

# Woodward to move forward with Laurelton plans

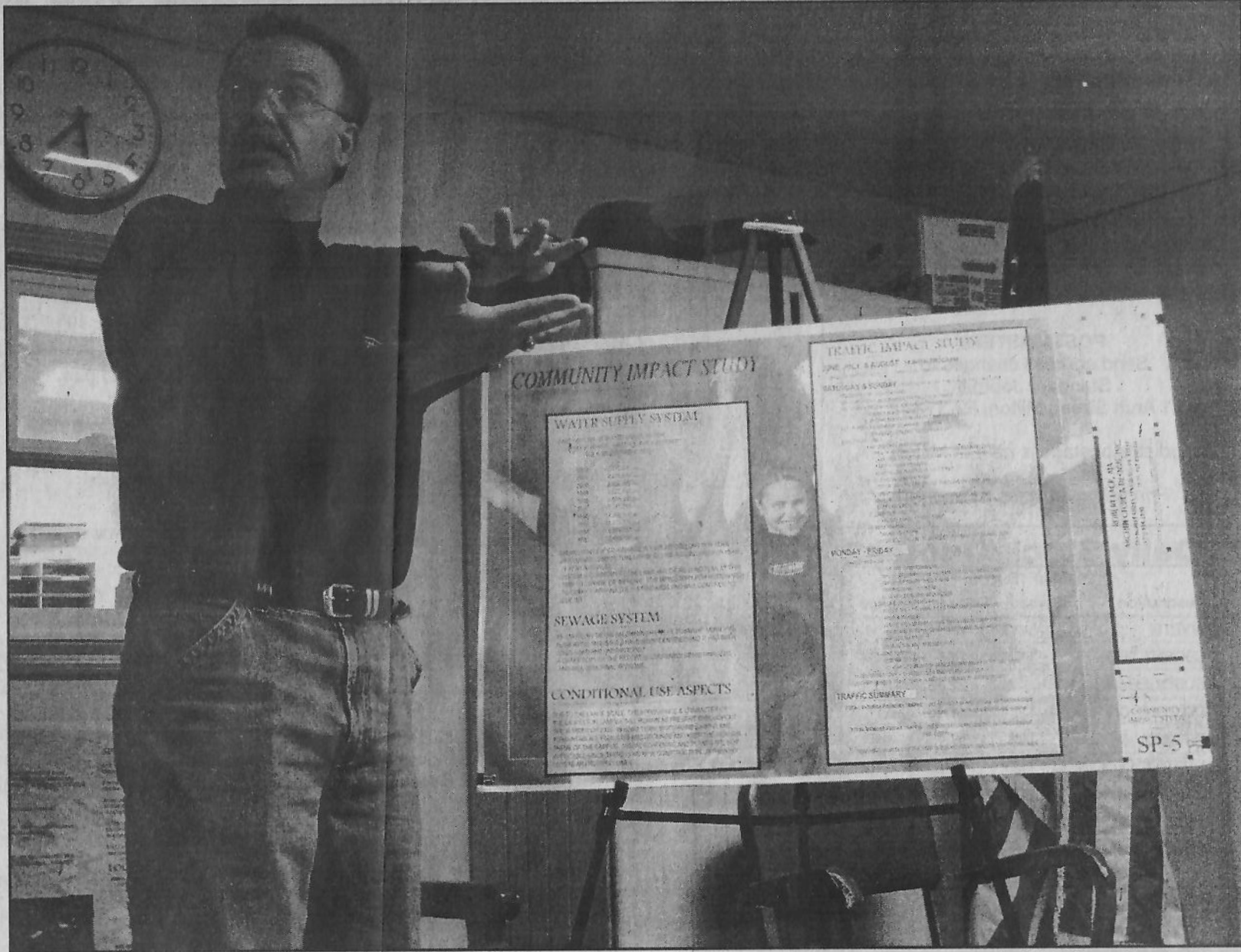
BY JERRI KOST-BROUSE  
Staff writer

LAURELTON — Woodward Camp can move ahead with its Phase I plans for to expand its facility into the former Laurelton Center.

The Hartley Township board of supervisors Thursday night unanimously approved an application made by Sports Management Inc. for conditional use of the property following a public hearing on the issue. About 30 individuals attended the hearing.

The supervisors are Eugene Kahley, Stephen Buttorf and Dale Zechman.

Woodward Camp, founded in 1970, is an action sports camp that operates for 14 weeks of the summer and trains kids in skateboarding, gymnastics, biking, inline skating and more. Woodward is located in Centre County and also recently opened a facility in Wisconsin. Another is planned for opening north of Los Angeles. The camp last year drew 10,000 students from 43 states and more than 20 countries. An average of 714 students are enrolled each week and there are 750 staff members — 110 of which are local employees.



**MOVING FORWARD** — Gary Ream of Woodward Camp explains plans for Phase I of the camp's use of the former Laurelton Center property at a public hearing in Hartley Township Thursday night.

Jerri Kost-Brouse/Standard Journal

During the off-season, Woodward offers a lodge for weekends so families can use the skate park buildings.

The conditional use status is temporary and covers plans to utilize 19 of 27 buildings on the property, build a swimming pool and repave streets. It will expire in one year unless officials ask for an extension or if they present a full plan to the board within that time frame.

Before they could come to the supervisors for the conditional use approval, they first

had to get a signed agreement with the sewer authority. They cannot acquire the property, though, until all of the conditional use approvals are met.

Gary Ream, one of the owners who also serves as camp director, presented an overview of the plans for the property. He said one thing he wants the community to know is that for Woodward, expanding into Laurelton is a "dream come true" and they have no plans to

change the outward look of the property.

"The looks of Laurelton are pretty special," said Ream. "There is not one square inch of the outside we are planning to change."

Ream said some of the buildings need paint, carpeting and "tender loving care," but no other changes to the aesthetics of the property will take place.

"It's a perfect fit for Woodward," said Ream.

"We're going to use the buildings basically the same as what the state used them for."

Ream said the game plan is to make use of the housing units, the cafeteria, the auditorium, superintendent's residence, maintenance buildings, storage, garage and school buildings. The senior citizen building will be left alone.

Some buildings will be changed internally — like Brown Hall, which formerly

served as a laundry. Ream said his hopes are to install some equipment and make that building an indoor skate park.

Two other changes would include the construction of an outdoor swimming pool and a 100,000-square-foot action athletic center (open air). The exact location of the pool has not yet been determined as additional research needs to be

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done on underground utilities.

Neither of those things will likely happen until the second year of operation.

Future plans for the site also include building changing the former hospital to a lodge, adding a public golf course that would wrap around the campus, and creating an action sports prep school that would offer both accredited classes and world class training. That wouldn't be underway until at least the third year of operation, Ream said.

"The golf course would be a perfect amenity for us," said Ream.

The course would be an extra-curricular activity for campers and would be open to the public, according to officials.

Robert A. Lack, principal architect for the project, assured the board that all of the buildings on the Laurelton campus are compliant with state and local building codes and that while some road repaving is planned, there will still be access for emergency situations.

"None of the roads will be closed or blocked

off at any time," said Lack.

He also noted that water usage will be only one-third of what it was when the Laurelton Center was operational.

"There is a significant reduction," he said.

Lack said it was also important for community members to know what when campers are at Laurelton, it will "look, smell, taste, just as it has ... there will be no change in appearance."

"The nature of the activities will not change the appearance at all," said Lack.

Ream said officials at Woodward hoped and even planned to be operating at Laurelton this year, but there simply wasn't enough time to get all of the necessary approvals.

"We can't just walk in and say 'we're open,'" said Ream. "There are environmental issues, there are roadwork issues, there are paint and carpet issues. It's absolutely impossible to think about opening this year...I'd be kidding myself."

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