

City of Crystal Lake Economic Development Committee
April 24, 2012 – 7:30 a.m.
Municipal Complex – City Council Chambers Conference Room

Call to Order

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

Roll Call/Attendance

Members Affrunti, Haleblian, Reece, Riley, Saidler and Fowler were present. Members Dalzell, DeHaan, and Hymes were absent.

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

Approve Minutes of the March 27, 2012 EDC Meetings

Mr. Riley moved to approve the minutes from the March 27, 2012 EDC minutes as presented. Mr. Haleblian seconded the motion. On voice vote, all members present voted aye. Motion passed.

Public Participation and Comment

There was no one present who wished to speak.

I Shop Crystal Lake Strategy for 2012-13

Mr. Richter said the budget for FY 2012-13 has been approved and we have a budget of \$25,000 for I Shop Crystal Lake. He said they are informing the Council of how we are spending our funds but he would like to add program measurement to identify the success the EDC is having with the program. That is a way to show the City Council that we appreciate the funding we have been provided with.

Mr. Richter reviewed the chart with the members of the proposed program components for I Shop projects, such as the contests, website, signs, etc. He said press releases were sent out with photos of the winners and information about the contest to the local media outlets but none have been published. Mr. Reece suggested contacting Patch and Mr. Saidler suggested Trib Local. Mr. Richter said he did send the press release to the Tribune with no results and he has also been contacted by Patch for advertising. Mr. Reece said Patch has a good demographics and he has know businesses that have gotten traction from their ads.

Regarding the I Shop Crystal Lake Gift Certificate Contests, in response to the discussion at the previous meeting, Mr. Richter shared details for a quarterly contest with a budget of \$3000 per contest. Other budgeted items include spending more money on advertising the contest during the holiday season. Mr. Fowler said they need to keep this in front of the public. Mr. Haleblian said they need to be conscious of not diluting the contest with having them all year long. Mr. Fowler said they should give it a year to see what happens. Mr. Richter said the response to the winter contest was surprising and the spring contest is fair. He recalled that the Back to School promotion last year was not very successful. Mr. Reece said they had decided at the last minute to do that promotion and there wasn't enough time to get the word out.

Mr. Haleblian suggested that the money be put into the Holiday promotion. Mr. Affrunti said die-hards will do it every quarter. Mr. Haleblian used his own business as an example to make an argument for not funding the contest during an off-season.

Mr. Fowler asked if the program could be advertised at Three Oaks Recreation Area. Mr. Riley said the forms could be available there as well. Mr. Riley suggested advertising new businesses in town too.

Mr. Saidler said once the contests end it will be hard to explain it starting back up again. Mr. Fowler said they need to give it a year to see how it goes. Mr. Reece said there is money available in the budget that can be moved to add to the promotions. Mr. Riley suggested that the photos of the winners can be added to the advertising that is done. Mr. Reece suggested that the I Shop contest flyers be put in the bags that the baseball tournament participants receive. They do spend a lot of money in Crystal Lake. The Committee felt that was a very good idea.

Mr. Richter said our new business “coming Soon” signs have been successful. Businesses are requesting the “Coming Soon” signs. The panels with the individual businesses are currently done by an outside source but there is a possibility we can do it in-house shortly.

Mr. Richter understands that the Committee wants to go with the quarterly promotions but asked what would they like to name them. Mr. Affrunti said the one from November to January should be the Holiday promotion and February to April should be spring.

Mr. Richter asked how they should measure the success of the contests. Mr. Reece said by keeping track of the amount of money the people spend and if they participate in several contests. He suggested adding a column to the spread sheet totaling the amount of receipts for each entry. Mr. Fowler said this is staff time and they need to be able to do it efficiently.

Mr. Fowler asked if they should increase the threshold. Mr. Haleblian suggested \$300. Mr. Saidler said they want to keep people shopping in Crystal Lake so why change the amount. Mr. Fowler said they need to keep it simple. The consensus was to keep the purchase threshold at \$200.

Mr. Saidler asked about the click throughs with the Constant Contact. He also suggested that we could charge \$200 if a business wished to advertise in our e-mail blast. Mr. Richter said he had not checked the click throughs previously but will in the future. Mr. Haleblian asked if the City could charge for a business to advertise in our e-mail blasts. Mr. Richter said they could but this has always been a free program for the businesses. Mr. Saidler also said that the e-mails that are bounced back from the Constant Contact blasts should be removed from our list. That also could reduce the cost of the blast itself. He warned that the e-mail blasts should not be overdone. They need to be careful on how many are sent and the content of the blast. Mr. Reece said once a month or every other week should be good.

There was a discussion regarding the press release in various publications such as the Business Journal. Mr. Saidler said with the Business Journal you need to give them the angle – they won’t come up with one. Mr. Richter said he sends out the press release for I Shop but it is not published. Mr. Saidler said it needs to stand out and needs an unusual spin. Mr. Reece suggested that the picture be sent to the “Neighbors” section which is published on Saturday in the Northwest Herald. That would be a separate submission and people love that section. Mr. Saidler said if we get the press releases published in other publications such as Patch, the Northwest Herald will take notice.

Mr. Richter asked about the City creating videos for the program. Mr. Reece said it is very difficult for businesses to undertake a video and it is even harder to do it well. Mr. Saidler said then the City will need to be worried about the content and they can actually post a video themselves on You Tube. Mr. Fowler said Staff has enough going on without worrying about videos.

Mr. Richter suggested a contest call “I SPOT CHRIS.” There could be a poster or image of the I Shop logo placed in a business, the customer take a photo of themselves next to “Chris” and submit it along with a

receipt from that business for a chance to win a gift certificate from that business. Mr. Fowler explained how Crystal Lake Bank and Trust ran the "Where in McHenry County is Henry" promotion. The problem is how you choose the business that gets the poster. Mr. Reece suggested a lottery drawing. Purely luck. Mr. Fowler said they could pick 20 businesses and contact them in order to see if that business is interested.

There was a discussion about having a Facebook contest. Mr. Saidler said it could be tested during the slow time such as summer and see what happens.

Mr. Reece moved to approve the I SHOP CRYSTAL LAKE program for FY 2012-13 with changes as discussed. Mr. Riley seconded the motion. On voice vote, all members vote aye. Motion passed.

Open Meetings Act Training for Public Officials

Mr. Richter said he has set up the website in the Council Chambers so it can be projected onto the screen. He said the EDC members must complete the Open Meetings Act training by January 1, 2013. After the training is completed, they will receive a certificate which the City will need a copy of.

Organization Reports

Downtown Crystal Lake (Brian Fowler)

Mr. Fowler asked about the Olive Tap. Mr. Haleblan said he is working on the flooring for the new business. He said there were some issues between the owner of the building and the business owner. Those have been resolved and they should be opening by June 1.

Mr. Fowler said the Downtown is gearing up for the activities for the summer.

McHenry County Economic Development Corporation (Brian Fowler)

Mr. Richter said the software for McEDC has been installed and each municipality will receive their own copy to run the economic impact models.

Chamber of Commerce (Gary Reece)

Mr. Reece said their Spring Board event held last week was a success and the Expo a few weeks ago was very successful. He said there are 65 out of the 140 businesses that have signed up for next year's expo. The golf outing is sold out but there are sponsorships still available. He added that at the May 1 City Council meeting the Chamber will be presenting the Pride in Crystal Lake Award to the City for Three Oaks Recreation Area.

City of Crystal Lake (James Richter)

Mr. Richter gave the Committee an update on the PEDCOR development. He had provided the draft PZC minutes in the members' packets. The letter of support from the EDC will be included in the City Council information for the project.

Mr. Richter reviewed the Melaniphy & Associates Inc. report which was sent to the EDC members. He said Crystal Lake had a 7% total retail sales increase. Mr. Saidler said Algonquin is not listed in the report. Mr. Fowler said the Algonquin Commons is having a rough time. Mr. Haleblan said he would like to compare our numbers to that of Algonquin. Mr. Richter said he would check to see how to get them.

Monthly Report to the City Council

Mr. Richter said he will prepare the report for Council and will include the I Shop information, the Open Meetings Act training, and highlights of the Melaniphy report. The members agreed.

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Comments from the Committee

Mr. Richter said there is a tour of Auto Troll at 365 Prairie on Friday, May 4th at 8:30 a.m. Please let him know if you will be attending.

Adjourn

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