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Larry Cox sets Jan. 2 exit from Memphis International Airport

By Wayne Risher

Posted October 18, 2013 at 12:23 p.m., updated October 18, 2013 at 6:12 p.m.



PHOTO BY [MIKE MAPLE](#)

Larry Cox

Larry Cox will clean out his desk Jan. 2 after about 30 years as Memphis International Airport's chief executive and 41 years as an employee.

Cox, 66, said Friday he'll leave six months earlier than planned because his successor, Scott Brockman, is more than ready to run the show. Plus, Cox said, the job isn't as much fun as it once was.

Cox, who is paid \$350,000 a year, was due to retire next July 14 after entering a city of Memphis deferred retirement program three years earlier. He has taken a lower profile representing the Memphis-Shelby County Airport Authority since longtime chairman Arnold Perl stepped down last December.

Two months ago, the Memphis-Shelby County Airport Authority board named Brockman as Cox's future successor at CEO.

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"The last two years haven't been as much fun as the first 39," Cox said. "Frankly, I'm ready to turn the reins over to a really competent guy. It's best for me to just get out of the way."

Board chairman Jack Sammons, who succeeded Perl last January, said, "You can't have two head coaches. Larry recognized that, and for the good of the team decided he wanted to help us in any way he can, through his undivided support of Scott."

"It was time that Scott take the reins full-time and be the designated leader," Sammons added. "We're so proud of all the great accomplishments Larry has made over the last four decades, and we have high hopes for where Scott will lead us in the years ahead."

"Our mission is simple: Relentless pursuit of frequent and affordable air service."

Cox took a lot of heat from airport critics after Delta Air Lines began dismantling the once-bustling Memphis passenger hub, which has lost two-thirds of its flights since 2000.

Complaints and suggestions come with the territory, Cox said, but "some of the organized efforts to try to make individuals feel uncomfortable, that's what disappointed me. I felt there was sometimes almost a hatred out there."

A social media group, Delta Does Memphis on Facebook, played a prominent role in questioning airport management decisions and calling attention to high airfares and service reductions.

A founder of the group, blogger Tom Jones, said Cox's early exit is the right thing to do.

"The airport has entered a new era, and its new leadership's emphasis on customer service and competition are the right priorities at the right time for the Memphis region," Jones said in an email. Jones added:

"Since Mr. Cox was going to leave next summer, it was considerate of him to step aside now so that the new year begins with a clean slate for change and progress.

"He's invested 40 years of his life into the airport, and although the past few years have been brutal and Delta Does Memphis has not always agreed on airport decisions, he deserves to be judged on the totality of his career rather than just the years when Delta destroyed our air service."

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Memphis College of Art

Ballet Memphis, River Project 2
Playhouse on the Square

'I Wish You Well' Wall 7 a.m.
Overton Square

**"Grossology: The (Impolite)
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October 18, 2013
12:57 p.m.

orchids writes:

Goodbye and good luck!

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October 18, 2013
1:03 p.m.

BogeyMan writes:

41 years!!?!? No wonder he got so "comfortable" with the airport's tenants and vendors (and vice versa).

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It'll be interesting to see where he goes next (even with his fat pension). My bet: someone he got real chummy with doing the airport's business.

Good riddance, Mr. Cox. You held this airport back for most of your tenure. We'll spend years making up for your mismanagement.

P.S. The only one who'll miss him is probably Fred Smith who got real used to him saying "how high" when Fred said "jump." Then again, his replacement will probably be Fred's boy as well.

October 18, 2013
1:18 p.m.

Vril writes:

in response to **BogeyMan**:

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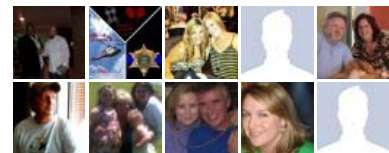
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I was going to ask if Cox's FedEx robot clone was in place, but you pretty much covered it.

October 18, 2013
3:02 p.m.

jomejr#226949 writes:

Delta left, he left.

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October 18, 2013
3:13 p.m.

thecatsmeow writes:

Political patronage positions, such as the election commission and the airport authority results in idiots, collecting a plum check. Dems? who did you put in place on the EC? Did he graduate as expected? Expected, being the key word.

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October 18, 2013
3:51 p.m.

Mexican_Blackbird writes:

Worst thing to ever happen to MIA. Oh wait it's not MIA anymore.

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October 18, 2013
4:26 p.m.

SCRAPPY writes:

Look above his shoulder in the picture.....looks like there are holes in the ceiling.

[Suggest removal](#)

Very symbolic of his legacy.

[Reply to this post](#)

October 18, 2013
4:44 p.m.

orchids writes:

in response to **thecatsmeow**:

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Let's don't go off the deep end here, Meow. I know this man and he's not an idiot. He worked his way up the ladder from the lowest, part time, night position at the airport so he probably knows more about the airport than anyone in the City.

I would agree that he hasn't had the flexibility he needed for his job for the last few years. But consider this--FedEx has been dumping jillions of dollars in the lap of the airport for years. The passenger service industry has been in a tumult off and on since the 80's. Memphis has come out on the losing end. But Larry Cox is comfortably ensconced in his position thanks to his biggest customer.

I'm not excusing his inflexibility or lack of diligence in securing new service or lack of planning when it came to passenger service. Now he's leaving so let's wish him good luck.

@bogey and @vril--no worries about Fred Smith's robot; Jack Sammons, Chairman of the airport's Board of Commissioners, is Fred Smith's nephew-in-law.

October 18, 2013
4:56 p.m.

bigtime21 writes:

This is a prime example of why having someone in the same position for more

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than 2 decades is detrimental to the overall growth, welfare and development of an organization/business/government. It brings complacency, lack of vision and overall stagnation.

Memphis has made this a continuous habit over the years in politics by electing the same people to serve as Mayor, the city council, county commission, state and national representatives.

Also, appointments to the MCVB i.e. Kevin Kane, RDC i.e. Benny Lenderman and MAA i.e. Arnold Pearl and Larry Cox.

Like it or not, new blood is a necessity to overall growth and vision for the future.

October 18, 2013
5:23 p.m.

615x840 writes:

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in response to **SCRAPPY**:

Look above his shoulder in the picture.....looks like there are holes in the ceiling.

Very symbolic of his legacy.

Could it be mold? That would be fit the legacy too....

October 18, 2013
5:50 p.m.

spades writes:

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in response to **BogeyMan**:

41 years!?!? No wonder he got so "comfortable" with the airport's tenants and vendors (and vice versa).

It'll be interesting to see where he goes next (even with his fat pension). My bet: someone he got real chummy with doing the airport's business.

Good riddance, Mr. Cox. You held this airport back for most of your tenure. We'll spend years making up for your mismanagement.

P.S. The only one who'll miss him is probably Fred Smith who got real used to him saying "how high" when Fred said "jump." Then again, his replacement will probably be Fred's boy as well.

Yes, I'm sure you would tell Fred to take a hike so you can try to attract 20 flights a week from Southwest to come to a market that has only two Fortune 500 companies and a median income well below the national average.

October 18, 2013
6:42 p.m.

robert30#348835 writes:

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Larry Cox and the other board members were too tight with Delta, trying to do everything Delta wanted. This backfired on the board when Delta was taken over by the crew that had bankrupted Northwest. I sometimes have wondered if FedEx has been involved behind the scenes not wanting MEM to have too much traffic so their planes could land and take off at will. Southwest is a great start but more flights from other low cost airlines are needed.

October 18, 2013
7:08 p.m.

blessedbe writes:

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He did for Memphis International Airport what Willie Herenton did for the City of Memphis.

October 18, 2013
7:08 p.m.

BogeyMan writes:

[Suggest removal](#)

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in response to **bigtime21**:

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Like it or not, new blood is a necessity to overall growth and vision for the future.

Exactly right, and well said.

October 18, 2013
7:28 p.m.

robiningroom writes:

in response to [bigtime21](#):

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Like it or not, new blood is a necessity to overall growth and vision for the future.

+1 "continuous habit" for a reason

October 19, 2013
5:35 a.m.

guycobb writes:

This is awesome news. Larry Cox will be turning in his leisure suit for an orange jump suit. To fully understand what he's been doing read this FBI and Department of Justice report I worked on for the past three years.

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<http://www.guycobb.com/hurricane/cree...>

Guy Cobb

October 19, 2013
12:47 p.m.

thecatsmeow writes:

in response to [orchids](#):

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Let's don't go off the deep end here, Meow. I know this man and he's not an idiot. He worked his way up the ladder from the lowest, part time, night position at the airport so he probably knows more about the airport than anyone in the City.

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@bogey and @vril--no worries about Fred Smith's robot; Jack Sammons, Chairman of the airport's Board of Commissioners, is Fred Smith's nephew-in-law.

I do wish him well. Of course "idiots" was probably an unfortunate choice of words, but I do think the "political appointment" system is garbage.

October 19, 2013
4:55 p.m.

USAidit writes:

Congratulations and best wishes on your retirement, Larry. 41 years is definitely something to be very proud of.

[Suggest removal](#)

[Reply to this post](#)

October 19, 2013
7:23 p.m.

orchids writes:

in response to [thecatsmeow](#):

[Suggest removal](#)

I do wish him well. Of course "idiots" was probably an unfortunate choice of words, but I do think the "political appointment" system is

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garbage.

Meow, you're right about patronage...it's a one way thank you that doesn't usually benefit the public. BTW, "idiot" is a word that easily rolls off the keyboard. No worries.

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