

State and Local

TDC land sale fails to get bids for second time

Associated Press
HOUSTON — The Texas Department of Corrections failed Tuesday to get any bids on 3,600 acres of prime real estate put on the auction block to help \$125 million to finance construction of new prisons. It was the second time in three months state officials have tried to sell the land.
 "We're going to have to look at our options and consider making some improvements on the land, but we are not going to panic," Texas Land Commissioner Garry Mauro said. "We are not going to have any fire sale. We are not going to give it away."
 Bids were sought on 1,300- and 2,000-acre tracts in Fort Bend County and 322 acres in southern Harris County.
 The land office said there were about 15 inquiries about the land but no bids were submitted.
 A Sept. 17 sale of 2,000 acres valued at \$17 million had similar results.
 Prospective buyers complained they did not have enough time to prepare bids. They were given 45 days, but buyers said it often takes six to nine months to prepare such proposals.
 Mauro said the land office and the TDC would take a look at the situation and might be able to announce in a few days what the next step would be.
 "If we could have had the sale two years ago, we probably could have turned this land asset into a cash asset," he said.

Student leader profile

Speaker of the Senate says job not all fun and games

By MEG CADIGAN
 Staff Writer

Laurie Johnson says being speaker of the Texas A&M Student Senate is not all fun and games.
 "Everyone thinks 'Oh, you have so much power,' but really people are taking from you all the time," Johnson says.
 She says patience is not one of her stronger virtues, and that the Senate meetings can be trying experiences.
 "They (the senators) are mad at you — they're yelling at you that you didn't give them a fair chance, or the debate was closed," she says. "If things don't go their way, they're not mad at somebody who's on the opposite side of them (on a particular issue), they're usually mad at the speaker, who has nothing to do with it, anyway."
 She says her job as speaker is mainly to organize the Senate meetings and make sure that parliamentary procedure is conducted correctly. She says this job is similar to that of a judge.
 "A judge has to remain impartial," Johnson says. "You've got to give people the benefit of the doubt."
 Johnson says this is occasionally difficult for her to do because she is a very decisive person. She says it makes her mad to see those senators who have a better understanding of parliamentary procedure take advantage of those who do not know the procedure as well.



Laurie Johnson

Although there is difficulty associated with the speaker's job, Johnson says it doesn't really bother her.
 "I'm sensitive and my feelings get hurt," Johnson says, "but I'm not easily intimidated."
 Johnson attributes her ability not to be intimidated to her two older brothers and the fact that she was raised on a ranch outside of San Antonio.
 "You kind of grow up being a loner, and you have to learn to deal with it," she says.
 One thing she did to deal with being a loner was to get involved in student government in high school. She says that when she reached college, she considered getting involved in Student Government.
 However, Johnson says, she

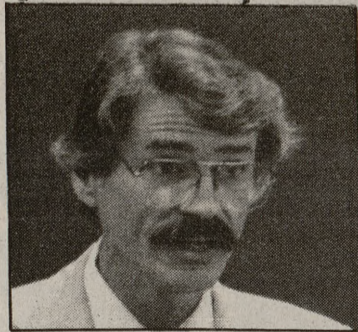
never planned to become speaker of the Senate. She had been a senator her sophomore and junior years, but she says she never wished to be at the speaker's podium.
 Speaker of the Senate is a position elected from within the Senate, and Johnson says she ran because she felt she could make a commitment to do an outstanding job.
 "I hated to sit back my senior year and watch it not go well or maybe have some problems," Johnson says. She says government has been of interest to her for many years.
 "Government interests me because I don't like to know that decisions are being made and that I don't have any input," Johnson says. "As an individual, I like to know that I have control over my life and government does control your life. If you think it doesn't, then I think you're being ignorant of how much it does. You can just look out your window and see everything on the street, the sewage systems . . . everything, relating to the municipality government."
 Johnson plans to graduate in May '86 and use her geophysics degree to work for a government agency in geology. Johnson says she plans to continue to participate in government but does not want to run for an elected public office.
 "I'm not saying I'll always be in the public world, because then you have to become a real humanitarian and give up some of your individual beliefs," Johnson says.

Controversial job

GSS organization doesn't promote homosexual activities, faculty adviser says

By CAROLYN VEIGA
 Reporter

Larry Hickman, a Texas A&M philosophy professor, sits in a cramped, cluttered office surrounded by books on logic and reasoning. His office isn't out of the ordinary, and he appears to be your average philosophy professor.
 But Hickman, 43, holds a controversial position at the University. Hickman is the faculty adviser for the Gay Student Services and actively participates in many GSS activities, such as the Gay Aggie Band march in Houston during Gay Pride Week.
 "If you can't engage in a little self-directed humor than you might as well throw in the towel," Hickman says about the march in Houston last July. Hickman says he marched with other GSS members and learned to play the Aggie War Hymn on his kazoo.
 A native of McAllen, Hickman earned his Ph.D. from the University of Texas. He has been involved with GSS since 1982. Although he did not officially assume the responsibilities as adviser until last semester, Hickman advised many of his students previous to the establishment of GSS.



Dr. Larry Hickman

The purpose as an adviser for GSS is not to promote homosexual activities, but help gay students relate to society and help facilitate their goals, Hickman says.
 GSS offers many services to the gay community at A&M, he says.
 He says many people misinterpret the organization.
 "There are a lot of straight people associated with the GSS movement . . . it doesn't mean at all that they're gay. . . . GSS doesn't promote gay activities . . . it promotes an understanding to help rid the stigma attached to being gay."

Hickman says there is no real way to know if members are gay because no one at the meetings talks about their sexual orientation.
 In conjunction with his support of homosexual rights, Hickman has taken issue with the 14th Amendment. As a member of the American Civil Liberties Union, Hickman says he finds the guarantees under the 14th Amendment detrimental to homosexuals.
 The 14th Amendment, which explicitly protects the rights of citizens, is viewed as discriminatory towards homosexuals, Hickman says.
 "Gay men and women constitute roughly 10 percent of our population and are severely discriminated against in our society," he says.
 "Employers find out their employees are gay and fire them," he says. "Landlords find out their tenants are gay and leases are terminated . . . that's why I feel so adamant toward gay rights. Gays have a difficult time succeeding in life . . . and I'm concerned that there is no justification."
 Because Texas has outlawed all homosexual activities, Hickman says he finds this discriminatory toward gays. The 14th Amendment is "trying to restrict gay rights," he says.

Hickman, also an adviser to the Student Art Films Society at A&M, teaches three courses in philosophy and has recently edited his second textbook, "Philosophy, Technology and Human Affairs," which is used at several universities across the nation, including A&M.
 Hickman says he has done research on the effects of television evangelists, or what he calls the "electronic church."
 "The emphasis is on superficial images, rather than on content," he says. "The evangelists . . . are able to manipulate mass media by means of the electronic media."
 Although Hickman at one time studied to be a Baptist minister, he says he is not a Christian now. "When you die, you die," he says. " . . . you stop existing as an organism . . . that's all the evidence we have."
 "I wouldn't consider myself an atheist . . . (mine) is a philosophical position that has taken me a lot of years to work out."
 Leaning back in his chair, Hickman blew a puff of smoke toward the ceiling, grinned and said, "I'm always looking for evidence of life after death but I haven't seen any, have you?"

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