

City of Crystal Lake Economic Development Committee
Regular Meeting
February 24, 2009 – 7:30 a.m.
Municipal Complex – Council Chambers

Call to Order

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

Roll Call/Attendance

Members Affrunti, Feddersen, Fowler, Viger, and Riley were present. Members Johnson, Bawolek, and Haleblan were absent.

James Richter II, Assistant Director of Economic Development, was present from staff. Thomas Aquilina with Aquilina & Associates was also present as an observer.

Approve minutes of the February 3, 2009 EDC meeting

Ms. Viger moved to approve the minutes from the February 3, 2008 EDC meeting as presented. Mr. Fowler seconded the motion. On voice vote, all members present voted aye. Motion passed.

Public participation and comments

Ms. Feddersen said she was interested in having groups paint the windows of empty store fronts. The various schools, scout troops, etc. could do the project. It would leave everyone with a better feeling and they only need a little paint. Mr. Richter said the City doesn't regulate signs in store windows but will check with the various departments to see if there are any requirements related to window art.

Mr. Affrunti said they would have to clear it with the building owner and there could even be a contest for the best window. Ms. Feddersen said it would be a positive activity and it would get their name out. Mr. Affrunti asked if this would encourage graffiti in the area. Ms. Feddersen said they could get renderings of the art to be put on the windows for approval. It also could incorporate the I Shop Crystal Lake program.

Mr. Riley asked if Ms. Feddersen had buildings this could be done to. Ms. Feddersen said it could be done to the Joann Fabric store that has been empty for some time. Mr. Richter said he would take it up with the other departments and report back at the next meeting.

Mr. Richter asked if there were any other comments from the public in attendance. Mr. Aquilina said no.

EDC Projects

I Shop Crystal Lake program 2009 – Bid review and discussion

Mr. Richter provided a list of the bids that were received at the bid opening yesterday. He said that he was not able to get through all of the bids during the prior evening since they did not all use the format that the City requested for the RFPs. Mr. Richter stated he wants this to move forward as soon as possible and that he will review the bids and possibly call a special meeting of the EDC to review the bids only.

Ms. Feddersen suggested that the members turn in a check list of what they are looking for in for James to review. Ms. Viger stated that the check list was the RFP.

Ms. Feddersen said they could even have a small fee for the businesses to be in the I Shop program. Mr. Riley said that was discussed in the beginning of the program. Mr. Richter stated that there has been

difficulty getting businesses to sign up for the program in the beginning even though it was free to them. Mr. Richter stated that the City has hosted this program to support Crystal Lake businesses to create an awareness of shopping opportunities in town.

Mr. Richter said he will let the Committee know about the special meeting date and time.

Community Investment Awards

Mr. Richter said the plaques are complete and handed them around to the members. He said they are trying to schedule dates for the presentations and wanted to confirm dates for the EDC members to attend – morning, afternoon, etc.

Mr. Fowler suggested that Staff set up the dates and let the members know. If they can attend the presentations, they will. He asked if there is a list of possible award recipients for the Committee to review. Mr. Richter said the Building Division was able to put together a list of new buildings that have received final occupancy and he will send that to the members.

Retention Survey

Mr. Richter stated that the draft survey that was provided to the members is a combination of several other communities' surveys tailored to work in Crystal Lake. He also provided a list of 20 possible businesses to be contacted. Mr. Riley asked if there was a survey done in the past. Mr. Affrunti said the MCEDC had started it but wasn't sure how far it got. Also they need to be aware of the confidentiality. Mr. Richter has gone through the old EDC information and didn't see any previous surveys or data.

Ms. Feddersen said she will start with the people she knows with empty storefronts. That would also be a great opportunity to ask them about the window painting.

Mr. Riley suggested that the survey be put on the website. Mr. Affrunti said there needs to be a benefit to the businesses to complete the survey. Mr. Richter believes that visiting the businesses may be better. He wants the businesses to know that the City is interested in their success.

Mr. Aquilina said his company does many surveys and they start out with a letter of introduction to those businesses stating that they will be contacted about the survey and setting up an appointment with them. The letter should also state what you are trying to gain with this survey. If the survey is conducted face to face, that will give the business representative an opportunity to expound on their comments. It's not just a number but a number and why. Mr. Aquilina said they also need to identify the correct person to talk with and suggested that it not be held at the business but rather over coffee. Mr. Aquilina said that follow up is key.

Mr. Richter said some businesses on the list are national businesses and it is difficult to determine who to contact. Ms. Feddersen said they need to get to the corporate people and then the local operator. Mr. Fowler said the store manager has a stake in the store. If it doesn't do well they are replaced and if it does well they move up the ladder.

Mr. Aquilina said they need to be careful about confidentiality. That the comments that are made are presented as data points and not “James said that ...” Mr. Richter said that another purpose behind the surveys is that if there is a problem for the business this will give the City an opportunity to help if we can.

Ms. Viger asked what the timing of this survey is. Mr. Richter said there is no definite time line. He will talk with the communities who have done this type of survey on how it was administered and will get back to the Committee at the next meeting.

Staff projects and reports

Recruitment initiatives

Mr. Richter said they have recently had a surge of inquiries from interested prospects and Staff has been tracking them. The biggest key is the follow up.

Ms. Feddersen discussed two possible leads she has – one a church and the other a restaurant. Mr. Richter asked if Staff could help. Ms. Feddersen said she will keep staff updated on the situations.

Mr. Richter said Michelle Rentzsch, Director of Planning and Economic Development, and he will be attending the International Council of Shopping Centers in Chicago on February 25 and 26. They will have a table with 2 displays.

Mr. Richter said he will be attending the ReCon in Las Vegas in May. He will be there for 2 days and they will not have a booth but he will make appointments to meet with various retailers and developers at that conference.

Organization Reports:

Downtown Crystal Lake (Brian Fowler)

Mr. Fowler asked if Staff got the information to Ms. Kenney for the Main Street presentations. Mr. Richter said Ms. Rentzsch was working on getting the information together. Mr. Fowler said the downtown is planning their usual events.

Committee for Business Support (Terry Feddersen)

Ms. Feddersen said she has two possible interested parties for the City. She also said that the rent for office space is low. Mr. Richter asked if it was property on Route 14 or elsewhere. Ms. Feddersen said everywhere.

Mr. Richter asked if Ms. Feddersen attended the last CBS meeting. Ms. Feddersen said yes. Mr. Richter asked what was discussed at the meeting. Ms. Feddersen said Ken Koehler discussed water and the quality of the water in McHenry County. Also discussed were inclusionary housing developments. Mr. Richter said in the proposed UDO there is a section that was been added for inclusionary housing.

McHenry County Economic Development Corporation (Brian Fowler)

No report

City of Crystal Lake (James Richter II)

Mr. Richter said the Mayor is hosting a Business Development Summit here at City Hall on March 4, 2009 from noon to 2 p.m. They have sent letters to all of the owners and managers of the shopping centers and inline centers in the City. Lunch will be served and he has received about 12 RSVPs so far. He said the EDC members are welcome to attend.

Comments from the Commission

Mr. Fowler asked about the certificate program. Mr. Richter said it is complete. Mr. Fowler asked if the certificates are being used. Mr. Richter said the Chamber has reported that they are and that they track where the gift certificates are being used.

Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 a.m.