

# Laurelton Center to be rebid

It is back to the drawing board again as the former Laurelton Center property will be put out for bids again.

According to state Rep. Russell H. Fairchild, R-85 of Lewisburg, the property will be put out for bids within 30 days.

He made the announcement recently during a speech before the League of Women Voters of the Lewisburg Area.

During his speech, he also talked about gambling, tax reform and the state budget.

In statements made after the speech, he said officials from the governor's office decided to go through the bidding process again to quell any legal questions that might arise from a sale.

The former Laurelton Center property had been under contract to Woodward Camp, but officials there canceled the contract in June with a termination statement. Among their concerns

were leaking underground fuel tanks that might have caused environmental damage.

Talks dragged on with officials with both sides hopeful the deal could be closed. Eventually the sale was called off. Although Woodward officials said they were still interested in the property, the state decided to begin the process over.

"(The state's) attorneys feel with that (termination) statement there is no basis to resurrect that agreement," said Fairchild.

Selling the 272-acre property in Hartley Township has proven difficult for the state. Woodward is the most recent of a list of failed deals that also included plans for a hotel and golf course and retirement community.

During his speech, Fairchild also spoke of the need for tax reform and how dangerous it is to tie that to gambling.

Though Governor Rendell

continues to push gaming as a form of tax relief, Fairchild says he isn't ready to roll the dice.

"I made it clear this doesn't eliminate property taxes," he said. "It cuts \$250 to \$300 on a homeowner's property tax."

Even to do that would require \$1 billion a year in revenue.

"Will \$1 billion a year be sustainable?" asked Fairchild. "No."

Estimates are that casinos or rasinos would have to make \$3 billion a year to generate \$1 billion in revenue.

Fairchild reported that the Pennsylvania Economy League has estimated that each household in the state would have to lose \$628 a year to make that mark.

"People only have so much money to spend and gamble. I'm just afraid if that money doesn't materialize... then what happens, they raise property taxes and we're left with the problems with gambling," said the lawmaker.

And in the end it could harm senior citizens by drawing money away from the state lottery, he said.

Fairchild said the House passed a cap on noneconomic insurance damages as part of a tort reform plan and that the Senate will vote on the issue March 9.

He also reported that the Chesapeake Bay Commission has developed a 10-year plan to improve the quality of the estuary and have it removed from the EPA's endangered list. The cost will be \$18 billion.

# Laurelton Center bids being studied

## State trying to find buyer for property

By Eric Mayes  
The Daily Item

LAURELTON — State officials are reviewing bids for the purchase of Laurelton Center.

This marks the fourth round of bidding for the 272-acre property in western Union County. The center was a state facility for the mentally retarded until it was closed in 1998.

According to state officials, bids were received in mid-October and unsuccessful bidders were recently notified that their offers had been rejected.

How many bids met state

requirements or who placed those bids is not yet a matter of public record.

"I can't really discuss who has put in a bid," said Department of General Services spokesman Frank D. Kane, adding "(But) the award has not been made."

Kane said state law prohibits the release of details until an award has been made.

Just when that will happen is uncertain.

"I really have no timeline on it," Kane said.

Since the center closed, three separate deals for the

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# Bids for center being studied

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pt- purchase of the property have  
on fallen through.

th The most recent was an  
it offer by Woodward Camp to  
to buy the center for \$175,000.  
5 The sale fell through when a  
n leaking gas tank was discov-

ered on the property.

Woodward officials wanted to use the property as an extension of their sports camp in Woodward.

Other failed proposals were a golf course and resort and a retirement center.