



CITY COUNCIL Study Session

October 27, 2025

6:00 PM, Council Chambers - 111 E. Maple Ave.

To view a Council meeting agenda, visit <https://independencemo.portal.civicclerk.com/> and select 'Most Recent Council Agenda'.

PRESENTATIONS

1. Legislative Update
2. IPL Governance Charter Amendment

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).



City of Independence, Missouri 2026 State Legislative Agenda

The 2026 City of Independence State Legislative Agenda is a policy document expressing the positions of the City of Independence for the 2026 Missouri General Assembly Session. It is not intended to be either an exclusive or an all-inclusive document but rather captures the major policy positions of the City.

TOP LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

The following are the top legislative priorities for the City of Independence for the 2026 legislative session. The corresponding pages in the policy provide additional information:

1. The City of Independence opposes any changes to Economic Development tools, such as Community Improvement Districts (CID) that would hamper development and redevelopment. (Page 3).
2. The City of Independence opposes any reductions, caps or altering of the local sales tax rate. (Page 4).
3. The City of Independence opposes any utility relocation legislation that requires taxpayers to fund the relocation of cable and streaming infrastructure in public rights of way. (Page 6).
4. The City of Independence supports increased funding for mental health services in Independence including state funding for the ARCH program. (Page 5).
5. The City of Independence supports legislation that restores the ability for Municipal Court judges to suspend in-state driver's licenses for failing to appear in Municipal Court for Public Safety. (Page 5).

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Business Incubation

The City supports legislation that promotes startup businesses, including business opportunities for graduates from the Ennovation Center. The Independence Regional Ennovation Center formerly housed the Independence Regional Hospital. In 2007 the hospital announced its closure, and community leaders worked together to repurpose the building. The Ennovation Center opened in 2010 and has housed over 60 startup businesses. Resources are needed to help tenants graduate into expansion spaces within the community. Research confirms that new and young businesses create most of the new jobs nationwide.

Financing Tools

The City opposes any changes in state law that would restrict the flexibility of cities to use financing tools to promote economic development in their communities. The ability to utilize Community Improvement Districts (CID), Chapter 353 tax abatement, and Transportation Development Districts (TDD) is critical for development and redevelopment in Independence. This is especially true in blighted or distressed areas that would not otherwise support investment at market rates. These tools are essential to communities throughout Missouri when engaging in public improvement and economic development projects.

Pay Day Loans

The City supports legislation to control payday loan interest rates. The City has zoning codes to limit the number and types of businesses that profit from loaning money to low-income people. The City supports legislation to cap the amount of interest that may be charged by payday and car title loan companies. According to the State Commissioner of Finance's report to the Governor, the average interest rate for payday loans in Missouri in 2025 is 406.26%.

FINANCE

Sales Tax Caps

The City opposes legislation to limit or cap sales tax rates. In 1980 Missouri voters approved the “Hancock Amendment” to the Missouri Constitution Article X Section 22. This provision states that a majority of the qualified voters of the political subdivision must vote to approve any increases in local taxes. In the last several years several bills were filed that would cap or otherwise alter sales taxes. This legislation would tie the hands of local leaders in addressing future needs and could result in the reduction or elimination of City services that our citizens require and have come to expect.

Sales Tax Exemptions

The City opposes legislation to expand sales tax exemptions. In 2016, voters approved a constitutional amendment to prohibit local governments from asking voters to expand sales taxes beyond goods. It is important to preserve the existing tax base to ensure stable local revenues to deliver crucial municipal services. Further exemptions threaten to erode revenues generated by retail sales.

Unfunded Mandates

The City opposes legislation that impose state mandated costs for which there is no guarantee of local reimbursement or other related benefits. The City welcomes open dialogue with members of the General Assembly regarding the burden of unfunded mandates on the daily operations of local governments.

MUNICIPAL COURT

Appropriate Fines

The City supports legislation to raise municipal court fines to \$500 in order to be a deterrent to criminal behavior and offset the staff time dedicated to processing criminal offenses.

The City has experienced increased numbers of serious violations, including fraudulent use of credit cards, bad checks, assaults, and stealing cases that are now handled in municipal court. The City supports raising fines up to \$1,000 for cases that could be filed as felonies, such as possession of methamphetamines, possession of heroin and car thefts. Municipal courts in Jackson County are processing more of these serious offenses.

Driver's License Suspension

The City supports legislation to allow municipal courts to suspend driver's licenses for offenders who fail to pay court fines and/or appear in court.

Several loopholes exist in state law which allow those found guilty of certain "minor traffic violations" to avoid compliance with judicial renderings in municipal court, thereby eliminating any real incentive for an offender to comply with state and local laws. With the passage of Senate Bill 5 in 2015, municipal courts lost much of their enforcement authority, including the ability to suspend in-state driver's licenses for non-compliance with judgments.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Regional Crime Lab.

The City of Independence supports locating a Regional Crime Lab in Independence.

The Missouri General Assembly approved approximately \$1 million in funding in 2014-2015 and in 2015-2016 for a Regional Crime Lab in Independence. This would have funded the equipment and personnel for the State Highway Patrol to operate this facility. Governor Jay Nixon vetoed it in 2014-2015 and withheld funding in 2015-2016, citing budget constraints.

The urgency for a Regional Crime Lab to serve Western Missouri persists as a critical public safety need. Absent a clear commitment from the State of Missouri on issue, law enforcement professionals, victims of crimes, and the unjustly accused will continue to be denied proper and timely resolution of cases while criminals remain free to commit crimes in our communities.

Mental Health

The City supports increased funding for Mental Health Services in our community. 1

in 5 adults and 1 in 6 youth in the United States experience a mental health disorder each year. The 2022 Independence Health Assessment indicated that Mental Health was one of the top public health concerns among our residents. Independence has a higher suicide rate than Eastern Jackson County, Kansas City, the State of Missouri, and the United States in 2020. Increased funding options for the ARCH program and Missouri 988 hotline are expected to divert individuals in a mental health crisis away from law enforcement, emergency, and hospital resources potentially reducing the burden on these systems.

Ground Emergency Medical Transportation

The City of Independence supports legislation that would provide reimbursement for any agency that provides emergency medical transport services for a particular

area. This legislation would allow the City of Independence to appreciate these funds from the state of Missouri through the Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) if it chose to provide this service in the future.

TOURISM

Short-Term Rentals

The City opposes any legislation that would limit the authority of local governments to regulate short-term rentals. Communities like Independence are increasingly seeing owner-occupied homes used as short-term rentals for short-term stays through websites such as Airbnb and VRBO. Short-term housing can benefit local economies by increasing tourism and the affordability of housing. Cities need flexibility to regulate short-term rentals in a way that best meets the needs of the local community.

Film Tax Credits

The City supports increases in the caps for eligible qualifying expenses for film tax credits in the “Show Mo” Act. Most of our border states have a film tax credit to bring production of television shows and movies to their states. The success of the Hallmark Channel “Holiday Touchdown: A Chiefs Love Story” sets the City of Independence up for future projects.

UTILITIES

Utility Relocation

The City of Independence opposes any legislation that requires municipal taxpayers to fund the relocation of cable television and broadband infrastructure within rights-of-way.

Over the past several years there have been more and more bills filed in the Missouri General Assembly that would require municipalities to pay for the expense of moving infrastructure belonging to cable television and streaming services to perform needed public infrastructure improvements. Most utility companies factor these costs into their projects. Cable companies and streaming services should follow a similar business model.

IPL Governance



Overview

Recapping Activities to Date

Review of Current Charter Provisions

Review of Proposed Amendments

Next Steps

Discussion

Recapping the Conversation

A Look Back

- February 20th, 2023: 2023-24 City of Independence Action Plan Adopted
- April 5th, 2023: Council directed and authorized evaluation of future ownership and governance model for IPL
- November 20th, 2023: Council awarded contract to DKMT Consulting
- August 26th, 2024: Council received recommendations from DKMT
 - “Board governance could be public power utility’s greatest strength or weakest link.”
 - 70% of municipally-owned utilities the size of IPL use an independent board oversight model
 - Gave credence to creation of an independent management board comprised of individuals with strong professional backgrounds and skills

Recapping the Conversation

A Look Back

- September 16th, 2024: Council adopted resolution directing City Manager to review the current governance model for IPL along with alternative models presented by DKMT and present recommendations
- June 16th, 2025: Council roundtable held to discuss IPL governance model and possible City Charter amendment
- July 14th, 2025: Council Study Session to seek direction on final proposed Charter amendment and next steps

Review of Current City Charter

Section 3.12 through Section 3.18

Section	Focus Area	Key Points
3.12	Electric Utility Department	Establishes department
3.13	Operations	City runs its electric utility
3.14	Other Utilities	Provides for future utility operations
3.15	Public Utilities Advisory Board	Establishes PUAB
3.16	PUAB Powers & Duties	Sets oversight board with investigative, advisory, and reporting powers
3.17	Electric Operations Standards	Businesslike management, no general revenue, profits to rate relief
3.18	Council Coordination	Mandatory cooperation with PUAB

Review of Proposed Amendments

How the Charter Would Change

- **Current Sections 3.12 through 3.18 deleted**
- **New Section 3.12: Definitions**
 - Defines "public utilities" to include electric, water, and sewer systems, and any other service or facility considered a public utility by law
- **New Section 3.13: Governance of Public Utilities**
 - Electric utility controlled by the Public Utilities Board
 - Water and sewer utilities controlled by City unless transferred to the Board
 - Maintains public utility advisory board for utilities not operated by the Board

Review of Proposed Amendments

How the Charter Would Change

- **New Section 3.14: Composition of the Public Utilities Board**
 - Board consists of nine members with specific residency and experience requirements
 - Terms are staggered to ensure continuity
- **New Section 3.15: Appointment of the Board**
 - Members nominated and appointed by the City Council
 - Vacancies filled in the same manner

Review of Proposed Amendments

How the Charter Would Change

- **New Section 3.16: Organization of the Board**
 - Board elects a chairman, vice-chairman, and secretary
 - Meetings and records are public
 - Quorum and compensation details provided
- **New Section 3.17: Restrictions on the Board**
 - Board must be nonpartisan
 - Members cannot hold other public offices or be involved in political organizations
 - One-year prohibition on employment with the Board after leaving

Review of Proposed Amendments

How the Charter Would Change

- **New Section 3.18: Duties**
 - Board controls and operates the electric utility
 - Manages contracts, property, and assets
 - Cannot sell utility properties without voter approval
- **New Section 3.19: Powers**
 - Board has broad powers to manage the electric utility, including hiring, purchasing, and contracting

Review of Proposed Amendments

How the Charter Would Change

- **New Section 3.20: Funds**
 - All utility revenues deposited in the City depository
 - Comptroller appointed by the Board and bonded
- **New Section 3.21: Accounting**
 - Board follows accounting procedures for private utilities
 - Provides regular financial reports to the City
 - Annual audit required
- **New Section 3.22: Sale of Electric Utility**
 - Voter approval required for the sale or abandonment of the electric utility

Next Steps

Staff Seeks Direction on the Following:

- **Proposed Amendment**
 - Does the Council wish to make any further additions, deletions, or modifications to the proposed language?
- **Election Date**
 - When does the City Council wish to seek voter approval?
 - Upcoming elections dates

Election Date	Final Certification Date	Style of Election
April 7, 2026	January 27, 2026	General Municipal Election
November 3, 2026	August 25, 2026	General Election

