

City of Crystal Lake Economic Development Committee
April 23, 2013 – 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, DeHaan, Haleblian, Reece, Riley, Saidler, and Fowler were present. Members Dalzell and Hymes were absent.

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

Approve Minutes of the March 26, 2013 Meetings

Mr. Reece moved to approve the minutes from the March 26, 2013 EDC minutes as presented. Mr. Saidler 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.

Unified Development Ordinance proposed Amendments

Mr. Richter said during the workshop between the EDC and PZC recently, it was suggested that the EDC comment on possible UDO amendments. There are several related to business that are up for discussion.

Parking Space Dimensions

Mr. Richter said the current parking space dimensions are 9 ft. by 19 feet. The PZC inquired if the spaces are large enough for some of the larger SUVs and trucks. Mr. Affrunti said it is hard to put the larger pickup trucks in the spaces. Mr. Richter said the City does allow for compact car parking spaces but there is no provision for larger vehicle spaces. He added that Jewel's parking lot has double lines between the parking spaces to allow extra room for doors opening and larger vehicles. Most people love that little extra room which works out to be approximately 1 foot. Mr. Reece said he has not heard anything through the Chamber either way. Mr. Fowler said that would lessen the number of parking spaces in a given area.

The EDC was not in favor of any changes to this requirement.

Landscaping and Screening

Mr. Richter said the UDO currently requires foundation plantings around all four sides of a new building. That is not always practical and staff is suggesting the requirement be amended to eliminate the requirement from the rear of the building. Mr. Affrunti asked if there would still be a requirement to screen/landscape commercial from residential property. Mr. Richter said that is a separate buffer requirement and it would remain as it is. Mr. Affrunti said Tommy's on Route 14 was required to have landscaping in the parking lot. Mr. Richter said that is a different requirement and Tommy's likely received a variation. They have done a very good job of keeping up that green space.

The EDC supports the change to eliminate the rear foundation planting requirement.

Involuntary Annexations

Mr. Richter said when a property is developed under County requirements, when it is annexed into the City it is accepted in an "as is" condition including the use. Staff is researching language to amortize the removal

of bill boards from a property. Mr. Fowler said if the City is annexing the property it would take away the property owner's right to make money and he thinks the City would be sued. This is not business friendly.

The EDC was not in favor of the change.

Land Uses

Mr. Richter said that staff is reviewing the permitted use chart as well as the special and limited use criteria for all uses within the Ordinance. One of the items that was discussed prior to the EDC-PZC workshop was regarding used Merchandise stores. The UDO has three criteria for used merchandise stores. For all future used merchandise stores, they must demonstrate that they can meet the criteria prior to receiving occupancy. If the used merchandise store cannot meet the criteria, then by Ordinance, they would need to apply for a Special Use Permit. One of the criteria, then by Ordinance, they would need to apply for a Special use Permit. One of the criteria includes a 1,000 foot buffer between used merchandise stores. Mr. Fowler asked if used cars were included. Mr. Richter said no. Mr. Affrunti suggested that there possibly be a maximum number in a block. Mr. Reece said no one wants donated stuff stacked outside of the business. Mr. Haleblian said Richmond has successfully turned itself into an antique shop destination. Mr. Reece said you can't tell from the outside that the stores on Williams Street are resale. Mr. Fowler said there is a market for recycling unusable/unsellable merchandise. Mr. Saidler said there must be money in it. Mr. Affrunti said there is no cost for the product they sell. There is only utilities and rent for the space. Mr. Reece said all of them are surviving and the City should not dictate how many can go in a certain area. Mr. Haleblian said he has been in several of the Good Will stores and they are nice.

Mr. Richter said that one of the limited use criteria for used merchandise stores is that they keep track of their donations and the source. Many businesses have a problem keeping those records and have asked for a waiver from it. Mr. Fowler asked if the gold buyers are required to do that too. Mr. Richter said no because it is not considered resale. Mr. Fowler said it would be better to have consistency. He said if merchandise is donated and they are not paid for it – no record should be needed. But if they are paid for it, then there should be a record. Mr. Reece asked what the penalty is for non-compliance. Mr. Richter said they would go through adjudication and the fine could be \$500 per violation. Mr. Reece said if there are variations granted from that requirement consistently, then the requirement is not needed.

Mr. Richter said Staff will be reviewing the land use charts to make them more streamline for Limited Use or Special Use.

The EDC was in favor of changing the buffer as well as the record keeping for used merchandise stores.

Administrative Adjustment

Mr. Richter said currently all variations go before the PZC and City Council. The idea of having an administrative hearing officer or process for minor variations was discussed at the workshop. There would be a procedure in place – application and notification of the surrounding properties. Mr. Affrunti believed the City will be inundated with variation requests. Mr. Reece asked what would happen if the applicant disagrees with the determination. Mr. Richter said they would have the opportunity to go before the PZC, who would hold a hearing to appeal the determination. If there are several objections, it would be up to the Zoning Administrator to evaluate the objections. He said this process would save time and money for the applicant.

The EDC was in favor of the change.

Signage

Mr. Richter said the PZC asked for staff to look at the neon lighting/signs in windows. They don't feel that it is attractive. Mr. Reece said if there were another group, they may like the neon. Mr. Richter said a business may cover up to 25% of their window space with signs. Mr. Fowler said he does not want any more sign regulations. There are already too many.

The EDC was not in favor of adding more requirements to signs.

Mr. Affrunti said it is good for the EDC to review these possible changes.

Business retention tour updates

Mr. Richter said there were letters sent out to various companies and copies of those letters were given to the members. He said they have set up a tour for Eisenmann on June 12. The Camfil Farr tour will be set up shortly. They were waiting until their renovation project was complete. Mr. Richter said Mr. DeHaan has contacted Brian from Rita Corporation and a tour date will be set up soon.

Mr. Fowler asked if there are any other businesses who recently renovated their building who should receive the plaque. Mr. Fowler suggested Courtesy Motors who just went through a total "face lift" of the building. Mr. Haleblian suggested Anderson and Brilliance Honda in the future.

Mr. DeHaan reminded staff to include the DCEO representative. Mr. Richter said he will also invite McEDC representatives as well as the Chamber Forum for Business Support group.

Mr. Richter said with the last major snow fall took out a mail box for a recently relocated business and there were very upset since they had a large check in the mail box for the mail carrier to take. Mr. Saidler suggested that Mr. Richter invite the owner to lunch just to talk to see how things are going – not necessarily to talk about the mail box. Mr. Fowler said outgoing mail – especially checks – should not be put in the mailbox. There is more fraud that goes on with people taking that mail and making counterfeit checks.

Incentives program update

Mr. Richter said the received a request for a grant from a new bridal shop. Since there were no funds available from this current fiscal year's budget, it was approved by Council but using funds from 2013-14 fiscal year which starts May 1. The bridal shop will be in the Crystal Lake Plaza.

I Shop Crystal Lake program planning for FY 2013-14

Mr. Richter reviewed the current fiscal year's allocations for various items such as the website and certificate contest. He said the Holiday certificate contest was very successful. Mr. Fowler added that it seems that the same people are entering every time. It doesn't seem to be attracting new shoppers. Mr. Richter said he would suggest that they only do that once a year during the Holiday season, increase the winnings, and be able to advertise more for it. This can be done without spending more money than we have in the past with the 4 programs and it would save staff time entering all of the participants' information into our database.

Mr. Richter also suggested several changes including the website host and maintenance which if small can be completed in-house. He would also like to bring in a marketing professional hosting who better understands internet media such as twitter and facebook to market I Shop. Mr. Fowler said the Downtown Association suggested that we continue to Constant Contact e-mail blasts. Many of the businesses do see benefits from those blasts. He suggested that a random drawing be held from the e-mail addresses we have for a gift certificate. The businesses could even give us a certificate to give away.

Mr. Fowler said the I Spot Chris contest seems to have been a waste of time. Mr. Reece said if a marketing consultant is hired they may have an idea on how to do it differently. Mr. DeHaan suggested that a possible winner of a certificate other than for the contests be from the people who post their photo for the I Spot Chris.

Mr. Saidler said we want the potential marketing company to say here are their goals for our programs, what they can do for us with social networks. We also need to be sure they have details on how they are to be measured – their accomplishments through the length of the contract. He said we are hiring creativity. Mr. Richter asked if there were any suggestions. Mr. Reece said go on the Chamber website.

Mr. Richter said it had been previously suggested that there be an I Shop Committee made up of business owners. Mr. Saidler suggested that we contact some of the business owners from the shopping centers. Mr. Richter said there is a business group with the Crystal Lake Plaza.

Organization reports:

Downtown Crystal Lake (Brian Fowler)

Mr. Fowler said they are preparing for the bike race in downtown this July. Mr. Saidler said they need to get the word out. Mr. Reece said he believes that the organizers of the race do that. Mr. Richter said a few days after the race is here in Crystal Lake there is another in Sharon, Wisconsin. He said most of the races will probably be staying here since there really isn't too many hotels, etc. in that area for them.

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

Mr. Fowler said there was no report.

Chamber of Commerce (Gary Reece)

Mr. Reece said there are 2-foursoms available for the golf outing and there are also spaces in the 9-hole golf league. The Springboard Conference is Friday. He added that Bill Daley, former Press Secretary and brother of the former Chicago mayor, will be in town tomorrow.

City of Crystal Lake (Staff)

Mr. Richter showed the approved site plan for the Sage YMCA expansion which recently went before City Council. Also Texas Road House has received their initial permit review comments and we are awaiting revised plans. Anderson VW received Council approval for a few variations that were necessary due to the narrowness of the lot. The Rib House will be relocating to the strip center across the street and will have a drive-through. Mr. Richter said they are progressing nicely with the Crystal Lake retail website. It should be live soon. Finally Mr. Richter and Ms. Rentzsch will be attending the ICSC conference in Las Vegas in May. He asked the members if the meeting in May could be rescheduled to the first Tuesday in June. That way they would be able to review what happened at the conference as well as go over the marketing consultant information. The members did not have an objection. Mr. Richter said an e-mail will be sent out reminding the members of the change.

Report to the City Council

Mr. Richter said he would create the report highlighting the major points discussed during this meeting.

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.