INDEPENDENCE
MISSOURI
A GREAT AMERICAN STORY

City Council Study Session Minutes

May 28, 2025 6:00 PM

Council Chambers - 111 E. Maple Ave.

BUDGET PRESENTATIONS

1. City Manager's Office, Emergency Preparedness, and Communications

Lisa Reynolds, Deputy City Manager, gave the presentation for this item.

City Manager Mission
The City Manager's office exercises direction over all municipal operations; appointing department directors, overseeing the enforcement of all City laws and ordinances, and managing the City's affairs.

The City Manager's Office oversees all departments within the City.

There are six full-time employees.

The proposed budget has decreased from $1,259,260 in 2024-25 to $1,101,117 in 2025-26.

There is one approved budget package for $100,000 for the very successful Independence Together Program.

There is one proposed Operational Change which is the creation of the new Department of Community and Emergency Services as part of the Proposed Budget.

The Emergency Preparedness Presentation was given by Samantha Morris, Chief of Emergency Operations
Mission

The mission of the Emergency Preparedness Division is to protect and serve our community by preparing for the unexpected and ensuring a swift, coordinated, and effective response to emergencies of all kinds.

Strategic Plan Connection

1- An Engaged Community: Community (HOA) plans and Communication improvement
2- An Innovative Economy: Partnership with schools for apprenticeships, internships and job shadowing
3- A Safe and Welcoming Community: Public Safety, Improving Programs, Updated Technology Systems, Improving education
4- A Well-Planned City: Working with HOA's and neighborhoods to promote and maintain safe plans in the event of a disaster
5- A Financially Sustainable Organization: Continually working to capture additional grants to support our efforts
6- A High-Performance Organization: Cross functional team culture, 'best in class"- be the model, Staffing plans to address current and future workloads, performance measures/action plan.

Accomplishments:
• Awarded $250,000 in grant funds
• Applied for COVID-19 reimbursement funds (pending) $6.2M
• Participated in several city, region and state-wide exercises
• Fully implemented our remote activated and automated outdoor warning sirens
• Completed 3,000+ training hours

Number of Full-Time Employees: 3.50

Significant Operational Changes
Community and Emergency Services Department

Proposed budget has increased from $181,900 in 2024-25 to $304,587 in 2025-26

Approved Budget Package
Personnel addition: Homeless Outreach Coordinator as part of the new Community and Emergency Services Department
Equipment: $25,000 siren maintenance

Communications
Rebecca Gannon, Public Information Officer for the City of Independence, did the presentation for the Communications Department
Misson
The Communications Department serves the City of Independence by delivering clear, timely, and accessible information that connects residents, businesses, and community partners. Through thoughtful dialogue, storytelling, and meaningful engagement, we promote

transparency, strengthen trust, and support active civic participation.

Accomplishments:
Including:
• 500+ Media Hits
• 34.5% Social Media Reach Increase
• 42.3% Social Media Growth YOY
• Visitors Guide Completed
• 200+ graphics requests for Departments
• 30 Videos Completed

Number of Full-Time Employees - 4.00

Significant Budget Changes
• Identified cost-saving measures in the current fiscal year that allowed us to offset internal service charges for FY25-26.

The proposed budget increased from $391,434 in 2024-25 to $518,480 in 2025-26

Approved Budget Package
New Camera - $5,000

2. Community Development

Tom Scannell, Community Development Director, gave this presentation.

Mission:
The mission of the Community Development department is to enhance the quality of life in Independence by encouraging public involvement in the planning and creation of quality places in which to live, work, and play.
Strategic Plan Connection
Growth - Attract and retain quality employers; grow retail and commercial business; supporting and guiding developers; and, removing or reducing barriers as possible between the business owner and the city services they need to succeed.
Customer Focused - Improving customer service and communication with the public; and, developing positive working relationships with developers and landowners to improve communication by guiding them through the City's codes, specifications, and permit process.
Quality - Reducing blight through corridor sweeps, addressing unsafe, dangerous and vacant buildings, by continuing to identify and address code violations proactively; and, updating codes to help stabilize neighborhoods and help residents increase or maintain the value of their properties.

Accomplishments:
Neighborhood Services

Completed Kentucky Hills & Three Trails Neighborhood Improvement Initiative.
• Proactive enforcement on auto repair businesses considering recent UDO changes.
• Continue coordinating numerous large abatement cleanups.
• FY to date – 53% of code enforcement cases are proactive

Development Services:
• UDO Amendments on home-based businesses, small box discount, tobacco, convenience & liquor stores, West Central Independence Overlay and refuse collection businesses.
• Continued development for Northpoint and approval of Timber Creek, Little Blue Estates and McBee Acres projects.

Building Inspections:
• Utilized ARPA funds to demolish 15 dangerous buildings
• Continued enforcement of the Vacant Structure program with several properties returned to usable space again.
• Maintained timelines for reviews even throughout our busy season.
• Introduced online inspection scheduling for all types of building permits.

Regulated Industries:
• Amended Rental Ready ordinance adding additional inspection items
• Conducted proactive administrative hearings for businesses that pose a concern for public health and safety
• Worked with Finance to ensure revenue due to the City is collected before issuing and renewing business licenses.

Historic Preservation:
• Continued public outreach/education with free architectural walking tours of historic neighborhoods during the fall months.
• Hosted a series of in-person events celebrating National Historic Preservation Month.
• Completed a grant project to create construction documents for the Vaile Mansion façade and roof rehab.

Transit:
• Transitioned from fixed route service to IRIS on January 1, 2025.
• Continue to provide 24 Route and paratransit services through a contract with KCATA.
• Increased funding for transit by $350,000 for FY 25-26
• Continue to monitor transit situations in KCMO and in other adjacent communities.

Number of Full-Time Employees: 39

Significant Budget Changes
• Total lower than FY24-25, primarily due to less professional services expenditures due to changes in grants
• Costs associated with transit continue to rise due to increase costs and ridership

The proposed budget has decreased from $10,344,999 in 2024-25 to $8,534,942 in 2025-26

Revenue
• Planning, building permit and business license revenues are tied to the overall economy and are projected to stay steady for the current Fiscal Year.
• Northpoint projects should continue to increase building permit, planning and zoning, and business license fees.

One approved budget packages:
Transit Funding
$350,000 to sustain service levels of currently riderships

Code Enforcement Funding:
• Additional $50,000 for code enforcement
• As of April 2025, the department had already exhausted its funding for FY24/25. This is the second year in a row that funds have been exhausted by this time.
• Helps address trash and brush issues, abandoned/inoperable vehicles, open storage, among other issues.

Dangerous Buildings Funding:
• Additional $400,000 for dangerous buildings demolition from Marijuana Sales Tax Fund
• Need to demolish between 35-40 current dangerous buildings in the next year plus another 15-20 new dangerous building cases and/or structure fires that will need to be demolished.
• Current budget allows for 8-10 demolitions. Increased budget would allow for 32-35 demolitions.

A training was held for rental-ready inspectors in April. Another inspector training will be held this summer to discuss what is working and what is not working.
CDBG and HOME funds are up this year, but there is always a possibility they can go away.
CDBG funds give funds to public service agencies to help the most vulnerable in our community and for minor home repairs for low-income homeowners.
HOME funds go to community housing organizations to build new or rehab housing for low or moderate-income homeowners.

3. Parks, Recreation, and Tourism

Morris Heide, Director of Parks, Recreation and Tourism gave this presentation.

Mission
The mission of the Parks & Recreation department is to provide quality leisure, recreational, and educational opportunities in clean, well-maintained facilities for residents and visitors of Independence.

Strategic Plan Connection
An Engaged Community – Partnered with ISD, Truman Library, NPS Truman Visitor Center, CSL, and Noland RD CID on initiatives to improve the community
An Innovative Economy – Long-term Feasibility Study for the National Frontier Trails Museum;

2025 Visitor Guide; Wayfinding Signage project
A Safe, Welcoming Community – Transitioning Tourism marketing and promotions to CVB in order to maximize visitors to the City
A Well-Planned City – Parks Master Plan; centralized trash, mowing services and custodial contracts; Vaile, Bingham & MO Model Railroad Museum facility repairs; Cable Dahmer Arena upgrades
A Financially Sustainable Organization – Ongoing review of operations to reduce costs and downsize properties; implementing program review and evaluation for current and new recreation programs
A High-Performance Organization – Recreation Programming and Staffing Improvements

Accomplishments
Parks Improvement Sales Tax Fund
• Purchased new serving line, freezer, tables and chairs for the Palmer Center dining room and Senior Nutrition Program mostly funded through a MARC grant
• Brought Farmers Market operations in-house
• Began a new Parks & Recreation Master Plan with expected completion date in early 2026
• Replaced pedestrian bridge in Sycamore Hills Park
• Produced Recreation Catalog in-house
• Retooled a vacant position into a Community Relations Coordinator position to focus on marketing, social media, and sponsorship opportunities
• Assisted with transfer of Crysler Stadium to ISD
• Purchased a new trash truck to increase efficiency replacing a prior trash truck removed from service five years ago
• Replaced Rotary Park Playground
• Replaced pavilion at Santa Fe Park

Tourism Fund
• Assisted with establishing the CVB
• Relocated the Missouri Pacific Caboose from the Truman Depot to the MO Model Railroad Museum site to be restored
• Removed dangerous water tower
• Produced visitor guide in-house
• Continued to see visitors from all over the US plus 18 other countries at the National Frontier Trails Museum
• Expect completion of the Truman Depot restoration project in June

Number of Full-Time Employees - 82.73

Significant Budget Changes
• Transferring Tourism Marketing and Promotions to CVB
• In holding pattern waiting on Parks Master Plan recommendations

The budget has a proposed increased from $11,012,369 in 2024-25 to $13,176,863 in 2025-26

Projected revenue for 2025-26 $10,394,100

Approved Budget Packages
Personnel Additions
• Museum Services Coordinator
• Customer Services Attendant
• Recreation Programmer

Expanded Operating Hours:
• Additional funding to expand operating hours at the Palmer Center
• Additional funding to expand operating hours at the Sermon Center
• Additional funding to expand operating hours at the National Frontier Trails Museum

Vandalism and graffiti are the challenges this department faces every day.
We have 50 named parks, some of which are just grassy areas, with no equipment.
800 acres that are maintained, some of which is heavy vegetation.
26 playgrounds, 46 ball fields, as well as the centers, George Owens Park, and three cemeteries.

4. Fire

Jimmy Walker, Fire Chief for Independence Fire Department gave this presentation

Mission
The Independence Fire department will meet with the challenges of present and future community needs through proactive leadership, dedication to our core values, provision of quality all-hazard emergency services, and community riskreduction strategies in an efficient and effective manner.

Strategic Plan Connection:
The Goals, Objectives and Critical Tasks of the IFD Strategic Plan aligns with the COI Action Plan by:
• Increasing safety • Improving public infrastructure and facilities

Accomplishments
• Successful Fire Chief transition
• New Report Management System (ImageTrend)
• Criteria Based Dispatching implementation
• 2 Hiring Process (18 Firefighters)
• 3 New Pumpers, 2 New Truck, 3 Rescues(remounts)
• Updated 20+ Standard Operating Procedures
• Increased Hands-on EMS and Fire Ground Training for personnel
• Increased emphasis on logistics
• Completed Mandatory Life Scan Physicals for all sworn staffPoint

Number of Full-Time Employees is 207

Significant Budget Changes
• In FY25-26, Fire has been moved out of the general fund, and the entirety of its budget is now housed in Fund 017 – the Fire Protection Sales Tax Fund. Fire is receiving a transfer out from the General Fund, equivalent to 30.6% of General Fund revenues.
• Personnel costs continue to be large cost driver
• Large transfer ($10,000,000) for capital projects -$7,000,000 for new Fire Stations -$3,000,000 for 2 new pumpers

The proposed budget has increased from $35,468,047 in 2024-25 to $49,529,826 in 2025-26.

Approved Budget Packages
LifePak Replacement Funding:
• $172,000 to replace 17 LifePak Monitors/defibrillators
• Annual payment for 7 years
• Current LifeP ak's are older technology and nearing end of useful life.

5. City Council and City Clerk

This presentation was given by Andrew Frazier, Management Analyst.

Mission of the City Council
The mission of the City Council is to represent the interests of their constituents, propose, pass, and ratify laws and ordinances, manage budgets, and investigate city agencies when necessary. They also focus on crafting and enacting local laws and ordinances, zoning regulations, public safety measures, and fiscal oversight.

Strategic Plan Connection
City Council's Office touches all parts of the Strategic Plan by moving the City and agenda forward in a transparent manner.

Full time employees - 9

Significant Budget Changes
No significant operational budget changes this year. Increased budget largely due to internal service charges.

This proposed budget increased from $794,596 in 2024-25 to $959,656 for 2025-26

Susanne Holland, City Clerk, gave the presentation for the City Clerk budget.

The mission of the City Clerk is to manage and record official proceedings of the City Council and to maintain and preserve records of city business.

The City Clerk's Office supports the Strategic Plan by providing customer service, office management, administration, and public relations to the citizens of Independence as well as city staff.

One of the accomplishments I have achieved is assisting with the purchase of a new agenda system. With the help of IT staff, specifically Bill Reynolds and Nathan Wrisinger, we have gotten the system up and running smoothly and staff trained to use it.
This is a much more efficient and user-friendly system that staff uses for all agendas, including boards and commissions. This system stores all minutes and packets associated with these meetings and enables me to send city ordinances to Municode for codification quickly and easily. Before, I would have to send ordinances quarterly to Municode by email. Now, I can simply send a signed ordinance through the system with the click of a button.
This system also allows us to have all agenda, minutes and packets in one location with easy access for staff.

I also closely oversee 28 active boards and commissions. In the last year and a half, I have been able to bring these boards and commissions up-to-date with term renewals and vacancies filled. We currently have 13 seats to fill, which is a much smaller number than we had a year ago. Maintaining members on these boards and commissions is extremely important, as these committees assist the City staff with achieving goals and moving the City forward.

I am also working with staff to digitize records to become more technologically efficient, reducing the amount of paper records the City has.

I have created a new process to track signed contracts as a record-keeping system.

And we have established a direct email to IPD records so citizens, attorneys and insurance companies can obtain records directly from IPD which streamlines and speeds production of these records.
I, myself, have responded to approximately 1000 records requests in the last year.

I have one budget reduction this year which is the travel budget. This is to help balance the general fund.

My proposed budget includes one full-time employee.
The largest budget item I have is $185,000 for election costs which will be used for the Mayoral election and the election of the two at-large council members in 2026.

6. Independence Power and Light

Joe Heggendeffer, Director of Independence Power and Light, gave this presentation.

Mission
The mission of Power and Light is to provide reliable, safe, and cost-effective electricity to the customers of Independence.

Strategic Plan Connection:
• Partnering for future opportunities for governance & public outreach.
• Advocating to ensure timely electric service due to supply chain.
• Continue to evaluate rates & future generation/capacity needs.
• Performing studies for reliability, economic growth & 20-year outlook for IPL.

• Working on building cross-departmental relationships & aligning strategic goals.

Accomplishments
• Tree Line USA Award (25th year in a row)
• APPA's Safety Award (3 years in a row, fist time for Diamond level)
• MRO NERC Audit – zero deficiencies
• Dogwood gas prepay contract delivering annual savings
• APPA exceptional electric reliability award
• Implemented over 2,200 cyber security updates to the SCADA/EMS and associated systems

Number of Full-time Employees is 215.80

Significant Budget Changes
• Succession Planning continues to be problematic.
• Significant employee turnover, due to retirements & resignations, continues to be an issue.
• Supply chain issues causing significant increases in pricing and delays in receiving materials.

There is an increased proposed budget from $162,881,125 in 2024-25 to $191,229,098 in 2025-26

Proposed revenue for 2025-26 is $62,035,700

Approved budget Package
Personnel Additions
• Journeyman Power Plant Mechanic
• Electronics Technician
• Finance Analyst
• Engineer I
• Training and Outage Coordinator

Notable Capital Projects
• $1M for the Substation R Country Meadows 13kv Feeder
• $3M toward the construction of a new Substation S along with $2M to construct (6) new distribution feeders;
• $2M to demolish the Blue Valley Plant Chimney
• $8.5M to replace (4) 100MVA substation transformers

INFORMATION ONLY

1. ***Please Note:*** *In accordance with RSMo. 610.021, the City Council may convene in a Closed Executive Session during or after the meeting, on matters of litigation, legal*

action, and/or attorney client communications, as permitted by Sec. 610.021(1), on matters of personnel, as permitted by Sec. 610.021(3) and personnel records, as permitted by 610.021(13), on matters of contracts, as permitted by 610.021(12), on matters of real estate, as permitted by 610.021(2) and/or matters of labor negotiations, as permitted by 610.021(9).