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## **Lost Nation Airport ownership transferred to Lake County and Port Authority**

### **Author:**

John Arthur Hutchison | The News-Herald

Lost Nation Airport now belongs to Lake County and the Lake County Port and Economic Development Authority.

The Federal Aviation Administration approved the ownership change from the city of Willoughby and the transfer was officially recorded at the Lake County Recorder's Office on Oct. 8 just before the close of business.

The transaction ends eight years of discussions between the city, county and FAA and lifts the limbo on whether the airport will remain open. The city in 2006 asked commissioners to take over the airport's assets. Lake County commissioners created the Lake County Ohio Port and Economic Development Authority in 2007 to be the county's economic development branch and shortly after the agency formed it began the task to investigate a potential airport ownership transfer and to see whether it made the most sense to keep the facility open.

The Authority conducted a lengthy two-phase study that included public hearings to examine the best use of the airport facility before it was determined to keep the airport open.

Commissioners, Authority and Willoughby officials each approved the transfer in August and were then granted final approval this week by the FAA.

Authority Board of Directors Harry Allen and Anthony Debevc have been a part of the agency since the Authority was created.

Allen, who has served as board chairman since inception, said the airport transfer is one of the Authority's top accomplishments.

"To reflect back on the years of planning, finally accomplishing something that I think is great for the county and business community," Allen said. "It's a bright day for the county."

He said one of the reasons the Authority was formed was to develop an entity that could address issues such as the airport for the entire county and not fall victim to any one municipality's interest.

The next step is to work with the FAA to further develop the airport's master plan to serve as a prototype for what a regional airport will look like in the future.

Debevc has served on the board's committee to oversee the airport issue and has devoted much of his time studying the ownership transfer.

"I think it's a piece of infrastructure that will be preserved for the future and I think it needed to be upgraded and have new progressive ideas," he said. "We hope that the people of Lake County see it as a real jewel."

Debevc said he travels a lot for business and has had the opportunity to see and compare many other smaller county airports including many located in rural areas nowhere near businesses.

"Lost Nation is located in a great business district that is ready for growth," Debevc said.

"That's what business people like, they can fly from one airport to another, do their business and leave without a lot of driving."

Willoughby Mayor David Anderson was pleased the transfer is completed.

“I just think this is a great thing for the airport and the right thing for the county to be doing,” Anderson said. “Anybody who wants to make an investment in the airport hasn’t been able to do that.”

<http://www.news-herald.com/general-news/20141010/lost-nation-airport-own...>