

City of Crystal Lake Economic Development Committee
February 28, 2017 – 7:30 a.m.
Municipal Complex – City Council Chambers Conference Room

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 a.m. by Mr. Affrunti.

Roll Call/Attendance

Members Affrunti, Dalzell, Maule, Reece, and Saidler were present. Mr. Fowler arrived at 7:35 a.m. and Mr. Schroll arrived at 7:55 a.m. Members DeHaan and Leech were absent.

Heather Maieritsch, Economic Development Manager, and Katie Cowlin, Planner, were present from staff. Haig Haleblian, Councilmember, was also present.

Approve Minutes of the January 24, 2017 Meetings

Mr. Saidler said on page 3 the name of the gentleman from the Raue is Richard and not Rich.

Mr. Fowler arrived.

Ms. Maule moved to approve the January 24, 2017 EDC minutes as amended. Mr. Dalzell seconded the motion. On voice vote, Members Dalzell, Maule, and Fowler voted aye. Members Affrunti, Reece, and Saidler abstained. Mr. Schroll had not arrived yet Motion passed.

Public Participation

There was no one present to speak.

I Shop Crystal Lake Update

Ms. Cowlin said it was a steady month for I Shop. She said that “Where in Crystal Lake” and business profiles do well on Facebook and many people connect with it.

Ms. Cowlin said they included in the packet for the members a copy of the draft RFQ and contract for the I Shop Crystal Lake consultant. She said there have been a few minor changes to the scope of work. There will be a more defined target to draw people to Crystal Lake from outside communities. The current contract ends at the end of May. Ms. Cowlin said they will be adding language for the option of extending the contract for another year. Mr. Reece suggested possible extensions for two years on a year by year review.

Mr. Saidler asked what people are commenting on. Ms. Cowlin said they can request that it be added to the monthly report they receive. Ms. Maule said there are many posts that mention that “this was a part of my childhood.” She doesn’t see any action such as “Easter is coming up and ...”

Mr. Saidler asked if the City has heard that the merchants see any bumps in their website or foot traffic after a posting. He wants to justify the money that is being spent. Ms. Cowlin said they can contact the businesses to see if they noticed a bump in their website activity or increase in foot traffic. Ms. Maule said the merchants can also ask customers how they heard about the business. She added that the consultant did well setting up the foundation. Ms. Cowlin said they are getting a good reach on Facebook and not having to pay for advertising on that site.

Mr. Saidler asked if we know what will be posted. Ms. Cowlin said not always. Mr. Saidler suggested a possible calendar of sorts as to what they will concentrate on. The calendar would not need to be strictly

adhered to but it would give us a general idea of where they are concentrating and when. Mr. Fowler said the consultant needs to go with the flow of the time and not be set in a calendar. Mr. Reece said there are things that happen in Crystal Lake that could be covered such as Farmers Market, City-wide sidewalk sales, annual festivals, etc. Those could be focused on. Ms. Maule said they need to be sure all areas are covered and not just certain areas such as downtown. Ms. Cowlin said they could schedule things out more and possibly by month.

Mr. Dalzell said they could also mention the Lion's Club Community Sign at the Chamber office. They need to let people know that it is not strictly for not-for-profit groups to use but also can now be used by people to announce birthdays, anniversaries, etc. It still can't be used by businesses to advertise. Ms. Maieritsch said that can possibly be covered by an article in the City's newsletter. Mr. Dalzell said the Lion's Club keeps the funds they raise local.

Ms. Maule said there are other strategies that could be used such as District 155 is looking for their students to get involved with marketing. We need to engage shoppers. Are we interesting and worth sharing? She added that businesses need to follow as well. Next year we need to put a little push on it.

Mr. Fowler reviewed the items discussed to possibly be added to the bid specs such as the option to renewal and a monthly calendar of items to include especially City-wide events.

Mr. Dalzell asked how much video gambling is bringing into the City which was discussed at the previous meeting. Ms. Maieritsch said she will provide the members with a link to that information.

Mr. Saidler suggested reducing the number of pages in the document. He said that will scare away people.

Ms. Maule asked if it would be on-line so she can direct Chamber members to it.

Business anniversaries and tour updates

Ms. Maieritsch said the tour for the Food Pantry has been setup.

Mr. Fowler said he is working on setting up tours for a few businesses. He asked about the Community Investment Awards which are different than the anniversary plaques. He said they are given to companies which have invested in Crystal Lake such as Auto Tech and Aldi with their new buildings, and Garfield's and the Amish Furniture for their store expansions. Ms. Maule said the Chamber does the same thing but several of the businesses are not Chamber members and they are not able to be recognized for their investments by the Chamber group.

Mr. Fowler said that Aptar was in the paper recently with a change in their President. He suggested we send a letter to the former President thanking him for this service and send a letter to the new President welcoming him to Crystal Lake and for expanding in our area.

Ms. Maieritsch said the Anniversary awards at the City Council will be held off until the April 4 meeting.

Organization reports:

Downtown Crystal Lake

Mr. Dalzell said there is a ladies night coming up soon.

Chamber of Commerce

Ms. Maule said they applied to the City for funds to be used for the Shoppers Guide and there will be a video component. They also received approval for the banner program along Virginia Street. There will be 16 banners created of current service members who are from Crystal Lake. A committee has been created to choose who will be on the banners. She added that there will be something in the newsletter and on the City's website.

Ms. Maule said the annual dinner will be on May 25th and the key note speaker will be announced next month.

Ms. Maule said she is involved with District 155's incubator program which is similar to the TV show "Shark Tank". There have been several outstanding ideas presented.

McEDC

Ms. Maieritsch said she has reached out to Pam Cumpata and Ms. Cumpata will be attending the next EDC meeting in March.

City of Crystal Lake

Ms. Maieritsch said the interactive story map for restaurants is up and running on the City's website. She said it is under the interactive maps. She added that the City will be revamping the website in the future and will be moving the map to a more convenient location when that happens.

Ms. Maieritsch said there were two press releases sent out during the month. One was for the grand opening of Casey's. They are a gas station that serves various food items that are made from scratch on-site such as pizza and donuts. They also have sub sandwiches and breakfast items.

Ms. Maieritsch said Outback will be improving their façade this spring and two City businesses relocated within the City – Charlie's Dog House (kennel and dog day care) and the Food Pantry.

Ms. Maieritsch said she reached out to the Raue Center regarding some of the comments made at the previous meeting. She said that some of the restaurants and businesses in Crystal Lake follow the Raue Center on the internet so they are aware of what will be coming up.

Mr. Affrunti asked about the new Italian restaurant that is to open in the former Porter's building. Ms. Maieritsch said they are working on their financing. They plan on taking down the existing building and rebuild a new smaller building that would allow for more parking. Also a supper club will fill the former London Pub and will be opening this summer.

Mr. Schroll said he is on the Raue Center Board and has questions about what was discussed at the previous EDC meeting since he did not attend. Mr. Fowler explained the comments that were made by Mr. Leech. Ms. Maule said she travels to other communities to see bands that she likes and feels it is unfortunate that we can't have that at the Raue as well. Mr. Schroll said it is difficult to get a good mix of plays, bands, etc. to attract a good mix of patrons. Also the Raue receives different funding than some of the other theaters of the same size in the area. Ms. Maule said people also have an opportunity to come to Crystal Lake via the train. Ms. Saidler said they need to look at the bigger picture and some of the bands that might be a "good fit" here may also have a blacked out market area. Mr. Schroll said he will reach out to Mr. Leech about his comments.

Ms. Maieritsch said the City is working on the possibility of a technology park since the City now has fiber optics. They are working on a video and partnering with MCC. This is in the very early stages. Mr. Affrunti said the area along Route 14 near MCC would be a good location.

Comments and suggestions from the Committee

Mr. Haleblian said he has received calls from business owners about not being able to get into Three Oaks Recreation Area without a fee because they don't live in Crystal Lake. Mr. Fowler said he has received the same complaint. Mr. Reece feels that if you own property within the City limits you should be able to get into Three Oaks since they already pay property taxes to the City. Ms. Maule suggested a separate sticker for them. Mr. Haleblian asked how far this should be taken. Should it be extended to the businesses as well? He said he will be pursuing this. Mr. Reece said that would make the business owners happy.

Mr. Saidler asked what the holdup for the Buckey's opening is. Ms. Maieritsch said it was the weather, they need to pour concrete and are waiting for the soil to warm up.

Mr. Schroll asked about the property at the southwest corner of Crystal Lake Avenue and Main Street. Ms. Maieritsch said there was a conceptual plan presented to the City. The developers received feedback and are working on the plans.

Ms. Maieritsch said Willow Creek has been moving along and they hope to have their first phase complete and open this fall.

Ms. Maule said Mercy Health came before the Chamber asking for a letter of support for their plans to move 13 beds from Harvard to Crystal Lake. She said the members voted to support the request like they did previously for both Centegra and Mercy Health's previous request.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 a.m.