



INDEPENDENCE

Advisory Board of Health

June 4, 2021

RE: Re-Established City Health Department

Advisory Board of Health Members

Dr. Ralph Ruckman, Chair

Dr. John Ruddy, Vice Chair

Dr. Terry Morris

Dr. Peter Muelleman

Dr. Matthew Wingert

Dr. Darryl Nelson

Dr. Donald Potts

Lori Halsey

Jason White

Shawnna Jackson

Mayor and Members of the Council,

The City of Independence Advisory Board of Health (BOH) appreciates the Mayor for requesting our input into the decisions regarding the re-establishment of the Health Department. We also appreciate the leadership shown to recognize the need for the City to have a fully-functioning health department and to successfully engage with State officials to receive approval to establish our health department.

It is our belief that the citizens appreciate the services that a health department offers to our community.

The current health department staff has done an admirable job responding to the pandemic with testing, vaccination and other services while trying to reestablish the formal structure of the health department. They should be commended for their efforts and commitment to the citizens of Independence.

The BOH understands that adequate funding for the health department was the key challenge several years ago and that challenge remains true today.



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Funding for a city health department is typically a mix federal funds allocated by the state, grant funds for various functions, and city funds generated by the long-standing City health levy as well as City general funds.

Presently, we believe that there is a shortfall of funding for the City health department to provide the basic functions of a health department.

Earlier this year, a subcommittee of the BOH identified a set of basic functions, which the health department should provide. The full BOH has adopted those recommendations. At our most recent meeting, the BOH compared the list of basic functions which a health department serving Independence is expected to provide against the proposed budget.

The BOH believes that the shortfall between the proposed City budget for the Health Department and what minimal amount is needed to properly staff and provide for the Health Department is \$300,000. The BOH believes that the proposed budget leaves a shortfall of two public health nurses, two public health specialists (one of which serving as a grant writer as much of the funding support for any health department is through grant offerings) and funding for a pool of PRN nurses to assist with vaccination efforts and possibly immunization audits.

We accept that re-building the City health department may take several years, but we do not believe that the proposed City budget provides funding to provide for the minimal necessary functions.

The Board of Health believes that it is beyond the group's expertise to recommend a ballot initiative or any one additional funding source. The Board recommends the Council explore all methods for funding including ARP, RHF, CARES, additional State funding, and other revenues as appropriate and available to the City.



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The BOH would be glad to continue to assist the city staff and mayor/council evaluating the prioritization of functions for the new health department which should assist with budgeting.

Again, thank you for asking for the input of the BOH regarding this critical issue.

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