

NEWS-HERALD ARTICLE – APRIL 6, 2017

Lake County commissioners voted April 6 to increase the county's hotel bed tax to help fund lakefront improvement projects.

Page | 1 The bed tax increases to 5 percent from 3 percent with all of the additional funds — an estimated \$500,000 annually — going toward lakefront projects.

County Administrator Jason Boyd noted at the March 30 commissioners meeting that two county coastal development plans have been created over the years with private and public input.

"This is the first step of actually beginning the implementation of some economic development across the coast," Boyd said at [that meeting](#).

Advocates for the tax increase say it will predominantly be paid by visitors to the county, but Art Shamakian of the Steele Mansion in Painesville said that's not always the case.

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The bed tax rate in neighboring Ashtabula County is already 5 percent and in Cuyahoga County the rate is 5.5 percent. Geauga's is 3 percent.

The projects are required to be "port projects," meaning the Lake County Ohio Port and Economic Development Authority has to finance it, own it or is in some other way involved in the project. The projects have to be within a mile of the lakefront.

The county commissioners would have final say on what projects get funded.

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Projects could vary from breakwater improvements to acquiring land to help spur economic development. The latter is an example port authority board member Chris Madison used in February when discussing the tax option.

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For the past few years, there's been talk of building a resort hotel in Fairport Harbor and there's a piece of land that Madison said might become available.

"It would be very, very nice to acquire," he said. "That would expand the footprint of this potential hotel development and frankly make it a lot more palatable to the developers coming in."

Commissioner Jerry Cirino said they feel strongly that additional funding was needed in order to do some of the things they wish to do that will have the "ultimate impact of bringing more people into Lake County."

"No one enjoys taxes, no one asks for them, we understand that and we did not make the decision lightly," Cirino said. "But feel it's necessary. We always want to make sure we're competitive with neighboring counties and we think we've achieved that and still (in terms of bed tax rate) are under some of the neighboring counties."