

Wrong person with no vision nominated to Port board

It has come to my attention that Jerry Chabler has been nominated to sit on the Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority (Port) board. This nomination is wrong and should be voted down by the members of Toledo City Council at the September 23, 2008 council meeting. Mr. Chabler's attitude will be a giant step backwards for the community.

I had the unfortunate opportunity to go head-to-head with Mr. Chabler in 1999. At that time Mr. Chabler was sitting on the Port board while I was trying to sub-lease a small parcel of land from CSX for operations to supply the railroad with 60,000 tons per year of ballast. Mr. Chabler, along

with Mr. Jim Ruvulo and various members of management from the former local construction company S.E. Johnson Companies, Inc., tried to convince various members of the Port board that there was only "room for one dock" on the river. Their reasoning was that there was not enough business to operate another cargo facility.

The trio had the audacity to engage a Bowling Green State University professor that tried to convince



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the members of the Port board and the public the day before Thanksgiving in 1999 that this was a one-port town. Had Mr. Chabler taken the time to investigate he would have discovered that the general cargo facility operator, S.E. Johnson, employed an incompetent manager. I know this because I bought the facility from S.E. Johnson / Old Castle in 2004 and have grown the business at the ballast facility from 60,000 tons per year to 600,000+ tons per year. This was the major factor for the Port

receiving the Pacesetter Award.

There are going to be multiple openings on the Port board in the near future and there is an opportunity to appoint people that have business savvy with true interests in the community. Let's appoint people such as Dr. Lloyd Jacobs from the University of Toledo that promote the best of this community and move it forward to make it the best we can be.

Mr. Chabler had his chance to make his mark on this community and failed. We don't need a political retreat. We need visionaries.

Alex Johnson, president, Midwest Terminals of Toledo International

To the editor:

I recently learned that Mayor Carty Finkbeiner is nominating Jerry Chabler to replace Bruce Baumhauer as one of the City of Toledo's Port Authority board members. My reaction to this news is the old adage, "The more things change, the more things stay the same."

Mired in the economic development morass in which we find ourselves, and in a time when "change" seems to be everyone's theme, I could not possibly think of a less inspiring candidate for a group viewed as a "vital link" to Toledo and our area's future. And it is being prompted by a mayor who seems to have run his course as Toledo's "head coach." If you accept his view of his role as "our head coach," it is interesting in my opinion to see the outcome of applying "coaches' effectiveness review" to his performance. Such a review certainly includes "recruiting his players!" Yes, I have opinions about the appointee, but those opinions prompt even larger thoughts about Toledo's economic development situation.

I have noted that, when one examines the employment trends over the past couple of decades, it is quite visible that Toledo (and therefore Lucas County and in turn the Toledo MSA) significantly broke trend with the state and national trends in a **markedly negative direction**. That is coincidental with the time that Toledo adopted the strong mayor form of government. Since then, there has grown a local acceptance

about the same names being involved in our future that have brought us our immediate past. I see this appointment as proving that axiom to be absolutely accurate. Accordingly, I am inclined to combine these factors and other factors into my assessment of Mr. Finkbeiner's effectiveness along the way, and it appears our "head coach" is incapable of learning anything from reviewing the "game film" on Monday night.

While I have nothing personal against Mr. Chabler, my impression is that his history is among the "order taker" politicians that acquire a seat on a leadership entity board such as The Toledo-Lucas County Port Authority and then apply the guidance of others. And while the "others" (from whom I believe he has and *will* receive his marching orders) may have the very highest regards for their own opinion, I am surely not convinced those opinions have or will serve us well. I would be more inclined toward board appointees with a much higher threshold for private sector economic success and a keen eye to the future. In other words, if your team has not been performing for literally decades, maybe you should recruit new players.

So, if I were in a recruiting "brainstorming" session, without much thought I could think of several candidates who would bring a refreshing new verve to the important



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role of being a Port Authority board member (hint, did you see who led the charge for the Toledo version of the ABC hit show *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*?). This is especially vital at a time when the Port Authority's administration is also "leaderless" except for an interim director and vice president who doubles as interim director of the LCIC. That amplifies the need for new and strong leaders. It is not a time for "same ol' same ol'" in my view!

Mr. Finkbeiner fancies himself as a "coach" and derives his actions from what he envisions "head coaches" would do. Well, if he wants to be a successful head coach, he would realize his playbook is leading to too many "zero win" seasons. In the "real world" of coaching, his contract would have been terminated long ago. But this is Toledo, where there is seemingly no accountability. There is no "board of trustees" demanding the coach be fired, as there would be in a college "head coaches" world. There are no owners to call his game, as there would be in the NFL. In Mr. Finkbeiner's world, there are only fans in the stands moaning aloud as he runs his game plan leading to not only more losses, but embarrassing losses! I believe the missing link is "private sector leadership" willing to take a stand. Alas, therein lays the real problem for our area.

It is a fully accepted fact that

good teams have good leaders. Here, the leaders have abandoned the team and in fact seem to have left the stadium. And why shouldn't they? In trying to assist, they run the risk of alienating the coach and his support team by taking a stand. For that well-intentioned effort, they and their companies (or *gasp* even non-profit groups like, *oh my God*, the United Way) will be mercilessly raked over the coals, embarrassed, harassed, and even threatened. So, the stakes here are deemed to be far too risky for a strong willed and vocal leadership to come together and take control of the team's destiny. But a team without strong leaders and good players are doomed to continued failure season after season after season.

So, this particular board seat recommendation – and the effectiveness of the "head coach" who rendered it – is, in my opinion, a signal of clear and present danger ahead. It is politics as usual driving a "three yards and a cloud of dust" playbook in an age of "high powered spread offenses and highly sophisticated defenses," all utilizing the very top personnel to earn the championship. It is driven by a "head coach" with hopelessly narcissistic and megalomaniacal game day tendencies that scare the hell out of me. Looking ahead, what benefit will this appointment lead us to in 2015?

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