

City of Crystal Lake Economic Development Committee
September 28, 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 Feddersen, Fowler, and Haleblian were present. Members Affrunti, Bawolek, Riley, Viger, and Johnson were absent.

James Richter II, Assistant Director of Economic Development, was present from staff. Also in attendance were Gary Reece, President of the Crystal Lake Chamber of Commerce, Mary Wisniewski and Laura Fergus with Just Off The Tracks.

Approve minutes of the August 24, 2010 EDC meetings

Mr. Haleblian said there is no quorum and the minutes will be voted on at the next meeting.

Public participation and comments

There was none at this time.

Presentation regarding the “Just off the Tracks” website and marketing program

Mary Wisniewski and Laura Fergus with Just Off The Tracks were present. Ms. Wisniewski said their website shows things to do along the Metra train line. Their site includes current events and suggested excursions, which is a group of businesses relating to a theme. She said this site gives people a reason to get off of the train. Ms. Wisniewski said Metra is the second largest commuter rail line in the country. There are currently 47 businesses in Crystal Lake shown in excursions and they won't be featuring every stop along the Metra line. Ms. Wisniewski added that they are hoping for suggestions on places to go and things to do that are close to the train depots. There is a place on the website for “insider tips.”

Mr. Haleblian asked how they are spreading the word about their website. Ms. Fergus said by Twitter and Facebook. She said there are many organizations that have linked to this website and most are based in Chicago. Mr. Haleblian asked if the companies who advertise on the site are linked to their website. Ms. Wisniewski said yes. Ms. Fergus said they are asking the City to purchase ad space on their website. She said there is a discount if an ad for one year is purchased before October 30, 2010. Mr. Richter asked if the side ads appear differently for every community or if they are always visible. Ms. Fergus said they will rotate these ads.

Mr. Reece asked if there is anything like this anywhere. Ms. Wisniewski said not that she is aware of. She added that the business profiles are done in a question/answer format.

Mr. Richter said this could be discussed along with the ad/marketing plan for the Rewards program. He is not sure a decision can be made by the end of October. Ms. Wisniewski said they could hold the price for the City.

Mr. Haleblian said this is a great concept and thanked Ms. Wisniewski and Ms. Fergus for coming to the meeting to discuss their website.

Committee Goals

Mr. Richter said he has had an opportunity to talk with current and former members of the EDC. The Committee is in a transitional stage and will be bringing on new members. He wants to be sure we recruit new members that will support the direction of the Committee. Mr. Richter suggested that the Committee could re-organize to be set up similar to the Chamber with sub-committees for legislative, promotion, retention, and attraction. Mr. Fowler said they don't have enough members to fill the sub-committees at this time.

Ms. Feddersen asked if the Council is not happy with direction the Commission is going. Mr. Richter said no - this is just a brain storming exercise fueled by staff. Mr. Haleblian said he likes the staff-driven nature of the EDC. Ms. Feddersen said the Committee is an advisory board to staff and staff acts on it.

Mr. Haleblian suggested that they find a marketing person for one of the vacancies. Mr. Fowler said they would have to be from a larger company so there would not be a conflict of interest. Mr. Haleblian added that possibly adding an attorney and marketing person would be a good addition on the Committee. Mr. Reece said this is a good opportunity for the Committee to bring in the people you feel will help the most. Mr. Richter said there are four openings at this time. He asked if the members have any suggestions for members to please contact him and he will take it from there. Mr. Reece said the Chamber just went through this same process. They drafted a letter that could be signed by the Chairman – Mr. Haleblian – and sent it to the perspective members. They also held a ½ day strategic meeting on how to move forward. Mr. Richter thought this was a good idea.

Mr. Haleblian said the recent tour of Knaack was great and asked when and where the next one will be. Ms. Feddersen suggested Sports Decal. They make the decals used by most colleges.

Staff Updates

I Shop Crystal Lake

Mr. Richter gave an update on the ShopQA site. The company is finalizing implementation by entering business information. He showed a possible design of the site and asked what the members would like to see on the site. Mr. Fowler feels that the proposed photos used should be changed because he is concerned that businesses will complain about the logos shown on the website. He doesn't want to receive negative feedback from businesses because we are using certain photos unless they are photos of general areas and not of specific businesses. Mr. Fowler said they still need to meet with the businesses to explain the Rewards program.

Mr. Richter asked the members how they would like to promote the program at the retailers – window cling? Table tent? Mr. Haleblian said people don't look at the door and feels that the table tent may make better sense not only to keep it in front of the customer as well as the employee. Mr. Richter said he can add a note on the website for businesses to request a table tent. Mr. Fowler asked about the game plan for this project. Mr. Richter said they are hoping to make presentations to the retailers in October. Mr. Haleblian said they need to be finished by the end of October.

Incentives

Mr. Richter said \$21,000 in grants have been approved and qualifying businesses are using the 50% reduction in permit fees. He reviewed the Enhanced Sales Tax Incentive Program approval the Council recently gave to M'Lady Nissan.

Attraction

Mr. Richter asked for the members to suggest 5 retailers that they would like to have in town.

Retention

Mr. Richter said at the October 5 Council meeting plaques will be presented to Countryside Flower Shop, Joe's Barber Shop, General Kinematics and Lloyd's Paint and Paper for being a part of this community for over 50 years each. The Mayor and City Council are asking that members of the EDC be present for these awards.

Mr. Richter asked if there are any other businesses in Crystal Lake who have been here for 50 years + to give him a listing. He said he would also contact Diana Kenney of the Historic Preservation Commission.

3/50 Project

Mr. Richter briefly discussed the 3/50 project concept, where cities encourage shoppers to pick 3 local businesses that they can't live without and encourage shoppers to spend \$50 there. There is an informational meeting about the concept in Long Grove and EDC members are encouraged to attend.

Status Update

Mr. Richter said he and Ms. Rentzsch, Director of Economic Development, have met with the owners of Camfil Farr who have approached the City seeking incentives to stay in Crystal Lake. There is a lot of work that needs to be done to their current building. He said they were presented with the information on the City, County, and State incentives that they would qualify for. They will be keeping in touch with the owners. Mr. Fowler said they are a large corporation and it would be hard for the City to replace them.

Mr. Richter said Catalyst Exhibits is also contemplating moving out of the City. They are looking at their options and we want to do what we can to help. He said they are not in a hurry to make a decision. Mr. Fowler suggested a tour of the facilities with the Mayor. He said the rest of the Council could come if they wished but they didn't need to.

Organization Reports:

Downtown Crystal Lake

Mr. Fowler said the new sidewalks are going in, Johnny Appleseed was a big success, and the Lunch in the Park event will be this week.

Committee for Business Support

Ms. Feddersen said the Fire Chief gave a presentation on the wireless fire alarm system.

Mr. Reece discussed the event hosting the Republican Governor candidate, Bill Brady, who answered questions of the business community. He said Mr. Brady spoke for about 40 minutes and the video may be viewed on the MCEDC website.

McHenry County Economic Development Corporation

Mr. Fowler said the MCEDC annual dinner was recently held and well attended. They are also working on business retention and attracting new businesses to the area. Mr. Richter added that there were several Crystal Lake businesses nominated for MCEDC awards.

Comments from the Committee

There were no comments from the members.

Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:10 a.m.