

City of Crystal Lake Economic Development Committee
April 28, 2015 – 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. by Mr. Fowler.

Roll Call/Attendance

Members Affrunti, Dalzell, Haleblian, Leech, Maule, Reece, Saidler, and Fowler were present. Members DeHaan and Leech were absent.

James Richter II, Planning and Economic Development Manager, Katie Cowlin, Planner, Abby Wilgreen, City Engineer, and Eric Helm, Deputy City Manager, were present from staff. Mary Donner with PACE Transportation was also present.

Approve Minutes of the March 24, 2015 Meeting

Mr. Haleblian moved to approve the minutes from the March 24, 2015 EDC meeting as presented. Ms. Maule seconded the motion. On voice vote, members Affrunti, Dalzell, Haleblian, Maule, and Fowler voted aye. Members Reece and Saidler abstained. Motion passed.

Mr. Richter reminded the members of the tour at C IDEAS today at 4 p.m. Their office is at 125 Erick Street. They also will be presenting a Community Investment Award plaque to the owners for their commitment to the community.

Public participation

PACE transportation presentation (Mary Donner)

Ms. Donner said she is the only PACE employee that lives in McHenry County. She is certain that more buses have been seen around the area lately. Ms. Donner provided maps to the members for McHenry County routes as well as the 6-County regional routes. On the website, if you provide where you start and complete your trip the routes and times will be given to you so you can take public transportation the entire trip within their service area. Ms. Donner said that 67% of McHenry County residents work outside of the county.

Ms. Donner explained the Vanpool system. There are currently no vanpools in McHenry County. She said PACE pays for the vehicle, gas, upkeep, etc. and the riders pay a monthly fee. The drivers are not charged. She added that McRide has also increased its routes.

Mr. Richter asked if there are any employers that are working with PACE in McHenry County. Ms. Donner said no. She added that the employers are interested by the employees aren't. She would also like to work with the City on having a bus shelter on City property. That way they would not need to wait inside another building and possibly be missed. Soon there will be a fixed route from Elgin to the Crystal Lake train station on Woodstock Street using Route 31. It will run every 30 to 40 minutes during rush hours and every hour other times.

Ms. Donner said PACE uses the Ventra card which is used by all of the buses in the area. She said they are also very vested in the toll road expansion which will include a lane on the inside shoulder for buses to use during heavy traffic times.

Mr. Affrunti asked if there is a need for PACE with tourism. Ms. Donner said they need limited seasonal service to places like the Union Railway Museum, and the corn maze. They will be working with the McHenry County Visitors Bureau.

Mr. Richter said they will make it a point to bring up the PACE programs when the EDC takes tours of businesses in Crystal Lake. Ms. Donner asked if she could also be included in the tours. That way she can see what they would need.

The members thanked Ms. Donner for coming to the meeting and sharing the PACE information with them.

Mr. Fowler suggested that since they were discussing traffic that they should adjust the agenda and discuss the City's road construction projects. The members agreed.

Roadway projects updates (Abby Wilgreen)

Ms. Wilgreen showed a map of projects that have been completed as well as the projects that are underway. She said the South Main Street widening is a City and County project. This project will widen Main Street to four lanes from Route 14 to Rakow Road. This project is moving quickly and should be completed by the end of November.

Ms. Wilgreen said the Country Club Road project is the last year of a 3-year project. Also in that area there will be a multi-use path from Wedgewood to South Elementary School. That project should start in the fall or possibly next spring. She said the City had planned to repave the streets in that area after the water main project is complete, but Lakewood has started a project and the City would prefer to wait until they are complete so the new road surface is not damaged by heavy trucks.

Ms. Wilgreen said a very large project is the IDOT project for Route 14 which has two sections. The northern section is from Woodstock to McHenry County College and the other section is from the college south to Crystal Lake Avenue. The northern section has been ongoing since last construction season and the other section's utilities are being relocated at this time. The project should take about two years to complete.

Ms. Wilgreen said the Route 31 project from Rakow Road to Virginia is almost complete.

Ms. Wilgreen said they are constantly updating the information on the City's website as well as sending out information on Facebook and Twitter. In the past the City has allowed businesses that are affected by major road construction to put up additional temporary signage. The businesses would need to get a no cost permit for the sign so we are certain it is placed out of the construction area but still visible.

Mr. Dalzell asked about the impact on the businesses from the road improvements. Ms. Wilgreen said there will be several unmountable barriers that are planned for these projects. She added that IDOT is allowing U-turns which makes for a safer movement into those businesses. Also the City has put up signs showing where driveways are for the affected businesses and in the past we have put ads in the Northwest Herald for the businesses.

Mr. Affrunti asked if there is major roadwork being done, why aren't the power lines being buried at that time. Ms. Wilgreen said it is a matter of money and who is paying for the burial. It would be better if they were buried.

Mr. Saidler pointed out that on west-bound Congress Parkway there is a striped area – not a left turn lane – into the urgent care. He asked if there is enough room for a left turn lane. Ms. Wilgreen said she believes there would be and it could be striped with the annual thermoplastic project. She added that they are investigating a traffic signal at Congress and Exchange. Mr. Saidler said that would be helpful since the larger trucks have difficulty getting out of the side street.

Ms. Wilgreen thanked the members for their suggestions and asked that if they have any concerns, questions or ideas to please contact her. The members thanked Ms. Wilgreen for her time.

Three Oaks Recreation Area and Wakeboard Park update (Eric Helm)

Mr. Helm said he is the point person for Three Oaks Recreation Area and gave the presentation for the wakeboard park that was given to the City Council. He said construction started and they hope to get the cable towers up and running by the end of this season but more likely the beginning of the 2016 season. This use will be on the north lake and will be a great amenity. There will continue to be no swimming in the north lake. Mr. Helm said the building design is complimentary to the existing buildings.

Mr. Helm said people will pay at the main gate for parking and the parking will be validated by the wakeboard park. Mr. Saidler asked if this would be open to anyone. Mr. Helm said yes but if they are not City residents there will be a \$5 parking fee. Mr. Fowler asked if there is any way to eliminate the \$5 parking fee. Mr. Helm said that is part of the revenue stream for that facility.

Ms. Maule said the fee is a large barrier for non-residents who want to have lunch lakeside. Mr. Helm said this is modeled after Independence Grove in Lake County and they hope that with adding various amenities that they can make Three Oaks Recreation Area a weekend destination. He added that there is a fee at Main Beach through the Park District. Ms. Maule feels that Three Oaks Recreation Area and Independence Grove are not similar.

Mr. Fowler said they have received feedback from businesses while taking their EDC tours regarding the parking fee for Three Oaks for employees and business owners who are non-residents. Mr. Reece asked about attendance at the park. Mr. Helm said it has decreased but last summer was cooler and wetter than normal.

Mr. Haleblan asked if the scuba lessons will start this year. Mr. Helm said yes. Mr. Fowler said he doesn't feel that this will become a weekend designation. He said the goal should be for McHenry County residents to come here. Mr. Haleblan asked what percentage of visitor to the area are non-residents. Mr. Helm said about 55%. Mr. Dalzell said he can visualize tournaments coming for the wakeboard park.

Mr. Fowler said this area is discussed a lot on their business tours and believes that more people would come to the area if there was no parking fee involved. This creates a negative feel with the community as to who is allowed to use the park. Ms. Maule said there is also an extra fee for non-residents to use the beach. Mr. Haleblan suggested moving the gate house towards the main lake so there would be no fee for the wakeboard park. Ms. Maule said the initial contact is a barrier. Mr. Fowler said there are businesses within Three Oaks Recreation Area that would benefit from no parking fee. It would make those businesses more successful.

Mr. Richter said the parking fee is meant to help minimize the impact on residents' tax bills.

Mr. Fowler said the role of the EDC is to advise the City on business concerns. They want the businesses within Three Oaks to be successful and on every business tour the parking fee is mentioned.

Ms. Maule asked about seasonal passes. Mr. Helm said they do have them and gave the price ranges.

The members thanked Mr. Helm for coming and answering their questions about Three Oaks Recreation Area.

I Shop Crystal Lake social media update

Mr. Richter introduced Ms. Cowlin and stated that she oversees the I Shop program. The contract with the consultant for the social media updating expired on April 24th. He stated there is \$5,000 in the EDC's budget for the 2015-16 Fiscal Year. Ms. Cowlin said the goal was to have more I Shop users in social media. The numbers were low to start and items were posted on Facebook. She asked what the goal of the Committee is regarding I Shop. Ms. Cowlin suggested that there be more quality posts than quantity. Possibly a few a week about various businesses. She added that the consultant suggested that there be a Thank You campaign for the followers on Facebook. It seems that the postings that are about happenings in Crystal Lake get more likes.

Mr. Richter said the consultant was asked to do posts on businesses and she primarily used her client base. He suggested that a summer intern could take over these tasks for the summer. Mr. Fowler said that had been tried in the past unsuccessfully. He would prefer it to be outsourced and they will be able to run reports showing the information we need. Mr. Reece said a list of businesses in the City should be created and pull a name so the Facebook posts can reference that business for that week. Mr. Saidler asked if we have a list of businesses in town. Ms. Cowlin said no since we do not require a business license.

Ms. Maule said Facebook followers don't want only "what's on sale" posts. Mr. Reece said we need to keep control of what is posted on Facebook. We need final approval. Ms. Maule said even remodeling companies could post before and after photos of their work. People like to see that.

Mr. Richter said they need to give a consultant more direction. Mr. Saidler suggested that we add a "right to cancel after 6 months" clause. We need to get more statistics – best post/worst post of the month, etc. If certain posts are working we should go in that direction. There are other reporting systems that can be used. Mr. Saidler said we need more "meat."

Mr. Richter again inquired on an intern to do the job for the summer to save money, and then hire a consultant for the rest of the year. Mr. Saidler asked what they would do after two months when they go back to school. Mr. Fowler said they tried MCC in the past and that was a failure. Mr. Reece said this is a good use of the money they have budgeted.

Mr. Reece moved to solicit proposals from social media marketing firms for their professional services for \$5,000 for one year with a clause of "right to cancel contract after 6 months." Mr. Saidler seconded the motion. On voice vote, all members voted aye. Motion passed.

Ms. Maul moved to extend the existing contract with Fast Forward Marketing for 30 days until securing a contract with a social media marketing firm. Mr. Dalzell seconded the motion. On voice vote, all members voted aye. Motion passed.

Comments and suggestions from the Committee

Ms. Maul said the Governor has launched a website.

Mr. Haleblan showed the members a half page ad that was recently in the Northwest Herald regarding restaurants in Crystal Lake. Mr. Dalzell asked what we paid for the ad in the Northwest Herald. He said he has contacts there and would be glad to help negotiate ad pricing in the future.

Organization reports:

Due to the length of the meeting, the Organization reports were not given.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 a.m.