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Port Authority outlines projects

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THE BELMONT County Commissioners held their final meeting of the month at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, and residents and county officials who would otherwise not be able to attend the regular meetings took advantage of the evening meeting to address the commissioners with their comments and concerns.

Port Authority Director Larry Merry brought to the board updates regarding future Port Authority projects.

In the spring of this year, Merry said the Port Authority plans to apply for an ISIF grant from the state in order to start on the construction of an infrastructure in Warren Township near state Route 800 where the Port Authority plans to create an industrial park.

The site will require the acquisition of several hundreds of acres to create, and Merry said the Port Authority has been talking with Barnesville officials to get the construction accomplished.

Commissioner Mark Thomas said that the creation of such a complex will be beneficial to the economic success of the county.

"It will be a great economic tool," Thomas said. "We are excited about this opportunity. Barnesville is excited to be a part of it. The net result of this collaboration will be economic success."

Regarding other Port Authority projects, Merry mentioned that they are in the process of trying to create a manufacturer's council in Belmont County.

"I found it's a good way to come together and work toward issues," Merry said. "We need to make sure the manufacturing industry continues to grow and expand."

Thomas said that the creation of such a council is the perfect example of the Port Authority thinking "outside of the box" in an attempt to expand on already-existing county jobs.

"The retention of jobs is just as important as the creation of new jobs in Belmont County," Thomas said.

In other business, a Fairpoint resident came before the commissioners to request help with a situation involving a run-down house near his residence that he believes is creating a "health and death hazard" for children in his area.

Armed with photos of the property in question, James Loccisano presented the property to the commissioners and said an open well existing on the property is among his concerns.

"I have been writing letters to the property owners without response," Loccisano said. "I have been trying to purchase this property for 20 years. If some kid falls into this well and drowns, all kinds of people will come out of the woodwork then."

Thomas said that there was no legal action that the commissioners could take on this issue except to contact others, such as the health department, so see what can be done.

Commissioner Charles Probst added that they will look into the issue.

"We will get this taken care of very soon," Probst said.

Finally, Don Pickenpaugh, GIS director, expressed gratitude to the commissioners for their annual contribution of \$50,000.

In 2001, the commissioners passed a resolution to commit that amount each year to the GIS, and Pickenpaugh said that he took advantage of the night meeting to extend his thanks as a courtesy to the board of commissioners.

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