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January 10, 2024

Dear City Council Members & Mayor Bleichner,

The Independence Area Chamber of Commerce requests funding for \$6000.00 from the City's hotel/motel tax fund and asks you to add this request to the City's FY 2025 budget allocations. The Chamber appreciates the monies that were allocated for FY 2024. I also would like to take the opportunity to say thank you for the collaboration with the council, city manager, and various city departments to put on community events.

This request would help the Chamber to continue with, grow, and look at adding a new community event in 2024 to expand Jingle on Main throughout the holiday season. We have two events that continue to flourish and are community favorites, Meet Me on Main and Jingle on Main. We would allocate those funds to events. There is no admission fee to these community events already in place for our community. Individuals and families coming to the events are spending money in our community, supporting our local retailers, restaurants, gas stations which are generating additional tax dollars for the city.

Just over the last holiday season alone, Shop Historic Independence had 4379 Holiday Punch Cards turned in which is equal to \$437,900 spent locally in just 17 stores, bars, and salons from November 2nd through the close of business on Christmas Eve. This number is up just \$17,000 from 2022 with 4 fewer participating businesses. This program that the Chamber helps to facilitate has seen steady growth in dollars spent in our community. These numbers do not account for the partially punched cards or for those businesses that do not participate.

In the Chamber's request last year, I had mentioned Mayor Bleichner and I had the opportunity to meet with a community member who would like to help the Chamber lead a Christmas season-long event in the Riverwalk Park area. I am confident this is the year! This would be a community collaboration, involving businesses, local non-profits, school clubs, etc. This has been a goal to expand Jingle on Main into a lights display at Riverwalk Park since even before I took over as Director in 2019. If fully funded at \$6000 for FY 2025, \$2000 would be start-up funds for this event. Throughout 2023 I had the opportunity to speak with different community members about the feasibility of this kind of event with positive feedback. This event will take a village, but I do believe that Independence will step up for this.

Thank you for your consideration, we hope to make 2024 another great year to Live, Work & Play in Independence!

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nikki Barth".

Nikki Barth, Executive Director
Independence Area Chamber of Commerce