

City of Crystal Lake Economic Development Committee
Regular Meeting
February 23, 2010 – 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, Feddersen, Fowler, Riley, Viger and Haleblan were present. Members Bawolek and Johnson were absent.

James Richter II, Assistant Director of Economic Development, was present from staff. Gary Reece, President of Crystal Lake Chamber of Commerce, was also present.

Approve minutes of the January 26, 2010 EDC Meetings

Mr. Riley moved to approve the minutes from the January 26, 2010 EDC meeting as presented. Mr. Affrunti seconded the motion. On voice vote, members Affrunti, Feddersen, Fowler, Riley, Viger and Haleblan voted aye. Motion passed.

Public participation and comments

There was no one present who wished to comment.

EDC Projects

I Shop Crystal Lake advertising and promotions update

Mr. Richter gave an update on the I Shop program. He said the videos for the restaurants are finished taping and now the editing is underway. The videos will soon be on Channel 17 and the I Shop website. Mr. Richter reviewed the restaurants who are receiving the videos – Jameson's, TGI Friday's, 1776, Yellow Tail (formerly Porters), Chen's King Wok, Buffalo Wild Wings, Williams Public House, Chez Pierre Creperie, and Duke O'Brien's. He said postcards were also sent to restaurants in the City giving them an opportunity to purchase a 30 second video of their business at a reduced rate. There have not been any takers on that offer. Mr. Riley asked if there is a dead line. Mr. Richter said none, as long as Dobbe Marketing and Create-A-Video hold their prices.

Mr. Richter said the cling promotion is still going on and the web activity has increased.

The budget process is currently underway and the next fiscal year and that we will likely need to trim our I Shop budget for the next fiscal year.

I Shop Crystal Lake program evaluation and planning update

Mr. Richter said Ms. Dobbe of Dobbe Marketing started putting together survey questions but that she needed all of the data from our gift certificate programs to create the questions. At that time all of the applications have not been processed, so they will hold off on putting together the questions until those are processed.

Mr. Fowler asked if the checks are being used. Mr. Richter said yes. There have only been a few issues that he is aware of where the tele-check scan of the check shows the account has insufficient funds. He said if the person has already written out that business name on the check they can bring it in to City Hall to obtain a new check. Mr. Reece said to be sure that the checks clear for the \$30 and not more. Mr. Richter said he will check into that. He also said that he will have a list of what businesses are benefiting from those check redemptions. Mr. Reece said the Chamber also has that information from the City's program last year.

EDC McHenry County Convention & Visitors Bureau recommendation update

Mr. Richter said the hotel tax distributions were approved at the previous Council meeting. The McHenry County Convention & Visitors Bureau did not receive funding. However, there was a discussion at Council and they will be looking into other funding for possible membership to the MCCVB. Mr. Fowler asked if the hotels were at the Council meeting. Mr. Reece said they were present when the MCCVB made their original presentation to Council. Mr. Haleblian asked if the amount collected from the tax was down this year. Mr. Reece said he believes it was down a significant amount.

Ad Hoc Committee - Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) review

Ms. Feddersen said she has some comments regarding the UDO. She said it is a good thing that temporary signage was changed from 1 time per year and questioned the signs on residential lots. Mr. Richter said there is no limit to the number of signs but there is a size restriction. He added that political signs are also considered temporary and are only limited by size.

Mr. Richter said the Zoning Commission reviewed the proposed changes to the UDO last week and this will be sent on to Council for their review. He said the Limited Use was a change from the original Zoning Ordinance. That allows staff to approve a use if they meet the criteria listed in the UDO. If they don't then they would be required to go through the process.

Ms. Feddersen asked about pods/trailers. Mr. Richter said there are some concerns in a residential area if a pod/trailer is located there for a long period of time and if the pod/trailer is rusty, etc. That is not a good look for a neighborhood. He added that the Building Commissioner has the ability to approve an extension for the pod/trailer temporary use permit.

Ms. Feddersen asked about wind turbines. Mr. Richter said they are permitted but no taller than 15 feet taller than the highest structure on that lot. Ms. Feddersen said some of them can be very noisy. Mr. Affrunti suggested they put a noise restriction on them so they can't be any noisier than an air conditioner.

Mr. Richter reviewed the changes in how the square footage of a sign is determined. There is also a proposal for additional signage on multi-tenant buildings for the end tenant.

Ms. Viger asked if the changes were suggested by contractors or staff. Mr. Richter said both. Some things are just housekeeping – numbering, etc. and for others it was discovered that the provision was hard to enforce.

Mr. Reece suggested that the City keep reviewing the UDO every 6 months. Mr. Haleblian said he is pleased with the changes to the sign portion of the ordinance since that as always a mess.

Ms. Feddersen asked if there is any leniency for sprinklering a building. Mr. Affrunti said it's only when there is a use change – if it were office before and goes to a more intense use. Mr. Reece added sprinklers are required when there is a new building.

Mr. Richter said that the Unified Development Ordinance does not cover fire suppression requirements – these matters are addressed in the Fire and Life Safety Codes. Mr. Richter offered to invite a representative from the Fire Prevention Bureau to one of our future meetings to review the Fire Code requirements for fire suppression and to talk about the Life Safety inspections. Mr. Richter said he has had the opportunity to attend several of the Life Safety Inspections for our major retailers and employers with the Fire Department and that things were going well. Ms. Viger said the only problem is that they show up unannounced. She said that is not a problem for them to come to inspect but it's hard to drop everything to walk around with them. Mr. Riley asked if the downtown area had been completed. Mr. Richter said he knew that many of the buildings in downtown had been covered, but that he wasn't sure if all of the buildings in downtown Crystal Lake had been inspected. Mr. Richter said that the businesses which he attended Life Safety Inspections with were aware of the dates and times of the inspections. He felt that it would be best for a representative from the Fire Prevention Bureau to discuss these topics further with the Committee and said that he would try to arrange for them to attend a future EDC meeting.

Mr. Haleblian said staff did a good job on the UDO and the proposed changes.

Economic Development incentives update

Façade / Tenant improvements incentives summary

Ms. Feddersen said she had stopped by several places where the building needed a façade change and the owners were not interested in spending money at this time. Mr. Richter said that City staff is working hard to keep this program. Mr. Reece said this is a great program. Mr. Affrunti said this is a great promotional tool showing potential businesses the City is interested in them and their community.

Staff projects

2010 Economic Development Goal Setting and Action Plan

Mr. Richter reviewed the goals for the Planning and Economic Development Department for the next fiscal year. Those goals are broken down and an action plan is put in place. Ms. Viger asked if this is the first year they have done this. Mr. Richter said that we set goals for ourselves annually and that this is a great beginning to on Economic Development Strategic Plan.

Ms. Feddersen said she is receiving more phone calls and showing more properties lately.

Mr. Affrunti said in the Northwest Herald Business Section there seems to be more businesses featured that are coming to Crystal Lake than other communities.

Mr. Affrunti asked if the parking structure in the downtown is on hold. Mr. Fowler said the structure is a waste of time. The parking is working better now. Mr. Richter added that he hasn't received complaints recently.

Mr. Fowler suggested that instead of goal being to fill vacant retail spaces to change that to include all vacant spaces. He said they are all tied together.

Ms. Feddersen said she and other realtors met with Representative Bean last week. Representative Bean complimented Crystal Lake on what they were doing to help businesses.

International Council of Shopping Centers Idea Exchange (February 23 – 24, 2010)

Mr. Richter said he and Ms. Rentzsch were going down to Chicago to attend the ICSC conference. There will be many seminars today and the big day is tomorrow with the municipal deal-making forum. This conference is a great place to network and promote the available spaces in town and our occupancy-assistance program.

Organization Reports:

Downtown Crystal Lake (Brian Fowler)

Mr. Fowler said they will be holding their annual meeting tonight. There are some vacant spaces in the downtown area. Mr. Richter said he has been in contact with a small clothing retailer who wants to be in the downtown and Sweet Pea Cakes is doing very well.

Committee for Business Support (Terry Feddersen)

Ms. Feddersen said she was not able to attend the last meeting. Mr. Reece said there was a representative from ComEd there to review their program which is in the last year of three years. He said they are now going away from energy efficient products and going for bigger stuff. There is a lot happening there.

Ms. Feddersen said many communities are going WIFI. There have been ads for "CLEAR" in Chicago. Mr. Riley said the City has done that in the past and the business went bust. Mr. Richter said it is not viable at this time due to the proliferation of 3G wireless services through wireless providers.

McHenry County Economic Development Corporation (Brian Fowler / James Richter II)

Mr. Richter said the MCEDC put together a round table for municipalities for education. He said that representation from CMAP and SBA were there to discuss relevant programs with municipalities.

City of Crystal Lake (James Richter II)

Mr. Richter stated that Camelot School recently received Preliminary PUD approval from Council. It is a private school for autistic students. There are several others in the Chicago area including Hoffman Estates – near the Sears Centre, DeKalb, and Aurora. Mr. Richter said there is a new business coming to Crystal Lake – O'Reily's Auto Parts. They will be building near Aldi. He met with representatives of the CVS project and with the surrounding property owners. They need additional property either along Route 14 or purchase a few homes to give them the property they need. Mr. Richter said this project as well as the O'Reily addition would be a good jump start for this area and the Virginia Street corridor project.

Comments from the Committee

The Committee members did not have any additional comments.

Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 a.m.