartley Township, Union County. The former state-run mental health institution was sold last week for over \$1 million during a county judicial sale.

Image Credit: "fatLouie" @ UrbanAtrophy.com

Laurelton, Pa. – The former Laurelton Center in Union County, which has been vacant since 1998, was sold last week at a judicial sale for more than \$1 million.

The complex was sold to Jay Fulkroad for \$1,005,000 at a judicial sale at the Union County Courthouse on March 30, according to Jeff McClintock, finance director for Union County. McClintock estimated that the deed will be transferred in June.

Fulkroad is the owner of a construction business in McAlisterville. Fulkroad did not immediately return a reporter's phone call for comment. McClintock said he was not aware of what Fulkroad has planned for the property.

The Laurelton Center, which opened in 1939, had previously been used as a state hospital for the mentally disabled. The complex is located along Route 45 in Hartley Township in the western end of Union County.

Last week's judicial sale was for two properties that were known as the Laurelton Center, according to McClintock. The sale included the main property of 266.429 acres. The other property that was part of the sale is located across Route 45 from the main property and contains 5.9993 acres. That property was sold to Fulkroad for \$34,000, McClintock said in an email.

The complex is located along Route 45 in Hartley Township in the western end of Union County. The county put the complex up for sale after previous owner, Mountain Valley Inc., run by Gary E. Murphy of Maryland, failed to pay taxes for several years. County records show Mountain Valley purchased the complex in May 2006 for \$1,632,500. The purchase included more than 50 buildings.

Mountain Valley's plans for the property never came to fruition. Murphy's proposal for the complex included a convention center, restaurant, dude ranch and outdoor recreation activities, according to The Millmont Times. Instead, the complex and its buildings continued to sit empty.

The creation of the Laurelton Center was first approved by Pennsylvania legislators in 1913. Known then as Laurelton State Village, construction began on 230 acres of land with the first cottage opening in 1917 with 36 residents, according to the Asylum Projects website. The institution housed women with mental health issues.

By 1939, all buildings on the grounds had been completed and included a theater, administration offices, recreation buildings, several hospital buildings, a powerhouse and two cottages. The stone buildings were meant to be attractive, and

with the surrounding forest area and lush grounds the state facility looked more like a university campus.

In 1969, the Laurelton Center admitted its first male patients and the name was changed to Laurelton State School and Hospital. The Laurelton Center had been open for 77 years before the state made the decision to close the complex in 1998.

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