Penn State is discontinuing its credit courses in Lewistown, and that’s causing some concern in Mifflin County.

The university announced in November that it would be eliminating its for-credit opportunities by 2017. But some in the area are concerned about the hole it will leave in their community.

The Mifflin County Planning Commission will be discussing the issue at a meeting at 3:30 p.m. Thursday at the county courthouse.

“This outreach center is particularly important to this area where we do not have a four-year college or community college,” planning director Bill Gomes wrote to the university Jan. 8. “As you may be aware, Mifflin County ranks as the next to the lowest (66 out of 67
counties) county in the state in terms of per capita income.”

In November, Penn State said the decision came because of decreasing enrollment and declining revenue, but that the center would continue to provide cooperative extension programs and small business development center services.

Gomes said the declining enrollment was a result of classes that were already being scaled back before the decision was announced.

He pointed to other impacts, like on the LPN nursing program at the Mifflin County Academy of Science and Technology and the RN diploma program at the Geisinger-Lewistown Hospital School of Nursing.

“It also has affected the Advanced Placement programs at the high school,” Gomes said.

Penn State maintains that the university can still help students pursue opportunities through the online World Campus or at other locations.

David Aneckstein, news director for Penn State Outreach and Online Education, said that a
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Lori Falce: 814-235-3910, @LoriFalce

university representative is unavailable to come to Thursday’s meeting, but that Mifflin County representatives have been invited to the university to look at the decision next month.

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