

# New Jersey rejects Tropicana bids, restarts sale process

New York (Reuters) – Casino regulators in New Jersey agreed on Wednesday to reject all bids received for the Tropicana Casino and Resort in Atlantic City, and to restart the process for a buyer.

The New Jersey Casino Control Commission said in a statement it gave the trustee overseeing the sale process, retired state Supreme Court Justice Gary Stein, another 120 days to find a buyer for the Tropicana.

Stein was appointed by the state to oversee the casino after regulators refused to renew the license of its former owner, Columbia Sussex Corp, after receiving complaints ranging from massive layoffs to problems with service and cleanliness. That led the state to seek a sale.

The commission receiving „multiple expressions of interest“ from possible buyers, but Stein concluded none of the bidders offered what he viewed as fair market value.

„Requiring Justice Stein to produce a buyer from the available pool is impractical,“ the commission chairwoman, Linda Kassekert, said.

Kassekert added that „whoever the participants in the bid process may have been, none of them, nor anyone else not already a party has raised any concerns with Justice Stein’s proposal to reject the original process and start over.“

Stein had hoped to have a buyer by the end of April. But several developments, including the worsening of the credit market, the slowing national economy and a bankruptcy filing by a Columbia Sussex affiliate, Tropicana Entertainment LLC, slowed the process to a crawl.

The bankruptcy filing led potential buyers to low-ball their offers, Stein said earlier this month.

Columbia Sussex acquired the property in its 2006 acquisition of Aztar Corp.