

The Juniata Observer

"Love Where You Live"

SATURDAY, 17 JANUARY 2026 VOL. 1 – NO. 2 ALTOONA, PENNSYLVANIA

WEATHER: SNOW SUN., WED., FRI.; RAIN TUES.; HIGHS NEAR 34F, LOWS 24F.

Civic Notices

JUNIATA CIVIC ASSOCIATION

Support local Juniata Civic Association Events. The January book review will focus on Nobody's Girl by Virginia Roberts Giuffre.

Meeting set for 1/14/26 at 6:30pm.

At the Box Office

BEN MILLIRON

Greenland 2 Migration - A good thrill ride but forgettable ★★☆☆☆

While *Greenland: Migration* suffers from a reliance on implausible coincidences and a relentless barrage of obstacles, it succeeds in delivering an entertaining spectacle. The narrative occasionally drags under the weight of repetitive and unbelievable scenarios, and the characterization remains largely one-dimensional. Nevertheless, for audiences seeking a high-stakes apocalyptic thriller, this long-awaited sequel satisfies the demands of the genre.

News Image

Cricket Knoll Update

A significant residential development project along a major Altoona corridor, which has sat largely unfinished for decades, is finally moving toward revitalization. On Friday, January 16, the Altoona Redevelopment Authority officially kickstarted the next phase of the long-dormant "Cricket Knoll" subdivision.

Located strategically along Juniata Gap Road and Cherry Avenue, the Cricket Knoll site has long been viewed by city officials as a prime location for needed housing stock. However, after an initial phase of development years ago, the remaining acreage sat untouched.

At their meeting on Friday, Authority members took decisive action to restart the project by approving a contract with the local engineering firm, The EADS Group. According to reports from the meeting, The EADS Group has been tasked with creating a comprehensive "concept plan" for the site.

The goal of this new initiative is not for the city to build houses directly, but rather to prepare the land for private investment. The vision outlined by the Authority is to transform the currently vacant 17.7-acre tract into a "shovel-ready" residential neighborhood.

The concept plan being developed by EADS will lay out the essential infrastructure required to make the site viable for builders. This includes the design and placement of new streets, water lines, and sewer systems connecting to the existing grid along Juniata Gap Road.

This development marks a major turning point for a property that had stalled under previous ownership. The city took control of the site's destiny last year by purchasing the remaining tract from S&A Homes, with the explicit intention of seeing the original vision of a single-family home neighborhood through to completion.

Once The EADS Group completes the concept plan and the infrastructure layout is finalized, the Authority is expected to seek a private developer to purchase the lots and begin vertical construction of the homes.

Housing Update City Wide

Based on the reporting from the *Altoona Mirror* article "**Altoona adopts statute on group housing**" (published January 13, 2026), here is a synopsis of the new housing statute:

Purpose & Scope

The ordinance, officially adopted by the Altoona City Council on Monday, January 12, 2026, is designed to tighten and update regulations for **halfway/recovery houses, rooming and boarding houses, and institutionalized housing**. According to City Manager Christopher McGuire and Councilman Dave Ellis, the goal is not to be punitive but to ensure the safety of residents living in these facilities while maintaining the "viability of neighborhoods" where they are located.

Key Provisions

- Licensing & Inspections:** The statute establishes a mandatory licensing program for covered facilities. It incorporates existing state laws regarding inspections and licensing but adds local mechanisms to ensure compliance with city codes, fire safety, and zoning requirements.
- Space Requirements:** Facilities must provide a minimum square footage per resident to prevent overcrowding.
- Local Accountability:** Owners of these facilities—many of whom are from outside the area—are now required to provide a **local contact person** who is readily accessible to city officials.
- "Good Neighbor" Clause:** Operators must enforce rules requiring occupants to be considerate of neighbors. This includes specific prohibitions against "excessively loud, profane, or obnoxious behavior" that interferes with neighbors' use of their own properties.
- Grandfathering:** Existing facilities are "grandfathered" in (allowed to remain) but must still come into compliance with current building codes and fire regulations.

Opposition

The *Mirror* reports that critics at the meeting argued the ordinance violates the **Fair Housing Act** and the **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**. They cited legal precedents where courts have struck down municipal restrictions that unfairly target group homes for people with disabilities or those in recovery.

Context

Councilman Dave Butterbaugh noted that the ordinance seeks to address problems with facility owners who prioritize profit over safety and evict residents when their subsidies run out.

Additional Information: City Council Video Recording: 1/12/26

Yerty Auto Service Expands to Altoona with \$4.5M Lumax Site Redevelopment

According to a January 9, 2026 report by the **Altoona Mirror**, Roaring Spring-based Yerty Auto Service has acquired the former Lumax Industries facility on Chestnut Avenue to significantly expand its operations. The **Pennsylvania Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED)** confirmed the deal earlier this week, announcing that the project is supported by a \$1.8 million low-interest loan which will help fund the estimated \$4.5 million renovation of the 140,000-square-foot site. As noted in state filing documents, the move will allow Yerty to consolidate its vehicle dismantling and shipping services, retaining 22 current employees while adding 10 new full-time positions to the local workforce at the property, which had been vacant since Lumax's closure in 2023.

Juniata Works

Strawberry Hills

Work continues on the Strawberry Hills complex. This 100-acre site, located between North 9th and 19th Avenues, is being transformed into a major soccer and multipurpose facility.

Heavy grading has commenced. Logan Township documents confirm the long-term vision to bring vital green space to the community.

The ICE Facility

The former ICE Armory Operations center has officially returned to city control. The 5.6-acre property was recently appraised at \$2.3 million.

Retail Expansion

At the corner of 25th Avenue and Juniata Gap Road, construction is active on the 7,500-square-foot Dollar General, replacing the former Pizza Hut site.

Correspondence

To submit news, business offerings and services, yard sales, or editorial comment email info@juniataobserver.com

ARCHIVES

Edition: 2026-01-10