

Mean, green solar machine

By Zach Osowski | The Herald Bulletin | Posted: Wednesday, April 22, 2015 7:00 am

PENDLETON — The town of Pendleton will be celebrating Earth Day this year by trying to finalize plans for a new solar park, enhancing the town and the state's green energy.

The Indiana Municipal Power Agency approached the Pendleton Town Council in March with the idea of building a solar park on land near Falls Park. Pendleton is a member community of IMPA.

Although the contract details are still being hashed out, Councilman Chet Babb said he is confident a deal between the town and IMPA will be reached by the end of the month.

Babb was nominated by Pendleton's Redevelopment Commission to be the negotiator in contract talks. He said there are still a couple of hang-ups based on the length of the contract. The agreement will be for 45 years and Babb said he wants to protect the town's interests in the land if IMPA decides in 20 years it wants to go in a different direction than solar power.

"I would like the town to be able to buy the land back if IMPA isn't using the land before the contract is up," Babb said. "That's kind of where I'm hung up right now but we'll get something worked out."

The park would be the second solar park in Madison County. IMPA finished a solar park in Frankton last year. Dan Worl, manager of energy efficiency at IMPA, pitched the idea to the council originally. Worl said they would like to build a park in Pendleton similar to the one they built in Frankton, which sits on about 10 acres. They would like to possibly go to 20 acres if a deal can be reached. The 10-acre park generates about one megawatt of power per day, which Worl said can power 1,000 homes per day.

Earth Day brings conserving energy to mind for everyone and the option of going green is a plus for Babb and the rest of the council. As regulations for coal production continue to raise the price of coal and coal-produced energy, companies like IMPA are looking toward green alternatives to keep their prices down across the state.

As the black panels soak up the sun in Frankton and possibly Pendleton, giant turbines up north near



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John P. Cleary | The Herald Bulletin These are part of the solar panel banks that make up the 10-acre Frankton Solar Park that was built by Indiana Municipal Power Agency last year. They have proposed to build another solar park in the Pendleton area.

Elwood create a different kind of energy. The Wildcat Wind Farm, which is located in Madison and Tipton counties, was finished in 2012. With 125 wind turbines, it ranks as the third-largest wind farm in Indiana.

In addition to a drop in rates, clean energy also provides other benefits to communities like Pendleton.

"There are a lot of pluses," Babb said. "We've just got to make sure it is a good deal for the town and taxpayers."

Town Manager Tim McClintick said establishing a solar park in Pendleton was "forward thinking," and thinks it will be a good example for all of the residents in the town.

Babb said it is still too early in the process to know what the exact financial impact will be but is confident everything will be done by May 1, which is the target date IMPA set. He said if everything clears, the park could be ready by the end of June.

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