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'World class resort' lauded for Laurelton

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LEWISBURG — A "world class resort" may be coming to our area soon. Not only will this create new jobs for area residents, it will also attract tourists from around the country, as well as from around the world.

With all the ideas that have been circulating concerning the sale of the soon-to-be-closed Laurelton Center, perhaps local residents have found the answer to their prayers — a golf course.

There was some public concern when a religious group wished to purchase the center ("What God wants, He will get," a preacher stated) for fear of "Turning Laurelton into another Waco," as one resident stated.

There were several moans and groans during talks of creating a rehabilitation center and drawing drug addicts and alcoholics, "Away from their homes in Williamsport and into our community," a reply from yet another concerned Laurelton resident. However, the golf course idea has seemingly brought a calm feeling to the air and has pacified the troubled local residents.

The proposed golf course is the brainstorm of three Mifflinburg residents who have recently joined ranks in order to develop a proposal to adapt and reuse the center. Dave Iddings, Ted Cresswell and Bill Seigel are planning this world-class resort, which includes a conference center, golf course, corporate retreat and several other amenities.

"The reuse proposal would likely create 350 or more new jobs," according to a statement released by Cresswell. "If the project proves viable, we intend to submit a formal proposal to acquire and develop the facility."

The proposal will be submitted to

the Laurelton Center Task Force and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The Commonwealth has indicated it will be publishing a formal Request for Proposals during the next few months.

Iddings reported that investors are being identified, alternatives are being evaluated and contractors are being interviewed to determine the feasibility of this project. Additional data must be assembled in order to prepare the business plan and determine the feasibility of the project. The group plans to have this information by December.

In addition to determining the financial feasibility of the project, the group has begun to meet with local officials and groups to solicit their comment and input. Seigel indicated that this project is locally driven and should represent a positive public/private partnership.

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The group contends that while financial profitability is important, so too is the development of a facility that offers local economic opportunities, while complementing the natural and pristine qualities of our valley.

The majority of public opinion has been expressed as satisfaction in knowing the center will be locally-owned, if purchased by the Mifflinburg Trio, and also hope of attracting a productive group of people into the area.

Of course the plans for the golf course are not finalized or approved at this time. There are several diffe-

rent ideas being reviewed by the Laurelton Center Task Force.

They are, at this time, soliciting developers to submit proposals in order to make a formal presentation to Gov. Tom Ridge and Rep. Russ Fairchild.

The Department of General Services Evaluation Committee, made up of four state officials and three Task Force members, will evaluate and negotiate the final purchase agreement. Then Rep. Fairchild will introduce legislation to transfer the land to the successful developer, and the legislation will need approval in the House and Senate, and then the governor's approval.