

# John Loftus retiring as Lake County Port Authority leader

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Loftus

The Lake County Port Authority will look for a new leader as Executive Director John Loftus plans to retire.

Loftus has worked in the public sector for most of his life, including nearly five years as the Port Authority the agency's only executive director. His last day is Friday.

Loftus, 54, also has worked at organizations such as the Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority, the Toledo Mayor's office and the Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority.

"I've been doing this in different places for over 30 years. At some point, you come to the realization that it's a little chaotic and a little hectic," he said. "We need some young blood coming into this organization to take us to the next level."

Although he's retiring, Loftus plans to come back to the Port Authority on a part-time basis in February because the agency is working on many different projects and he wants to help with the transition to a new executive director.

Loftus, an Orange Village resident, said he won't return as executive director.

"I don't want to leave them walking in cold and saying what the heck is going on here," Loftus said. "I want to help out whenever I can to help these projects going forward."

Lake County commissioners created the Port Authority in February 2007 with the mission to promote projects that involve job creation and employment opportunities. It is also authorized by state law to enhance and aid transportation, housing, recreation, governmental operations, culture

or research.

During Loftus' tenure the Port Authority has grown from a fledgling agency to one the county relies on to

help spur economic development efforts.

"John came in and did a great job defining what the Port Authority is all about and has been involved in some very important projects, not only for the county, but for the area," county Commissioner Raymond E. Sines said.

The Port Authority has studied options for the Lost Nation Airport; worked to redevelop, own and eventually lease the former Coe Manufacturing facility in Painesville; implement county Coastal Plan projects; and offer public financing for small businesses.

Commissioners plan to use some of the county's share of

casino revenue distributions to aid the Port Authority's economic development mission, Sines said.

Loftus said the commissioners' support is among the items that he's most proud of during his tenure.

"It's that vote of confidence that we're doing something good for the entire benefit of the community and they're willing to step up to provide additional funds," he said. "The reward is they are giving us more resources and hopefully we can continue to grow that economic development."

Loftus has been great to work with and affable, Port Authority Board Chairman Harry Allen said.

When Loftus was hired he brought a knowledge of how to get the agency off to a running start.

"He has become the face and literally the image of the Port Authority," Allen said.

"One of the things he is, is totally accessible and willing to listen to all ideas."