

## LOCAL NEWS

# 'They offered us \$100': I-83 project forcing non-profit out of rental, financial future uncertain

PennDOT is taking hundreds of properties through eminent domain as work continues along the Interstate 83 corridor. One non-profit faces a painful financial reality.



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HARRISBURG, Pa. — The Chinese Cultural & Arts Institute has been teaching traditional dance to students in Dauphin County since 1998, performing for audiences across the region.

"Later on, we added more," recalled Chen-Yu Tsuei, president of the non-profit. "Chinese painting, calligraphy, language and music."

By 2004, the institute was renting a building on South 41st Street in Swatara Township.

What was once a bare interior, turned into classrooms and a dance studio with specialized floating floors and custom mirrors.

Now, PennDOT's confirmed it's taking the building as part of the I-83 East Shore expansion plan and the institute has to go.

"PennDOT is supposed to relocate us or compensate what we have," Tsuei said.

"I knew it was going to be bad, knew they would lowball, I didn't think it was going to be this bad," said Bill Hubler, CEO of the Chinese Cultural & Arts Institute.

Though it's renting the building, the non-profit estimates it has more than \$400,000 in property here, needing more than \$750,000 for a successful move.

Instead, it received a letter from PennDOT on March 10, reading in part, "we are pleased to offer you the sum of \$100 for the right-of-way required from your property."

"They offered us \$100," Hubler said. "Speechless. It doesn't even cover the tape to tape the boxes."

"Everybody thinks it's a joke," Tsuei said. "For me, it's disrespectful, insulting. And also it's discrimination."

PennDOT said the \$100 payment was compensation for a sign on the property, but the institute said there is no sign.

A PennDOT spokesperson said:

"Through the acquisition process, it was discovered that the lease between the landowner and tenant required all proceeds of just compensation be paid to the landowner due to a condemnation. PennDOT does not intend to provide any further compensation, although the Institute has been made eligible for relocation benefits, where they qualify. "

Hubler doesn't buy it.

"There is a clause in all commercial leases were any and all improvements that the tenet makes become the property of the landlord," Hubler said. "That is normal, and is the case when you leave on your own volition. We are being forced to move and have all of our improvements taken."

"The government is taking all of our property and walking away with it and transferring the value to a for-profit entity," he continued. "It's government out-of-control."

"They want a minority non-profit crushed, disappear," Tsuei added.

The Chinese Cultural & Arts Institute is looking for a new home, but says rent will be three to four times higher than what it's paying.'

The institute is drumming up support, hoping it won't be flattened by the traffic headed its way.

You can find more information on the [Chinese Cultural & Arts Institute website](#).

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