

City of Crystal Lake Economic Development Committee
January 28, 2014 – 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, Dalzell, DeHaan, Leech, Reece, Saidler, and Fowler were present. Members Hymes and Haleblan were absent.

James Richter II, Community Development Manager, was present from staff. Matt Thurow with Alpha Star was also present.

Approve Minutes of the December 10, 2013 Meeting

Mr. Reece moved to approve the minutes from the December 10, 2013 EDC meeting as presented. Mr. Leech seconded the motion. On voice vote, members DeHaan, Reece, Saidler and Fowler voted aye. Members Affrunti, Dalzell, and Leech abstained. Motion passed.

Public participation

Mr. Fowler said he has asked Mr. Thurow to attend the meeting. The members welcomed Mr. Thurow.

Business retention visits update

Mr. Richter reviewed the list of businesses that have been visited by the EDC and discussed several businesses that are being targeted by the Committee. He will keep the Committee informed on tour dates as they become available.

Manufacturer attraction update

Mr. Richter said Cortech is moving forward on the Eisenmann building. Also the City reserved the IRB funds for them if they so choose to come to Crystal Lake. Mr. Fowler said they would also look at the State level for help. Mr. Richter said he will contact Pam Cumpata with the McEDC who may have contacts within the State.

Mr. Thurow said in the past he has contacted Congressman Don Monzullo but it is better to contact their staff and keep hounding them. It seems that it is best to contact the National representatives like Senators Durbin or Kirk than our state representatives. Also don't use the word "gain". They move faster if you use the word "lose". Mr. Thurow added that Illinois is very disorganized and has no blue print to help businesses. That can be a good point since there is no limit.

Business anniversary acknowledgement update

Mr. Richter said the businesses will be acknowledged at the February 18 or March 4 City Council meeting. We have been in contact with the businesses about which date they would prefer. There will not be a reception following the presentation. They will receive a plaque and proclamation.

2013 new business development summary

Mr. Richter said 2013 was the year of the small business in Crystal Lake. New businesses took up 226,000 square feet and there was 194,000 square feet of businesses that relocated. Mr. Leech asked if we had the statistics from previous years. Mr. Richter said yes and that he would send it out to the members.

I Shop Crystal Lake updates (Keith Saidler/Staff)

Mr. Saidler said there are a number of interesting things in the data presented. There were more clicks on the website from McHenry than Crystal Lake. Also 80% of the clicks were on mobile devices. Also most of the advertising through Google was sent to mostly surrounding communities. Mr. Saidler said there was more traffic on the website on Fridays and Mondays especially Black Friday and just before and after Christmas.

Mr. Richter said we received 3,300+ envelopes with 149 applications made on-line. There are usually many envelopes that have more than one application in it. After all of the envelopes are open and information is tabulated, it will be sent to the members.

Mr. Richter said staff is in the beginning budget meetings for the next fiscal year. He said that there is a possibility that the funds for the I Shop contest will not be available for next year. He has reviewed the number of applications received over the past few years and it has not increased significantly to warrant the continuation of the contest. Mr. Richter said they need to come up with something to keep the awareness of shopping local without spending a lot of money.

Incentive updates

Mr. Richter provided a summary of the Matching Grant program applications for the current fiscal year.

Comments and suggestions from the Committee

Mr. Reece asked what is the mission of the EDC. Mr. Fowler said they need to be careful what the City is projecting with having many thrift shops, health clubs, etc. Mr. Reece said the average household income for some of the surrounding municipalities is higher than Crystal Lake. That is why they can attract the higher-end stores.

Mr. Reece suggested that impact fees be looked at. He said there has been a net loss of students in the Crystal Lake districts and there are not many home starts – therefore not many additional students. He said it is expensive to pull a permit with the impact fees.

Mr. Saidler said they are having a problem attracting younger employees because there really isn't anything here for them. They prefer what Chicago has to offer – restaurants, theater, bars, museums, etc. Mr. Leech said it is not attractive to live here and work in Chicago.

Mr. Thurow said that the former WalMart and Cub Foods buildings have been vacant for some time and the center itself looks very dated. There needs to be a vision for all of Crystal Lake to make it a good place to live again. The potential is there. We need to update. Mr. Fowler said staff has been working on that for several years now. There is a conceptual plan for that center since it is the entrance to Three Oaks Recreation Area. He added that staff has been building relationships with business owners at the ICSC for several years and has also changed the perception of the City.

Mr. Richter indicated that the ownership of that particular center poses many obstacles since there is more than one owner. Also the prices that are being asked for the properties are very high and the City doesn't have the means to purchase the property and redevelop it ourselves. Mr. Leech asked for information and he will pass it along to the investors he knows.

Organization reports:
Downtown Crystal Lake

Mr. Dalzell said the annual awards night was held the evening prior to this meeting. He said there were many people there but the weather possibly was a factor in the number who were present.

Mr. Fowler said the Downtown Board would like to work with the Chamber on a seminar to help them with Yelp reviews and how to manage them as well as other social media.

McHenry County Economic Development Corporation

No report.

Chamber of Commerce

Mr. Reece said there is a mixer at Pablo's tonight and the State of the Community luncheon is today. He added that the position of Chamber Director is open. Mr. Richter said if Mr. Reece would like to continue on the EDC that the position he currently holds on this committee is for a Chamber member of which his company is. There is no need to replace him on this committee. Mr. Reece said he would like to continue on the EDC.

City of Crystal Lake

Mr. Richter suggested that a welcome letter from the EDC be created for new businesses thanking them for coming to Crystal Lake. Mr. Fowler said that is a good idea.

Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 a.m.