

Letter of Support

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lsior Springs Museum & Archives have an opportunity Aug. 7 to help secure the future of the Museum, its archives and the two 100-year old buildings that house its exhibits and collections.

The Museum Tax will provide a dedicated funding source that both the Museum and the Hall of Waters can rely upon to begin to tackle significant and ongoing needs to maintain these three buildings of such importance to the local economy.

Through the years, Museum supporters have stepped up repeatedly to contribute money, materials and manpower to such efforts as the “Light the Way” campaign in 2002; the renovation of the Francis Hotel in 2006; new roofs in 2010 and further roof repairs in 2011; and many other maintenance and restoration efforts over the years.

But after 50 years, we have reached the limits of what can be done through intermittent fundraising efforts. Our volunteers spend more time and effort raising money than they do on preserving the collections or welcoming visitors.

The same is true at the historic "building museum" that is the Hall of Waters today. Maintenance of that 82-year-old building has competed with pressing needs of the fire, police and other city departments. As a result, for several generations now, the Hall has received Band-Aid maintenance rather than improvements to make it more functional for today and preserve it for the long term.

The Excelsior Springs Museum & Archives is an independent nonprofit and our volunteers will continue to raise donations for most daily operational needs. We will continue to need memberships and research fees to pay the utility bills that make up 40 percent of our budget. The tax levy will fund structural and large operational needs. Each year, the funding needs will be outlined in a budget submitted to the city for the Museum's portion of the tax levy, guaranteeing the transparency and public oversight of this portion of the Museum's budget.

What will the Museum use the tax levy for? We believe there are two most pressing needs:

- Historic Structure Report: The first step is to assess the most crucial structural needs and develop a strategic plan to guide short-term and long-term improvements. This plan would focus on structural systems, mechanical (HVAC), electrical and plumbing systems; fire detection, safety and security; ADA compliance; energy and air safety.
- Curator: Second, a professional curator would manage day-to-day operations and guide the preservation efforts determined in the strategic plan. Having a knowledgeable staffer on duty daily will improve the consistency of operations, while

freeing volunteers to welcome visitors, to create fresh displays from the Museum's inventory of over 33,000 items, and to develop new programming ideas to increase the Museum's relevance to the broader community.

Through many years of concerted effort, our community is on the cusp of a renaissance. But it's not inevitable. Can you imagine a future without the Museum or the Hall of Waters, which draw tourism dollars, new businesses and residents to our community? I can. I've driven through nearby Missouri towns once filled with people and thriving small businesses now crumbling along their main streets. We can't let that happen here. We hope that voters will agree that this place matters for all of us!

—

Kathy Duncan
Museum volunteer
Excelsior Springs