

Port Authority members to organize

Board could become influential in Butler County economy

By Chris Dumond
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HAMILTON — What could become one of the most influential organizations for the future of the county's economic growth — the Butler County Port Authority — is slated to hold an organizational meeting tonight.

The port authority — authorized by the county commissioners in July and appointed by commissioners the following month — has broad, cross-jurisdiction project financing powers, eminent domain authority and the ability to put tax issues before voters. Before the port authority board of directors can get down to business, interim director John Foner said, it has to get organized. Some of the directors — including former deputy county auditor Joe Magdich, Watson Gravel owner

Ron Watson, McDonald's owner Steve Posey, former Middletown Chamber of Commerce President Richard Slagle, Colonial Round-tion Director James F. Fitton, Miller Brewing Co. Manager Denise Quinn and UC Physicians Marketing Director John Gillespie — have never met each other, Foner said.

"We're going to introduce the board members to each other (at the meeting)," Foner said. "Not all of them know each other." The board also is in for a

review of port authority powers and projects other authorities have undertaken across Ohio.

Foner, who is also the executive director of the Butler County Transportation Improvement District, said it is also likely that a committee will be formed to draft the authority's bylaws. "We need to create the port authority bylaws to decide upon the rules we're going to operate on," he said. "Then, I think we need

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to take care of operational things like letterhead and selection of officers and some functional things like that. We'll probably look to some communities in the county for modest operational support."

Questions about the authority's long-term funding haven't been asked, much less answered, Foner said.

For now, he said, the authority will need money to pay any consultants or advisers. He said it's possible the board may need an attorney to help draft bylaws or

a consultant to help with strategic planning.

Ongoing funding for port authorities varies across Ohio. Some have been dependent on funding from other government agencies. Others have been self-sufficient — funded through financing fees.

Foner said he does not expect significant funding needs until the authority is organized.

He said it is likely the board will meet each month. If the authority was to meet less frequently, he said, he doubted it would be able to get traction to move forward.

The meeting is set for 7 p.m. in the conference room C-1 on the fourth floor of the Government Services Center at 315 High St.

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