

From the desk of Mayor Hickman

2009 has presented challenges for every individual and family, every business, whether big or small, every non-profit agency and every municipality whether a city, town, county, school or township. This recession has touched everyone in some negative way. We all know this because we can't read a newspaper or magazine, we can't watch or listen to a television or radio and we can't be involved in a conversation with anyone for very long without the recession becoming the main topic.

We all know it will take a long time to recover from this recession. But the American people are not known for their patience. We are not known as a people who will sit back and wait for things to change. We are best known for our willingness and ability to pull ourselves up by our boot straps and make things happen. The same is true for the people in the City of Angola.

Although our unemployment is higher than we are willing to accept, our businesses and industries that are surviving are doing everything they can to stay open and to keep as many employees as they can working. Although they have had to lay people off, their main focus seems to be in trying to cut back current employees hours so that as many of their employees as possible can still work and hold onto their benefits. Our businesses and industries are telling me that they are seeing signs, for the first time in a long time that this recession may have bottomed out. They expect the recovery to be slow but they are seeing a light at the end of the tunnel. Some of them have also stated that they are seeing opportunities to grow their businesses because of some of the changes caused by this economy.

Like our businesses and industries, the City of Angola is moving forward with great caution making sure that we are supplying the needed services our residents expect at the same high level they have received them in the past. Our costs for gasoline, insurance, electricity, natural gas and equipment keep going up like everyone else does. The elected officials and the city employees are very aware whose dollars we are spending, how those dollars should be invested back into the community and who we are all serving with these invested dollars.

Hopefully you have all been paying attention to what all your city employees have been doing for you. They work hard every day for you. From our police officers, fire personnel, street department, water department to our wastewater, engineering, planning and economic development, building and fire inspection, IT department, law department, HR, parks department and the Clerk-Treasurer's office, we have people that you can be very proud of. They not only work hard at their jobs but they are making sure they are staying within the budget the city council sets for them year after year.

We welcome Kohl's, Buffalo Wild Wings, Samantha's, and the Klein Group along with many other businesses who have opened their doors in the City of Angola so far this year. We appreciate our old and new businesses in our community.

This year has brought about the first changes in how municipalities collect revenue that is used to supply our services to our citizens. With the so-called lowering of property taxes and the raising of the sales tax, we are seeing our revenues being determined more by the instability of the economy than the stability we had with property taxes. This, in many cases, has actually caused property taxes to increase and the revenues from sales taxes to go down, thus municipalities are now receiving less overall revenues than in the past.

This change is forcing many communities to lay off personnel. Muncie has had to close 2 fire stations and lay off over 32 firemen and 6 police officers. South Bend is looking at the possibility of having to lay off approximately 40 police officers and 40 firemen along with the possibility of having to close some of their parks. This story is starting to be played out all over the State of Indiana. If the state legislature is unable to come through with an increase in funding for schools the next thing we will be hearing about will be the laying off of teachers in some schools around the state.

Fortunately we have been able to avoid these scenarios in Angola. Because of the hard work of the elected officials and the hard work and sacrifices our city employees are willing to make, we are moving forward with the ability to keep our public safety personnel in place, our services at a high level and the progressive attitude of our community moving forward.

You have seen many changes in our city during the last 12 months. The city's portion of the bike and walking trail has been completed. Moss Street will be completed this year also. The widening of the intersection of Mill Street and North Wayne Street has been completed and looks wonderful. We are on schedule to complete Wohlert Street in 2010. This will be a nice extension of Wohlert Street from our south industrial park to our north industrial park. The remediation work at Univertical will be started at the beginning of 2010. This will keep this building open for business, save our #8 water well, bring back and increase the number of jobs at this location and allow Univertical to expand at this location. The new water tower at I-69 and US Hwy 20 will be completed by the spring of 2010. The Downtown Revitalization will be under way in 2010.

All of these projects will be started and completed during a downturn in our economy. Most of these projects will be paid for with state and federal grants.

This shows that the City of Angola is open and ready for new business. It will be an exciting time to live in Angola, Indiana in 2010.

Sincerely,
Richard M. Hickman
Mayor of Angola