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Barren County invests in possible job training program

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GLASGOW — Barren County Fiscal Court will contribute \$30,000 to a local effort to establish a computer training program that's been touted as a way to diversify local industries and keep younger residents in Barren County.

Barren County Judge-Executive Micheal Hale presented to magistrates what he described as a "business opportunity" that involves contributing to an effort to raise \$500,000 for a program designed to teach adults coding skills and help them find jobs in fields such as coding and web design.

"I feel that this is an opportunity that we cannot let pass us by," he said.

Interapt LLC, a Louisville-based software development company, runs training centers in Louisville and Paintsville that teach coding skills and help the people it certifies find employment in the field, Hale said. The program, if set up in Barren County, would offer industry certifications endorsed by the Kentucky Department of Labor, Hale said.

Hale said Ankur Gopal, founder and CEO of Interapt, is interested in headquartering a southern Kentucky training center in Barren County because of the community's "aggressive" approach to training its workforce.

"We have to diversify our economy," Hale said. "We have to attract businesses in a different way, I feel, than we have in the past."

Interapt certifications can allow learners to enter the workforce directly once their training is finished, Hale said, adding that he thinks the company's coding training would be a good way to keep young people in Barren County.

"I feel that this is an opportunity to create a new way of living for our next generation of Barren County citizens," he said, adding that some coding jobs would allow them to work from home.

"They can work right here in our county," he said. "They may be doing work for a company in Germany designing but they're doing it right here in our county."

Savannah Moon, a Barren County High School sophomore, spoke to fiscal court, asking the magistrates to approve the \$30,000 contribution to fund the program.



Moon said the program would allow her and others to get certified and work coding jobs locally.

“What that means for me is that in the future, instead of moving away, I can stay here and I could be close to my family,” she said.

Hale said that if the local community contributes \$500,000 to the program, Gopal would contribute an additional \$50,000.

Gopal plans to hire 10 project managers locally to run the program on Western Kentucky University's Glasgow's campus for a year, Hale said. Gopal has also expressed interest in having a building constructed in the county to serve as a headquarters if the program is a success, Hale said.

Magistrate Charles Allen said he hopes the initiative will be a strong enough incentive to keep young people in the county when they enter the workforce.

“We definitely need something to keep our young people at home,” he said. “There is stuff here for them, but it might not be the high-paying job they want.”

Jackson French

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