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Warren County art center studied Goal to host local, outside performers

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LEBANON - Warren County's newly formed Port Authority is launching a study of whether the growing communities between Dayton and Cincinnati need and can support a performing arts center.

"This is a homegrown thing that really just evolved," said Martin Russell, economic development specialist for the county.

"There appears to be a need among Warren County residents. ... We're trying to determine what that need should look like and how we can meet it."

The goal, he said, is to create a location for local arts groups to perform, bring in talent from metro areas to the north and south, and create educational opportunities for children.

A feasibility study is under way to determine the focus of the center, its size, location, cost and other details. Letters are being sent to business owners, elected officials and residents in Cincinnati, Dayton and Warren County, Russell said.

If support is strong, more formal planning could move forward within months, he said.

Talk of a regional performing arts center has picked up recently with two performances in nearby Butler County that, combined, attracted several thousand people.

The Cincinnati Ballet performed Monday night in a fundraiser for the Lakota high school bands. In October, the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra performed at Lakota Freshman School to raise money for the bands.

The next step is to create an advisory board to report suggestions to the Port Authority. By early spring, it should be clear whether the county will move forward with the plan, Russell said.

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