

City of Crystal Lake Economic Development Committee
May 25, 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, and Haleblan were present. Members Bawolek, Johnson, and Viger were absent.

James Richter II, Assistant Director of Economic Development was present from staff. Gary Reece, President of the Crystal Lake Chamber of Commerce, and Sue Dobbe with Dobbe Marketing were also present.

Approve minutes of the April 27, 2010 EDC meeting and the April 28, 2010 Development & Business Advocacy Workshop

Mr. Haleblan stated they will vote on the minutes later in the meeting if a quorum is present.

Public participation and comments

There was no one present who wished to speak.

EDC Projects

I Shop Crystal Lake for 2010-2011 fiscal year

Mr. Richter said at the last meeting they looked at the surveys for both the shoppers and the businesses owners. There was a discussion to move forward on concentrating on promoting shopping in Crystal Lake due to the reduction in the budget. He added that the ideas presented at the previous meeting were shared with Ms. Dobbe. Mr. Richter said he believes that a strategy needs to be established for the year.

Ms. Dobbe said the basic reasoning for the I Shop program was to strengthen the tax base and to educate shoppers on the value of shopping locally. The goal of strengthening the tax base is still strong but now they need a sustainable relationship between the customer and business. She understands the City has collected about 6,000 e-mail addresses of people who participated in the Holiday Certificate programs in the past and we have not used them other than this previous survey. Ms. Dobbe feels the City needs to have the website redesigned to be more shopper focused. This could include pod casts on new businesses, send e-mail blast about what's going on in the Downtown or at various businesses, or even have a "find a word on the website" and they could possibly win a prize. That would not necessarily be expensive. She said they would need to get to the businesses and give them ideas on how businesses can draw customers and increase their base. Ms. Dobbe said the City's shopper e-mail list is golden. She would like to see a new video on the website monthly and they could use videos they already have. This is most cost effective. She would be happy to put together a contract to do this every month and promote such events as the beach is open, farmers' market and lunch in the park in the downtown area.

Mr. Reece said the Chamber's attempts to use an e-campaign have been very effective. You will know who opened the information or not and if they went to another link.

Mr. Affrunti said some companies give coupons. Ms. Dobbe said that's not driving people to the website. Mr. Richter said the City does have the capabilities to do e-mail blasts to some but not all of the gift certificate recipients.

Ms. Dobbe said she is proposing the City hire someone who knows what is going on within the community and to refine the website. She said there is a lot on the home page and the business directory probably isn't used much. People usually Google on the internet to find business information.

Mr. Fowler said they need to cultivate the businesses. Ms. Dobbe said she wants to facilitate the people going to the businesses. It can't all be economics. There needs to be additional information, photos, etc. on the site to make it fun.

Mr. Richter asked if we could possibly cross-promote at ishopcl.com with the Chamber's new website. Mr. Reece explained some of the areas of the website. He said I Shop will be on the website. Mr. Fowler asked if there is duplication of the websites. Mr. Haleblian said I Shop website is more promotional and focused solely on shoppers.

Mr. Richter said the reason for the business directory on the I Shop website is because nearly 20% of the businesses in Crystal Lake don't have their own website. Our site helps them out.

Ms. Dobbe said she is proposing to revise the website and make it more dramatic. Also an e-mail should be set out once a month to the shoppers we have e-mail addresses and that will drive the website. We need to give them a reason to go to the website.

Mr. Reece said they need to let businesses know what is going on with the program and to possibly add to their incentives. Mr. Affrunti said we already know people shop here.

Ms. Dobbe said they should enhance the cling contest. It is effective and low cost.

Mr. Richter recapped by summarizing the main focus of this year's program to focus on giving the shoppers value and keeping the businesses engaged.

Mr. Fowler asked if there was any value to having a discount card instead of a rebate. Ms. Dobbe said the businesses involved with I Shop would be able to differentiate themselves from others. She said businesses don't need to dig deep in their pockets. We just need to help them get their offers out there. Mr. Affrunti said if they are a loyal customer it could be just an extra bonus.

Mr. Richter said he will put together a rough strategy for the next meeting. Mr. Fowler said it would be good to have this program up and running before back to school shopping.

Ms. Dobbe left the meeting at this time.

Approve minutes of the April 27, 2010 Meeting

Mr. Affrunti moved to approve the minutes from the April 27, 2010 EDC meeting as presented. Mr. Riley

seconded the motion. On voice vote, members Affrunti, Feddersen, Fowler, and Riley voted aye. Mr. Haleblian abstained. Motion passed.

Planning and strategy creation

Vacant Economic Development Committee positions

Mr. Richter said there is a vacancy on the Committee and have had many inquiries. He is not sure if there have been any applications sent to the Mayor. Mr. Fowler asked if there aren't 2 or 3 vacancies on the Committee. Mr. Richter said there have been some members not able to attend the meetings regularly. He asked if the members would like the vacancies to be posted on the City's website.

Mr. Haleblian said they should post the vacancies. Mr. Riley agreed that posting is a good idea. Mr. Richter said it would be nice to have someone with marketing or advertising experience. He also asked if anyone had someone in mind.

Mr. Fowler said attendance should be regular and suggested there be an attendance requirement. Mr. Haleblian said he thought there was one in place. Mr. Riley suggested that members who have not been attending the meetings should be contacted and let them know the position will be posted and they are welcome to reapply for it.

Mr. Richter said he will talk with other communities and put together an attendance policy. He will have that information at the next meeting. Mr. Riley recalled that the reappointments happened in October.

Mr. Haleblian added that the Chairmanship should also be addressed. Mr. Richter said that can be reviewed annually and will look into that as well for the next meeting.

Spotlight on local business

Mr. Richter said he has received several requests to be included in the Spotlight on businesses. He would like to do those before they change to another focus. The members agreed.

Development & Business Advocacy Workshop summary

Mr. Richter said the workshop went well. Ms. Feddersen said it went well and it was good to explain what is being changed.

Mr. Haleblian said he had a new business come in for flooring and he was told that they had a good experience with the City.

Mr. Richter said he had received feedback from a number of the attendees that there was not a lot of feedback at the workshop because some people felt apprehensive about bringing things up in front of Department heads and the Building Commissioner. He suggested that for the next workshop they go back to the original format. Mr. Fowler thought that was a good idea and to possibly have two per year – one with just James and the other with City staff to review the changes.

Knaack Manufacturing – 50-year anniversary recognition

Mr. Richter said this item was brought to his attention by Mr. Fowler. Mr. Fowler said he found out that Knaack is celebrating 50 years in business in Crystal Lake. He thought it might be nice to have a City proclamation or possibly even a plaque.

Mr. Richter asked if the Committee would be interested in giving Knaack a Community Investment Award. Mr. Fowler agreed.

Mr. Affrunti suggested that the City publish an article and include why they stay in Crystal Lake.

Mr. Fowler moved to present Knaack Manufacturing with a Community Investment Award for their 50 years in business in Crystal Lake and their community involvement over the years. Mr. Riley seconded the motion. On voice vote, all members voted aye. Motion passed.

Economic Development incentives update

Approved 2010-2011 Façade-Commercial Tenant Improvement program

Mr. Richter said the members were sent copies of the ordinances covering the 2010-11 grant programs. He said the website is being updated and new applications are being approved. He has had several discussions with businesses about the changes from the previous program.

Staff projects

Attraction update

Mr. Richter reviewed the businesses he has been talking with about coming to Crystal Lake, such as Family Video, Fresh Market, Advance Auto Parts, Five Guys Burgers, Pep Boys, and others. He said CVS is still interested in the property at McHenry and Route 14 but needs additional information for the development.

Mr. Richter said he has been informed that Crystal Lake Pontiac and GMC will be adding Buick to their line since Pontiac is being phased out. He said he had been in contact with Bob Roarman's assistant and they are still planning on building a high end car dealership next to Pauly Toyota. They are just waiting to acquire a franchise from the manufacturer.

Organization Reports:

Downtown Crystal Lake

Mr. Fowler said things are moving along in the Downtown area with the Farmers' Market and Lunch in the Park.

Committee for Business Support

Ms. Feddersen said she did not attend the meeting. Mr. Richter said the presentation was given by the City's Engineering, Building, and Planning Departments. He said they reviewed projects within the City.

McHenry County Economic Development Corporation

Mr. Richter said they are working hard with the McEDC and have been staying in touch with their staff. Mr. Fowler said the McEDC does bring about \$90,000 in grants to the City.

City of Crystal Lake

Mr. Richter had nothing additional to report.

Comments from the Committee

Mr. Haleblan asked if there could be a time limit placed on public presentations so they are not long and drawn out. Mr. Fowler agreed and suggested 10 minutes. Mr. Haleblan said they would like to be out of the meeting no later than 9:00 a.m.

Ms. Feddersen asked if the City was going to be in the parade this year. Mr. Reece said the cut off for space is June 1. Mr. Richter said he wasn't sure if they got any return on the money they spent on the signs, candy, etc. He doesn't believe there was a spike in the website traffic immediately after the parade.

Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:55 a.m.