

City of Crystal Lake Economic Development Committee
Regular Meeting
May 26, 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 Feddersen, Fowler, Riley, Viger, and Haleblian were present. Members Affrunti, Johnson and Bawolek were absent.

James Richter II, Assistant Director of Economic Development, was present from staff.

Brett Hopkins, Councilmember, and Gary Reece, Chamber President, were also present.

Approve minutes of the April 28, 2009 EDC meeting

Approve minutes of the May 15, 2009 Special EDC meeting

Mr. Haleblian said that due to lack of a quorum at this time the minutes will be voted on later.

Public participation and comments

Mr. Reece and Mr. Hopkins both said they will be attending more of the EDC meetings in the future. Mr. Richter said he will send them packets of the information to be discussed.

EDC Projects

I Shop Crystal Lake www.ishopcl.com website redesign and content management system

Status update – redesign and construction

Mr. Richter said he saw the first mockup of the website and sent comments back to the consultant. He said the first mockup was not very professional looking but things are moving forward.

Business of the week selections

Mr. Richter asked how the Committee would like to proceed. He suggested that they have several businesses for the week that could rotate on the home page. Mr. Haleblian asked if there was any criteria set up for the Business of the Week. Ms. Viger suggested that they be part of the I Shop Crystal Lake program and that they keep the selection random. That is a perk for being involved in the I Shop CL program. Mr. Haleblian asked if they should send a survey to the businesses so information can be put on the website. Mr. Richter said they will have a link on our home page to the business' website.

I Shop Crystal Lake program 2009 – advertising and promotions: 2009 program management

City Council meeting preparation

Mr. Richter said they had held a special meeting for the recommendation of the Committee. That recommendation will be going to Council for approval at their next meeting on June 2, 2009. He asked some of the members to come to the meeting. He said with the way the RFP was worded, the City has options as to what services we would want to take advantage of and still be within their budget. Mr. Haleblian and Ms. Viger said they would attend.

Retention survey

Review draft surveys and letters

Mr. Richter said they will start with sending a letter to the businesses and then follow up with the short survey. He said the survey can be customized for the business. After the short surveys are returned, then a meeting will be scheduled for the longer survey. Mr. Haleblian said the drafts provided looks good. It's a very easy format and quick to fill out. Mr. Richter said they received some of the questions from other communities that also do surveys of their businesses.

Mr. Hopkins asked who will be doing the longer surveys with the businesses. Mr. Richter said the other communities suggested that there be 2 people from the City – one to conduct the interview and the other to take notes. He asked that the members help with the longer surveys when the time comes. Ms. Viger said yes.

Mr. Fowler asked how the information from the short survey would be used. Mr. Richter said the first survey is to open the door for them. Mr. Haleblian asked how the businesses would be selected. Mr. Richter said they had discussed at a previous meeting the top 20 businesses in the community. He thought they would start with those.

Mr. Haleblian said the Chamber recently did a survey something like this. Mr. Reece said they sent out about 400 surveys and had about a 33% response rate. Most were small businesses and they received good information but it wasn't as detailed as this survey. Ms. Viger said most of the responses were very optimistic. Mr. Reece said the larger businesses in the area support the chamber but the smaller businesses rely on it more. He said the Chamber wants to help them succeed.

Mr. Fowler suggested that we follow up the initial survey. If we don't follow up they will feel it is a waste of time. Mr. James said they will also be checking to be sure they sent the survey to the correct person. Ms. Viger suggested that a due date be added – possibly one week. Ms. Feddersen asked if there is a prompt to call a staff member on the letter. Mr. Richter said yes.

Community Investment Award Recommendations

Final occupancy reviews

Mr. Riley said he would like to nominate Taco Bell. He asked who owns the building next door. Ms. Feddersen said that remodel was done some time ago.

Mr. Richter suggested that they go through the list month by month. Some of the businesses listed on one month have just a temporary occupancy and then is listed on another month as having final occupancy.

Mr. Riley asked about the LED company. Mr. Richter said that was just a build out and not an exterior renovation to the building. Ms. Feddersen said a vision specialist brought her business from Algonquin to Crystal Lake and does a lot of work with learning disabled children.

The consensus of the Commission was for the following businesses: Taco Bell, Buffalo Wild Wings, National City Bank, Dunkin Donuts, and Curran Building.

Mr. Richter said both the builder and developer for Buffalo Wild Wings and National City Bank worked well with the Building Division to complete the project.

Mr. Riley moved to recommend to the City Council approval of the Community Investment Awards be given to Taco Bell, Buffalo Wild Wings, National City Bank, Dunkin Donuts, and Curran building. Mr. Fowler seconded the motion. On voice vote, all members voted aye. Motion passed.

Mr. Richter said the recommendation will be sent to City Council for their action.

Staff projects and reports

International Council of Shopping Centers events summary

Mr. Richter said the trip to Las Vegas was very good and short. He said the attendance was about half of what it usually is but it was easier to meet with people there and give them information about Crystal Lake. Mr. Richter said he focused on two groups – retailers and developers. He had information to present to the groups this year and it was e-mailed to them in advance of the meeting. Regarding the Crystal Court redevelopment, many of the developers were interested but they said they needed a big box user before moving forward with a project. He said the biggest problem for the developers was that there are 5 property owners to deal with. Mr. Richter said many of the comments were that the City should purchase the property. The risk is that developers may not want to pay that price after the City purchases it. Ms. Feddersen said that is a big gamble.

Mr. Richter said most of the people who looked at the plans liked the Phase 1 option. They loved the main roadway leading to Vulcan Lakes and the big box store. They said after that, the other tenants will fall into place. He said not many liked the mixed use plan (retail, residential, and office uses). They said it wouldn't fly.

Ms. Viger asked if the roadway to Vulcan Lakes be completed. She said what business owner wouldn't want better access to their business. Mr. Richter said Simon – one of the property owners said they would not be in favor of eliminating some of their tenants' parking. Ms. Feddersen said they are empty and there are no cars there now. This would enhance the businesses. Ms. Viger said putting in the roadway would be money well spent. She also suggested a land swap with the current entrance to the property off of Route 14. Mr. Richter said they need to get people comfortable with the plan. He said there are a number of financial tools that can be used and staff has been researching options. Mr. Richter said this property currently is not part of the Vulcan TIF district and is not sure what the procedures are to add it, if it can be added.

Mr. Richter said he has met with Texas Roadhouse, Chick-Fillet, Sally Beauty, and several others. He also spoke with some hotels but they are not expanding at this time. He will be making a more complete report and sending it to the members. Mr. Richter said most of the people he met with wanted the information sent to them electronically.

Ms. Viger said it sounds like the trip was worthwhile.

Mr. Haleblian asked if any surrounding communities were in attendance. Mr. Richter said no. The communities that were there were Schaumburg, Naperville, and Orland Park.

Ms. Feddersen said there are more vacancies in the Crystal Lake Plaza. Mr. Richter said he understands the owners want to make more changes to the center.

Crystal Lake marketing pieces

Mr. Richter said the draft provided to the members is a summary of what the City has done recently. This will be available as a download and can be included in e-mails.

Mr. Haleblian said it is a bit wordy. Mr. Riley suggested that the title "Improved Communications" be changed to "Pre-application meeting."

Mr. Richter said there is another piece that he is working on comparing other communities to Crystal Lake – taxes, utilities, etc.

Organization Reports:

Downtown Crystal Lake (Brian Fowler)

Mr. Fowler said they will have Lunch in the Park utilizing the new gazebo. He stated that the hot topic is still parking. They heard that there was talk of moving the Z-lot for employee parking to the northeast corner of Main and Crystal Lake Avenue next to the Crystal Lake Bank drive-through building.

Committee for Business Support (Terry Feddersen)

Ms. Viger said she attended the joint meeting with several other communities' Chambers of Commerce. The speaker was a representative of the Olympic Committee in Chicago. This has tremendous potential for convenient towns to take advantage of this. She said they were told that countries come sometimes a year in advance of the games. Our train access is perfect and we need to start planning now. Mr. Haleblian said the announcement of who receives the games will be in October.

Mr. Fowler said Mr. Richter received an award at their annual dinner. Mr. Richter said it was a surprise and was very grateful.

McHenry County Economic Development Corporation (Brian Fowler)

Mr. Richter said he is now receiving leads from MCEDC. He said he had received them in the past and then it stopped.

Mr. Richter said the City will begin to use LOIS which allows us to put industrial site information on the website. MCEDC will be providing training for staff.

Ms. Feddersen said the County's website now has GIS which is very helpful to them. They previously had to purchase mapping for another company.

City of Crystal Lake (James Richter II)

Mr. Richter said M'Lady recently received approval for their Annexation Agreement extension which allowed them to keep the signs they currently have. They also were requesting variations to have an electric message center. Mr. Hopkins said they were asked to come back before Council with a reduced size sign. Mr. Richter said Anderson Motors has applied for a common sign plan which will be going through the review process. He added that Walgreens was before the PZC for Final approval. The petitioner did receive conditions during the Preliminary approval which were not addressed. They will be moving forward to Council at the next meeting. Mr. Riley asked if the proposed Walgreens is like the one we currently have in the City. Mr. Richter said the proposed building was rather flat and there were examples given to the PZC and City Council at the Preliminary meetings of other new buildings in the area that would fit in here.

Mr. Haleblian asked if the City had been in contact with Viking or Reichert. Mr. Richter said they have been in contact with Mr. Reichert and he feels he is in a good position. He said the Mr. Samaras from Viking has been in contact with owners of the property of the former Ford dealership.

Comments from the Commission

There were no comments from the members.

Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:50 a.m.