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December 1, 2025

Dear City Council Members, Mayor Bleichner, & City Manager Schmitz

I hope this letter finds you well. I am writing to you on behalf of the Independence Area Chamber of Commerce; an organization deeply committed to fostering economic growth and vibrancy in our community. As we continue to explore avenues to strengthen our local economy, I would like to formally request funding from the hotel/motel tax fund to enhance economic development efforts through advocacy, community enhancement, education, and networking.

Our Chamber has been actively collaborating with BCEDC, Tourism, and the City of Independence to expand sales-tax revenue by strengthening retail, dining, and community events. Independence is a hub for retail and service businesses, residents, and visitors alike. Since 2019, we have lead the planning and marketing for all of the Spring, Fall & Holiday Open Houses, Wine & Chocolate Walk, and Small Business Saturday. In addition we facilitate the Summer and Holiday Punch card program that has resulted in approximately 20,000+ punch cards turned in to the Chamber, which is equal to \$2,000,000.00+ in retail sales with just those two programs. That does not account for the partially punched cards that are still floating around in wallets waiting to be filled the next year. With each new retail addition and the Chambers' help with marketing of these Shop Historic Independence initiatives, Independence is becoming a must-visit destination, echoing the charm and unique shopping experience that people associate with places like Galena, Illinois. Events like the 4th of July Parade, Meet Me on Main, Jingle on Main, and hopefully RAGBRAI in 2026 do more than bring people together; they boost local tourism and help grow the sales-tax revenue that supports our city. These efforts have yielded promising results, attracting both regional visitors and investors to our city. However, sustaining and expanding these initiatives requires reliable financial support.

We believe that utilizing the hotel/motel tax fund for this purpose aligns with its intended use of promoting tourism and economic development.

The Independence Area Chamber of Commerce requests \$10,000.00 in funding from the City's hotel/motel tax fund and asks that you add this request to the City's FY 202 budget allocations. The Chamber appreciates the FY2026 allocation. As always, I would like to take the opportunity to say thank you for the willingness to work together with the council, city manager, and various city departments to put on community events.

This request would help the Chamber to continue with our community events. 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. In 2026 we will be working collaboratively with Tourism and BCEDC to add additional events like a Farm to Table dinner in downtown Independence.

Thank you for your consideration, and as always our goal is to make 2026 another great year to Live, Work & Play in Independence!

Thank you,

Nikki Barth, Executive Director
Independence Area Chamber of Commerce