

LOCAL

Laurelton Center up for grabs again

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LAURELTON — Could the third time be the charm for the Laurelton Center? It just might be. So far, two deals aimed at putting the former center for the mentally challenged back in use have fallen through. Now, the property is up for sale again.

According to Samantha Elliott, press secretary for the Department of General Services (DGS), the property was put out to bid again last week. Bids are due by Dec. 19. Elliott said the property "was once again put up for bid last week" because the group of local investors that had planned to turn the center into a resort area — complete with a state-of-the-art

golf course and conference center — couldn't secure the necessary funding.

The Laurelton Center, located in western Union County, consists of 335 acres of land and 52 buildings. It had been used as a home for the mentally retarded and was closed in June 1998 following 77 years as a state-run institution. Approximately 400 people were employed there. Residents were moved to community homes and the state-run centers, depending on their needs.

Elliott said she could not comment on whether any bids have been received to date.

Prior to the three men — Bill Seigel, David Iddings and Ted Cresswell — who made up Hickernell Springs Resort, an

Allentown firm, Hampton Laurelton, had planned to turn the Laurelton Center into a senior citizen resident/retirement community, but they failed to meet contract deadlines set by the state in a signed agreement.

The state agreed to sell the Laurelton buildings and grounds to Hampton Laurelton for \$3.8 million. After they failed to meet financial deadlines, the Hickernell Springs Resort group won the bid for the property for

the same price. In addition to the golf course, their plans included offering 125 rooms, keystone building, ballrooms, an indoor pool and health spa, an outdoor pool and at least two restaurants.

They hoped to open the facility by late 2003 or early 2004.

The DGS gave Hickernell six months to secure the necessary financing with a potential for an additional six months to get land development plans submitted to

the township and necessary zoning permits in place.

According to the description posted on the DGS website, ideal uses for the property include retirement living, continuing care, medical facilities, educational facilities, recreational facilities, high-tech facilities and corporate office facilities.

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For questions or comments on this story, contact Jerri Kost-Brouse at jerri@standard-journal.com