

This is a printer friendly version of an article from **newarkadvocate.com**
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

[Back](#)

Article published Mar 28, 2007

Port Authority plans for future

Members, local officials to meet with legislators to be prepared for any crisis

By MARK SZAKONYI

Advocate Reporter

HEATH -- More than a decade ago, support from local legislators helped save the Central Ohio Aerospace and Technology Center, also known as The Base, in Heath.

Local officials and members of the Heath-Newark-Licking County Port Authority plan to help hedge their bets against any future crisis when they fly out today to meet with legislators in Washington, D.C.

"We want to make sure the faces and name are put together, so we are better prepared should a crisis take place," said Rick Platt, executive director of the port authority.

Licking County Commissioner Tim Bubbs, Heath Mayor Dan Dupps, port authority member Fred Paul and representatives from Boeing Co., Bionetics Corp. and BAE Systems will meet with U.S. Sen. George Voinovich, U.S. Sen. Sherrod Brown, U.S. Rep. Pat Tiberi, U.S. Rep. Zack Space and the office of the governor, he said.

Much of the help legislators provide to The Base goes unnoticed by many, Platt said.

During The Base's more difficult times, Voinovich, then governor, wrote a letter to Boeing's president that was passed down through the company's hierarchy and provided a lot of attention for the facility, he said.

"These guys can help us open doors, even on the private side," Platt said.

He said legislators and the surrounding community are more informed about The Base's goals and importance than they were more than a decade ago.

He said he doesn't see a crisis in the future of The Base, which employs more than 900 people and hosts 20 employers, including Honeywell, BAE Systems and Raytheon.

"It's our job to save The Base every day," Platt said.

Aside from thanking legislators for support, Dupps said he wants to seek ways to fund the city's proposed water tower.

The \$1 million water tower would entice future businesses, especially an unnamed company that would bring about 450 jobs to the area if it decides to set up shop in Heath.

Dupps said he is looking to obtain grants and low-interest loans to pay for the construction of the 500,000-gallon water tower at the city's reservoir on Seminary Road.

"If push comes to shove, we would be able to do it, but it would stretch all of our resources," he said of building the tower without assistance.

The unnamed company is looking at Mid-Ohio Development Corp.'s 120-acre site at Thornwood Drive and Beaver Run Road and a 200-acre site that is part of the Central Ohio Aerospace and Technology Center, said John Groff, the city's zoning chief.

The other site the company is looking at is in Muskingum County, he said.

Dupps said he also hoped to chat with legislators about assisting the ArvinMeritor facility in Heath that recently laid off 114 employees and has declined to say whether or not future layoffs will be required.

"No company is more likely to get bids on military trucks than ArvinMeritor," he said.

The plant produces axles for utility, military, emergency, coach and construction vehicles.
