

**City of Crystal Lake Economic Development Committee**  
**Regular Meeting**  
**September 22, 2009 – 7:30 a.m.**  
**Municipal Complex – Council Chambers Executive Conference Room**

**Call to Order**

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

**Roll Call/Attendance**

Members Affrunti, Bawolek, and Fowler were present. Mr. Haleblian arrived at 8:05 a.m. Members Viger, Riley, Feddersen, and Johnson were absent.

James Richter II, Assistant Director of Economic Development, was present from staff. Sue Dobbe with Dobbe Marketing and PR was also present.

**Approve minutes of the August 25, 2009 meetings**

Mr. Fowler said they will hold off on the approval of the minutes due to the lack of a quorum.

**Public participation and comments**

There was no one present who wished to speak.

**EDC Projects**

**I Shop Crystal Lake program**

A. Final review the ishopcl.com website

Recommended improvements or enhancements discussion

Mr. Richter said he has a meeting scheduled for next week with Verity Three and asked if there were any comments or final recommendations for the site. He said previously he had received comments from businesses that the site was slow and that the design could be more appealing, but that it is a great tool. Mr. Richter reminded everyone that the idea behind a neutral design was to create a site that appeals to all business types, not just retailers.

Mr. Affrunti said the site is ok and everything seems to be there but he did not see Pauly Toyota or Walmart on the map. Mr. Richter said staff can create a new map with better information. Awe used the map from the shopping and dining guide provided by the Chamber. Mr. Affrunti feels that it looks very '70ish in design with the rounded corners.

Mr. Richter said the featured business window on the home page has space around it to display logos if they are provided. Also there are links to the business websites. Mr. Affrunti said he likes how the businesses change every time you go on the site.

Ms. Dobbe said she agrees with Mr. Affrunti that the design is very '70ish and it doesn't follow the I Shop CL logo which is square corners. Also the photos should be changed since the photos favor the downtown area. Some people feel this site is for the downtown area only. She has to keep telling people it is a City-wide program and not just for downtown businesses.

Mr. Affrunti asked if the photos will rotate. Mr. Richter said yes. He said he will also explore if the background can be changed. Mr. Affrunti suggested the background of the website match the colors used in the ad piece that is currently in the Northwest Herald. He said this website looks more like the City's website. Ms. Dobbe said the colors in the ads will change every month but the elements will remain the same. Mr. Bawolek asked if it would be difficult to change the background color. Mr. Richter said he will check with the designer. Mr. Bawolek suggested that it be changed quarterly if it is not difficult to change. Mr. Richter said he is not sure if it will be difficult to change or how much it would cost but that he would look into it.

Mr. Fowler suggested that the ad piece be put in PDF format and added to the website. Ms. Dobbe said that can be done easily.

Mr. Richter said the general direction from the business community and the EDC was to extend the I Shop Crystal Lake to all businesses not just retail. He said as a new business receives final occupancy for their space, staff will enter the business information on the website and send them an informational welcome packet.

Mr. Affrunti moved to approve the final design, layout and function of the new ishopcl.com website with the recommended changes discussed at this meeting. Mr. Fowler seconded the motion. On voice vote, all members present voted aye. Motion passed.

#### B. Advertising and Promotions program

##### Program evaluation (current progress) and Strategy review

Mr. Richter said that Ms. Dobbe and I will be presenting a summary of our progress for the I Shop Crystal Lake program and will be seeking direction from the EDC to make sure that we should be continuing our previously approved strategy. Ms. Dobbe said they have radio commercials with Star 105. They have received a nice response to the Northwest Herald ads wrap. The December issue will start running the week of Thanksgiving for the holiday season. She is also working on recruitment for both the I Shop program and the ads. Ms. Dobbe added that there will be a business builders breakfast to be held at City Hall on October 2 for interested businesses. The Chamber has been very helpful with the program and the invitations will be sent out this week.

Ms. Dobbe has also sent out information to the three local magazines for McHenry County about the I Shop program and they seem very interested in finding out more about this for an article. She said we are the only community in the region who has a program like this.

Mr. Richter said there was an interest in banners along our major roads so long as they can be reused. He said there are businesses that will be coming into town but it is taking a long time for them to negotiate leases. He would suggest that there be banners created similar to "I Shop CL welcomes \_\_\_\_" so people know the business is coming and it doesn't look like the City is going in the wrong direction. Mr. Fowler said we should stick with local businesses for the banner creation. Ms. Dobbe said they will.

Mr. Richter said the new larger I SHOP CL roadway signs have been put up.

Ms. Dobbe said the Lunch in the Park at the downtown gazebo was very successful and there were over 300 people who attended the last one. There was a singer who sang for over 3 hours and promoted I Shop between songs. She said they handed out over 100 shopping bags at the event and hopes that I SHOP can have more of a presence at next year's event.

Mr. Richter asked if the Committee feels that this program is headed in the right direction.

Ms. Dobbe asked if the Committee would be interested in having ads at the Metra stations which they could try to fit into the advertising budget. She has also been contacted by the Daily Herald. It seems they are also interested in offering advertising for the program. Ms. Dobbe said there will be a new local Tribune tabloid that will be about 8-16 pages long and come out weekly. It will cover Crystal Lake, Woodstock, Cary and McHenry. It will have all local news and can also be available on-line. We can submit stories for the on-line version which could possibly be expanded upon if the editors like the subject. Mr. Haleblian asked what the rates are. Ms. Dobbe said she is working on it. Mr. Richter said if the businesses support it financially we could go for it. Ms. Dobbe said the poster ads at the Metra stations run \$700 per sign but that could come from the holiday certificate ad budget. She said the posters on the trains are cheaper and she will put the numbers together. Mr. Haleblian said if the rates are favorable, it would be good to do both. He asked what the circulation is for the area. Ms. Dobbe said the Northwest Herald has 40,000 for Sunday only and the Tribune is about 30,000. Mr. Fowler said some people only get the Sunday paper so the ad on Thursday – even in the Northwest Herald – is for nothing.

Mr. Affrunti moved to approve the current progress on the program and to continue moving forward under the current strategy with the recommendations discussed at this meeting. Mr. Fowler seconded the motion. On voice vote, all members voted aye. Motion passed.

#### I Shop Crystal Lake contest

Mr. Richter said that one of the components presented by Dobbe Marketing and PR in their approved proposal is a points/drawings component to reward shoppers for spreading the word about the I Shop Crystal Lake program. This can be accomplished by holding a contest. Mr. Richter said that the City has a considerable number of window clings for the I Shop Crystal Lake program. We would like to distribute the clings at Crystal Lake businesses, City Hall, the library, gas stations, etc. We would encourage consumers to place the clings/stickers on their cars. A spotter (staff) would take a photo of a car with the I SHOP cling in the window and put the photo on the website. We will encourage people to visit the website to see if their car was spotted – if their car appears on the website, they can visit City Hall with their car to verify that the photo is of their car, and claim their prize. The contest is intended to drive people to the new ishopcl.com website and spread the word on the advertising benefits of the program. Originally we were going to give a gift check to the winner, but discovered that it is not appropriate to use public funds in this manner. He said we will ask Crystal Lake businesses donate prizes. Mr. Fowler said they can't put the license plate number on the web. Mr. Richter said they would

take a photo of it for our file and verification, but can only use photo of their car that shows the vehicle and the I Shop sticker. Ms. Dobbe said they don't have to be Crystal Lake residents to win.

Mr. Affrunti moved to approve the proposed contest details as outlined in the staff memo. Mr. Fowler seconded the motion. On voice vote, all members voted aye. Motion passed.

### Business retention

#### A. Proposed retention strategy

Mr. Richter said this topic has been discussed many times over the past several months and staff is recommending that we take this in a different direction. He was able to visit a business recently after contacting them for several months respond to some feedback we have received about our customer service. He said he was told they had a problem with the City previously and during the discussion he had with the owner of the company discovered that their lease was up soon. The owner said they were considering moving to another location and not necessarily within the City. Mr. Richter said he discovered that it will not be easy to get in to see the owners/managers of the businesses and that we should not utilize a survey questionnaire. Instead we need to begin a relationship with them. Mr. Bawolek said a follow up letter is very important so if there are issues we can let them know what has been done to address their concerns. Mr. Affrunti said we need to be sure to let them know we want to see them for economic development purposes.

Mr. Fowler asked what the City can do to ensure that company stays in Crystal Lake. Mr. Affrunti said it has a lot to do with the property owner.

Mr. Richter reviewed the outline for visitation and said there should be another point added to the visitation outline which is to hear what the business has to say. Asking a list of questions would be ridiculous but by just talking with them you can get a lot of the answers to the questions. Mr. Haleblan agreed that he would be turned off by someone coming in and asking a punch list of questions.

Mr. Fowler moved to approve the proposed retention strategy as is, and to direct staff to commence the retention program with the changes discussed at this meeting. Mr. Affrunti seconded the motion. On voice vote, all members voted aye. Motion passed.

### Staff projects

#### Economic Development incentives update

##### A. Façade / Tenant Improvement program

Mr. Richter said that in everyone's packets they received a letter stating that the Council has kept the eligibility for the incentive programs as is for now. They currently have 5 or 6 pending applications. Mr. Haleblan said there is a lot of paper work to get together.

Mr. Fowler said there is a significant amount of vacant office and industrial space in the City. Allowing those types of businesses to use these incentives will create more retail sales because of the workers in those businesses. He feels the City is missing the boat. Mr. Haleblan said he understands where both

the City and Mr. Fowler is coming from. He hopes that if the incentives continue that we can change the requirements to include those business types.

Business recruitment update

Mr. Richter reviewed information on the City's progress to fill vacant retail spaces.

Restaurant performance enhancement

Mr. Richter explained that through our efforts to recruit restaurants to Crystal Lake, we are being told that our existing restaurants are not performing at high enough levels to justify new restaurants in town. He expressed his frustration that he is unable to obtain sales numbers to justify this, but that he has been told this by more than one restaurant, including Daren Restaurants (Olive Garden/Red Lobster), Texas Roadhouse, Potbelly Sandwich Company, and Five Guys Burgers and Fries. Mr. Richter asked how the City can help restaurants to perform better. Mr. Fowler said if the office and manufacturing were fuller that would help the restaurants as well as other retail stores. He said the City needs to have a mixed economy. Mr. Bawolek said there needs to be a facility that attracts other support services such as a hospital. It would be great to have a hospital in Crystal Lake. He knows that St. Alexian wants to build a children's hospital. There isn't one between Rockford and Chicago's Children's Memorial. Mr. Affrunti said it is a big process to get a hospital in any area. It takes years.

Mr. Richter asked if there should be a special promotion to help with advertising for the restaurants. Mr. Affrunti said there are restaurants that have deals out there. Most people are looking for deals. Mr. Haleblian said he doesn't know what can be done for them. Mr. Richter said it is hard to get information on how restaurants are doing in Crystal Lake. Mr. Fowler asked if there is an industry guide. Mr. Richter said he has been in contact with several restaurant agencies, the Chamber, the IRMA and the IRA and have not received any information from them. Mr. Haleblian feels it is better to have more independent restaurants than chains.

McHenry County Economic Development Corporation cooperation

Mr. Richter said he recently met with the new McEDC director and they will be meeting on a monthly basis. They want to try to step up the relationship between the County EDC and the City. Mr. Fowler said they understand they need to work together with the municipalities. He said they have previously given grants to businesses with the City and the City needs to support the County EDC. They also have access to federal grants. Mr. Richter said the City is a member. Mr. Affrunti said they were difficult before but they are getting better. Mr. Fowler said it is nice to have someone to refer people to. It's another piece of the puzzle for us to use. He asked if the Committee was interested in having someone come here to give a presentation so we know what their goals are. Mr. Richter said he will invite them to attend the next meeting.

**Organization Reports:**

No reports were given.

**Comments from the Committee**

Economic Development Committee

September 22, 2009

Page 6

Mr. Affrunti said he received an e-mail stating that the Men's Warehouse was closing. Mr. Fowler said there are some vacancies in the downtown area.

**Adjourn**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:25 a.m.