

Dear Independence City Council,

The Buchanan County Tourism Bureau (BCTB) would like to discuss the Depot located on 5th Street in Independence. Since its inception, BCTB has been intricately entwined with the Depot. After a group of committed volunteers met in 2017 to create a strategic plan for the BCTB, they identified a need for a tourism director and for the group to move towards doing much more to promote the county, bringing in tourists to the Depot museum became a secondary goal.

This mission evolved over this time, about a year ago, Buchanan County Tourism Bureau began a restructuring to create a Friends of the Depot organization separate from tourism. Buchanan County Economic Development and the Independence Area Chamber of Commerce created space to house the new Tourism Director, separating tourism from the Depot Museum to allow the Friends of the Depot to establish themselves. This also allowed BCTB to focus completely on the promotion of Buchanan County, communities, events, and attractions, which is tourism's purpose.

A lot of work and dedication went into creating and making the Friends of the Depot viable and eventually building a separate entity from Tourism. Despite this hard work and dedication, the task became too much, and the volunteer base dwindled to a couple of dedicated volunteers. Over the last couple of years the Depot museum has not been open more than a handful of days due to the inability to find the volunteers needed to have it open.

What BCTB is asking of the City of Independence is if they would be willing to take ownership and management of the Depot Museum. The building and property is an extremely important historical site in the community and is in a prominent location along 150. Many hours of labor, funds, and organization went into moving and placing the depot where it is 33 years ago. It is an iconic landmark for the county, especially for the City of Independence. Caring for and trying to keep the Depot accessible has become more than what the few remaining volunteers can handle. The Depot Museum comes with a dedicated investment fund for its upkeep of approximately \$51,000. This fund was established when the depot was moved and has grown to this amount over 30+ years. Additional information has been provided in the attached packet of other potential funds, costs, possible projects, and recent work.

If the City of Independence would accept the Depot to continue to maintain it and keep it as a fixture within Independence and the county, the BCTB would deed the property over to the city along with the maintenance funding.

Sincerely,
BCTB Officers