

HERMITAGE, PA

\$750,000 state grant comes through for Casino project

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HHSDR Architects/Engineers, Sharon, submitted this computer-generated rendering of what the Casino in Buhl Farm park will look like when its \$3 million renovation is complete.

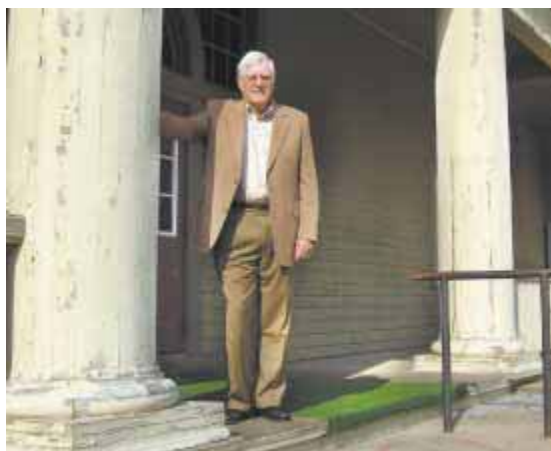
Farm “one of our most treasured assets in the community.” Built for slightly more than \$45,000, the Casino has hosted dances, concerts, plays and a variety of recreational activities. But the two-story building has seen its usage decline due to deterioration and escalating utility costs.

“This is going to be a big project,” said Jim Feeney, president of the F.H. Buhl Trustees, which oversees the park in Hermitage. A major change is that locker rooms built in the 1940s as an addition to the Casino will be removed. New locker rooms were recently added at the adjacent pool area so the old lockers are no longer needed. “When the old locker rooms are removed, we’ll wrap the porch around the Casino so it will look like it did originally,” said Greer Hayden, an architect for HHSDR Architects/Engineers of Sharon, which is overseeing the renovation. Another major improvement is that an elevator will be installed to make the second-story ballroom accessible to the handicapped. Other upgrades include: new heating and air conditioning, new windows and a facelift of the porch and its Greek-style columns. Renovations will transform the building while keeping its early 20th century look intact. “We will still keep the architectural integrity of the building,” Hayden said.

One interior design change will occur on the first floor which will house an office for the park manager, ranger, a conference center and new restrooms. Construction is scheduled to begin in March and is expected to be completed in about a year. A \$294,000 federal grant was previously committed to the project. Remaining costs will come from the F.H. Buhl Trustees which previously completed a \$5.1 million capital fundraiser. “That’s what the state liked about the project,” Feeney said. “We had the community money up front to leverage the grant money.” State grant funds came from the Growing Greener II and Housing and Redevelopment Assistance programs.

Another \$500,000 in state funds were earmarked Monday for the city of Hermitage to improve the North Buhl Farm Drive corridor between East State Street and the park. Improvements, which are covered under the state’s Elm Street initiative, will include handicap accessible sidewalks and curbs with the possibility of a trail, said Gary Hinkson,

Buhl Farm’s Casino has hit the jackpot for a major renovation. Two state grants totaling \$750,000 were bestowed Monday for the \$3 million renovation of the 1915 building. An icon of the park, the stately Casino in recent years has fallen into disrepair and was long overdue for an overhaul. Community leaders gathered Monday morning on the Casino’s front porch to learn about the renovation and receive the grant from state Sen. Bob Robbins, R-50th District, Salem Township, and state Rep. Mark Longietti, D-7th District, Hermitage, who called Buhl



Jim Feeney, president of F.H. Buhl Trustees, leans against a column outside the Buhl Farm Casino. A facelift of the porch and the Greek-style columns is part of a planned \$3 million renovation of the building.