

iMAN seeks expansion help

by Jennifer Decker jdecker@kpcnews.net | Posted: Wednesday, August 17, 2011 12:00 am

ANGOLA — The Angola Common Council expressed an interest in expanding its broadband capacity, but first needs to figure out how to finance \$125,000 in assistance.

The Indiana Metropolitan Area Network has asked the city for \$125,000 to expand the presence on U.S. 20 from downtown to the I-69 interchange, south to the city limits and including a small section of Wohlert Street.

iMAN is a community-owned fiber optic network allowing for the transmission of high volumes of data.

Sharon Stroh, iMAN's director of business development, said the priority would be to expand by adding new fiber along U.S. 20 to I-69 at a cost of \$60,000. It's estimated to install new fiber from south of downtown along Old U.S. 27 would cost \$50,000 and an extension along Wohlert Street would cost \$15,000.

"The priority would be from the downtown west to I-69 for two reasons. First, the cost efficiencies for the city at the same time the county is (expanding the fiber). It makes sense to do this while co-locating for the county. Secondly, it can incorporate more city amenities, like the water tower," she said.

Over the years, Angola has invested \$219,000 toward the fiber optics technology iMAN brings, Bill Geiger, iMAN founder and project manager said. The city has also received a payback of \$42,005 and that figures to grow. For the rest of the Angola community, there has been a cost savings of \$440,585.

"Wherever this goes it will make areas more attractive (to development)," Angola Mayor Dick Hickman said.

Council member Gary Crum said he felt fiber optics were part of economic development and he felt Major Moves funds the city has could be used.

"Since we're in the 2012 budget process, it would be better to do it now," Clerk-Treasurer Deb Twitchell said.

The council made no decision on the funding.

Instead, the council asked Twitchell to come back with financial scenarios for the next regular meeting.

The Steuben County Economic Development Corp. has adopted the completion of the iMAN fiber optic loop as a top priority.

iMAN is a nonprofit corporation that resides under the umbrella of the Steuben County Community Foundation. As customers hookup and use iMAN fiber services, part of the fees get turned over to the Community Foundation to be used for grants back to community projects.