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Port Authority gets first payout

Middletown gives \$10K to help cover start-up expenses

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MIDDLETOWN — The city of Middletown is the first entity to pay the new Butler County Port Authority its share of the authority's start-up costs.

John Fonner, secretary to the authority board, said the body received a \$10,000 check from Middletown Monday, making the city "first through the door."

The same amount also is expected from the city of Hamilton and the Butler County Commission, Fonner said.

Still, Fonner said he recognizes receipt of the check as a

"significant milestone" in the authority's short history. The county formed the body July 29 last year.

"Everybody has been really positive, waiting for the budgets for the new year to kind of kick in," Fonner said.

The port authority was created to assist Butler County communities with their economic development efforts, Fonner said, adding that the organization has not yet drafted an official mission statement. The authority requested \$10,000 from each entity — Middletown, Hamilton and the county — late last year.

"It's something to allow us to get up off the ground," Fonner said.

It wasn't difficult for Middletown leaders to decide to get involved

with the port authority, said Marty Kohler, the city's planning director.

"I think it's a bargain for Middletown, actually, if they can pull off the projects they say they can do," Kohler said.

Although it has been a challenge for the council to balance the city's budget in recent months, Kohler said council understood the value of a port authority. The port authority could be instrumental in finding new uses for the city's brownfields and under-used factories, he said.

"It was not much of a sales job," Kohler said of persuading the council.

According to a budget provided by Fonner, the \$30,000 from the county, Hamilton and Middletown will be generally broken down this way: \$12,500 for "expertise"

on projects under consideration, Web site development and more; \$10,000 for preparation of bylaws, organizational filings and more; \$3,500 for accounting; auditing fees and bank charges; \$3,000 for telephone calls, postage, travel, facility rentals, software and more; and \$1,000 for office and meeting supplies.

Richard Slagle, a Middletown resident, former Armco executive and interim chamber of commerce president, was named the authority's 2004 chairman in October. Slagle was re-elected as 2005 chairman in December. Joe Magdich, of Fairfield, was named the board's vice chairman.

The authority has power of eminent domain to appropriate land or easements for authorized purposes.