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# **Hearing** on Orchard Park set for spring

Dispute likely to continue as evidentiary hearing scheduled for March

By WILLIAM KIBLER bkibler@altoonamirror.com

The dispute between the city and a community group over the fate of Orchard Park in Logantown seems likely to extend for at least several more months, after a pre-trial conference Thursday

at which Judge David Consiglio scheduled an evidentiary hearing for March.

The focus of the pre-trial conference was on the lawsuit's disputed claim that the city dedicated the park for public use, if only by implication, thus protecting the park from development.

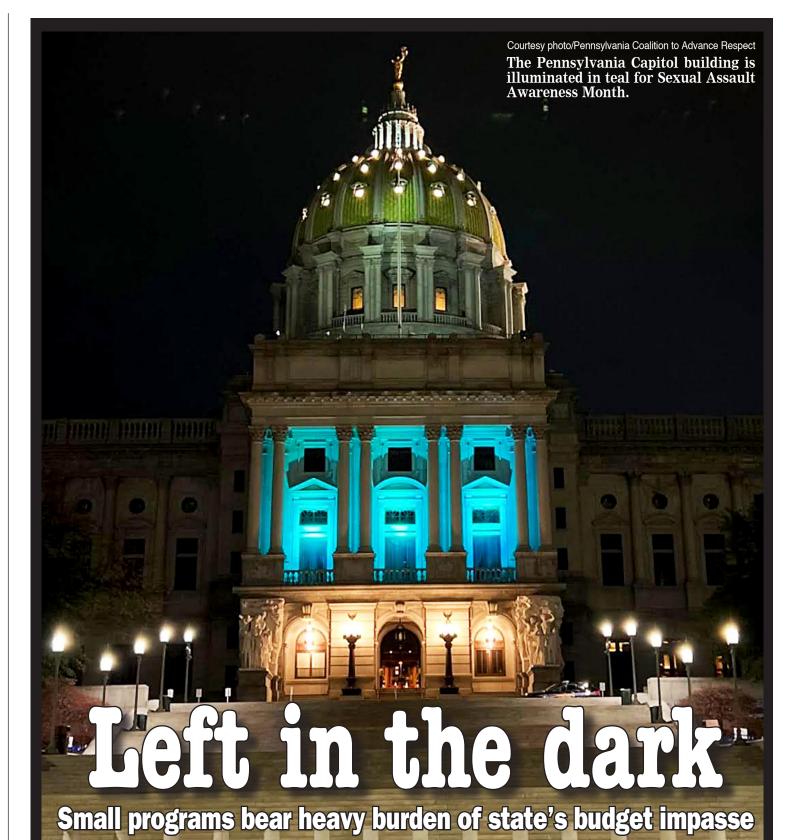
But Consiglio's ruling Thursday broadens it to include a forthcoming city claim that even if the park has been dedicated, a provision in the state's Donated or Dedicated Property Act should allow for undoing that dedication through the county Orphans

It makes sense to combine those two issues, rather than litigating the matter of dedication first, then. potentially, the matter of whether the city can justify to the court that the dedication should be overturned, according to city solicitor Mike Wagner, city Redevelopment Authority solicitor Patrick Fanelli and their adversary, community group lawyer Tim Fitchett of Fair Shake Environmental Legal Ser-

Under the DDPA, municipalities can petition their counties' orphans courts for "relief" from prior dedications of parkland, based on maintenance of the "original use" of such properties being "no longer practicable or possible"; or the parkland having "ceased to serve the public interest

Municipalities can also petition for relief if they are "in doubt as to the effectiveness or the validity of an apparent dedication, because of the lack of a record of the acceptance of the dedicated land."

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By Katie Meyer Spotlight PA

ARRISBURG — More than two months in, the effects of Pennsylvania's budget impasse are compounding. Many of the programs hurting most are smaller ones that tend to get little attention.

Across the commonwealth, small nonprofit programs like rape crisis centers are laying off staff and scaling back services, or preparing to do so. Wealthy counties are dipping into reserves to fund child services and programs for people with intellectual disabilities, while poorer counties are taking out lines of credit (and associated interest) or putting some

### **SPOTLIGHT**

services completely on hold.

"We urge you to contact your state representatives to let them know how important these programs are," the Community Action Partnership of Cambria County posted on Facebook last month, announcing it would indefinitely halt rental and utility assistance programs and a daycare. "Without state funding, the community suffers."

The budget was due June 30, but disagreement in the divided state government over funding transit and overall spending levels, and a lack of consensus on new revenue sources, have deadlocked

Programs affected by a delayed budget fall into two large categories: schools and other education initiatives, including libraries; and health and human services, many of which are administered by counties with help from state money.

This latter group is sprawling, encompassing everything from emergency medical services, to substance use and problem gambling treatment, to foster care agencies.

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## GOP narrows Dems' lead in state

Voter data shows 53,500 blue edge as more abandon both major parties

By John Finnerty

CapitolWire Democrats in Pennsylvania by more than 1 million registered voters. According to the latest voter registration data, that advantage today is less than 175,000. And when only active voters are counted, the Democrats' edge is just 53,557.

Donald Trump, but another big emerging as the tie-breaking segchunk is likely due to the increasing number of voters fed up with partisan politics and leaving both major political parties, say

"The exodus away from Democrats really started after 2008 and it kind of stabilized a little bit during Trump's first term," said Berwood Yost, a political science once outnumbered Republicans professor at Franklin and Marshall College. "It really tanked during Biden's term — Democratic registration. There is a tie between party registration and presidential job performance.'

With Democrats and Republicans essentially in a dead heat A chunk of that shift is due in terms of voter registration, to the popularity of President the state's unaffiliated voters are

ment who will decide elections. "The real beneficiary, if you want to call it that, the largest kind of percentage change in registration, is among unaffiliated and third party voters. There are a lot of people who aren't happy with the way politics is practiced. And they've abandoned the major parties, which is a huge statement in a place where we don't have open primaries," Yost said.

### Registration shift

In November 2008, there were 4.48 million registered Democrats in Pennsylvania, amounting to 51% of the total registered voters

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## **Huntingdon unveils** courthouse upgrades

By Conner Goetz

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HUNTINGDON — Although the Huntingdon County Courthouse is more than 140 years old, it's now ready to serve for another 140 years thanks to a suite of comprehensive renovations.

Local leaders unveiled the updates to the roof, second floor and rear of the building Thursday afternoon.

The \$4 million project began in 2024, when an inspection of the building discovered the wooden beams that support the roof were deteriorating, according to coun-

ty Commissioner Jeff Thomas. That discovery catalyzed a larger renovation project.

'You couldn't get to the roof beams without pretty much tearing up the whole upstairs to fix it, so it made the perfect sense ... to do the other renovations up there at the same time," he said.

The newly renovated building boasts a redone upstairs courtroom, secure holding area, safety and security upgrades and a variety of accessibility improvements to boost ADA compliance, he said.

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#78125 - 2 Orchard View Drive, Hollidaysburg.- 3 BR, 3 BA in HASD. Spacious LR and DR. HW floors. Kitchen with cherry cabinetry and Corian countertops. New furnace and central air. 2nd kitchen and bonus room on the LL Well equipped laundry. \$334,000.





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