

# Steuben signs fiber mapping contract

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ANGOLA — Steuben County Commissioners approved a contract with iMANAGE of Clear Lake to provide services to design specifications for a fiber optic network for the community Tuesday.

The company, which is not affiliated with Indiana Metropolitan Area Network, will be paid \$48,500 to draw up the specifications.

The company will develop the fiber optic routes and also develop the bid document and specification list for engineering firms. The company will also work on bids for contractors who would install the fiber optic line.

Project management would also be provided.

“You can bring us to the point where we can move forward,” asked Commissioner Ron Smith.

“Yes, sir,” responded iMANAGE’s Bill Geiger.

iMANAGE was the only company to submit a proposal for the work.

It is part of a \$2 million project to run fiber optic cable basically from Angola to all municipalities in the county. It will be up to each town to then extend the system within its boundaries. The project received approval last year by both the commissioners and the Steuben County Council.

The project works through iMAN, which is an arm of the Steuben County Community Foundation. Fees paid for access to the system are returned to the foundation, which then can make grants for a variety of projects.

The system has been running in Angola for a decade and has recently been extended to Fremont. In Angola, the system serves Angola government, medical facilities, schools and some businesses.

In the downtown area, most of the fiber has been run underground. As it leaves the community, it is run along Northern Indiana Public Service Co. poles. When it is all said and done, Geiger said, about 10 percent of the fiber will be underground.

In another matter Tuesday, commissioners approved a lease agreement with Pitney Bowes that will automate certain mailing functions

of county government.

Most significantly, the system will automate the process of sorting, collating, stuffing envelopes and addressing tax bills. The process currently is done over the course of about two weeks by numerous county employees and volunteers.

The system will cost the county about \$1,500 a month over 60 months. The first year is all but paid for through refunds being made on existing equipment by Pitney Bowes.

On the tax mailing alone, it is estimated that new system will save \$400 a month on postage and \$1,000 a year on returned postage.

The system should be in place in time for this year's tax mailing, which comes in April.