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2024

December 12,

Dear City Council Members & Mayor Bleichner,

I am writing to you on behalf of 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 \$8000 from the hotel/motel tax fund to help enhance economic development efforts, particularly in our downtown district, community events and continued sustainability of the Independence Chamber of Commerce.

Our Chamber has been actively involved in initiatives aimed at revitalizing downtown Independence, we worked collaboratively with BCEDC to bring the downtown building owners and the City of Independence together for our two recently completed CDBG grant projects. We facilitated and attended meetings with stakeholders from start to finish with both of those projects. Not only is downtown Independence a hub for retail and service businesses, residents, and visitors alike it is quickly becoming a regional draw for the retail and façade revitalization.

Over the past five years, we have lead the planning and marketing for all of the Spring, Fall & Holiday Open Houses, Wine & Chocolate Walk, and Small Business Saturday. These annual events alone, collectively bring thousands of attendees and shoppers to Independence. In addition we facilitate the Summer and Holiday Punch card program that has resulted in approximately 7000+ punch cards turned in to the Chamber, which is equal to over \$700,000 in retail sales from a small segment of participating local businesses with just those two programs in the last year. That does not account for the partially punched cards that are still floating around in wallets waiting to be filled the next year. Our efforts combined with each individual retailer we see visitors from all over Northeast Iowa and as far a Des Moines. These visitors are not only spending money in our downtown, they are eating at our restaurants, they are stopping at our gas stations for fuel and snacks for the ride home. This program that the Chamber facilitate has seen steady growth in dollars spent in our community each year.

The Chamber holds three community events each year, the 4th of July Parade, Meet Me on Main and Jingle on Main, which is more than any other organization in Independence. There is no admission for these events and the events rely solely on hotel/motel funds and business sponsorship. These efforts bring thousands of residents and visitors collectively to downtown

Independence that are spending money in our community supporting our local retailers, restaurants, and gas stations which are also generating additional tax dollars for the city.

We believe that utilizing the hotel/motel tax fund for these purposes outlined above aligns with its intended use of promoting tourism and economic development.

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. Our goal is to make 2025 another great year to Live, Work & Play in Independence!

Thank you,

Nikki Barth, Executive Director
Independence Area Chamber of Commerce