City of Crystal Lake Economic Development Committee
July 27, 2010 – 7:30 a.m.
Municipal Complex – Police Department Training Room

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

Roll Call/Attendance
Members Affrunti, Feddersen, Fowler, and Riley were present. Members Bawolek, Johnson, Viger, and Haleblian were absent.

James Richter II, Assistant Director of Economic Development, Fire Chief James Moore, Fire Prevention Bureau Chief Jerry Larsen, and Rachel Palya, Planning Department and Economic Development Intern, were present from staff.

Approve minutes of the May 25th; June 29th; and July 19th EDC meetings
Mr. Riley stated that a quorum was not present and the minutes from the three previous meetings will be approved at a future date.

Public participation and comments
There was no one present who wished to speak.

Presentation by Fire Chief Jim Moore regarding the new Fire Alarm System upgrades
Chief Moore thanked the Committee for allowing him to make this presentation to them. He said the Fire/Rescue Department is proposing a wireless fire alarm system for the City. This system will improve service and lower the monthly costs paid by businesses. Currently businesses pay approximately $1,500 per year and with this system it can be reduced to approximately $1,100 per year. Chief Moore said the City will be sending this out to bid for installation. This system will allow for earlier notification of a fire than it is currently. Currently for systems that are connected to an independent company, that company receives the fire call and they have 15 minutes to contact the City. This system will help reduce the number of false alarms the City responds to in a year. Chief Moore said there are several municipalities that have this type of system including Naperville. He said the City will own the frequency that will be used.

Chief Moore said this system is currently for businesses and not residential. There will be a one time connection fee of $200 while most of the other alarm companies charge almost $300. As another incentive to connect to the City's system the connection fee will be waived for the businesses signing up during the first year. He added that the fee for the service will be locked in until May, 2013 and there will be payment options available. Chief Moore said the range of the system will be 5 miles outside of the Fire Protection District. They hope to have this system fully operational by July or August 2011. He said there will be letters sent out soon to businesses that are currently direct connected to SEECOM. Eventually the wireless system will be mandatory.

Mr. Affrunti said there will be cost savings to the City for the reduction in the number of false alarms. Mr. Fowler said the costs of the system can be controlled because it is the City's system. Chief Moore said it will also reduce the City's fees that they pay to SEECOM for false alarms.

The Committee thanked Chief Moore and Fire Prevention Bureau Chief Larsen for their presentation.

Mr. Richter asked Chief Moore to address the minutes of the last EDC meeting regarding life safety inspections.

Chief Moore said he has spoken with other Fire Chiefs and most do not give advance notice of the inspections due to scheduling. He said a letter or even a phone call doesn't always get to the right person so they would still be surprised when they show up. He added that some communities charge for the inspections but we don't. Chief Moore said he is proposing to put a schedule on the City's website so business owners can check out when their business is tentatively scheduled. Mr. Reece feels that this is a fair way for some communication understanding that the date on the schedule is subject to change because of emergency call volume. Mr. Fowler disagreed and said a phone call would be nice so the business could inform the Fire Department if that is a good time or not. Chief Moore said even if the business is scheduled, the owner could always tell them that this is not a good time and they will reschedule. Mr. Fowler said he is not sure that businesses know they can tell the Fire Department that this is not a good time for the inspection.

Mr. Richter stated he has been on several of the inspections and there have been some phone calls made but the correct person was not notified of them coming. Mr. Reece asked why one business was notified and the others can't. He said to make come effort in communicating is important and asked if there was another name they could give to the inspections such as assessment. Chief Moore said they can't call it something else because if there is a violation legally, the owner can't be given a citation. He said they will be glad to post the information on the City's website on a calendar. Mr. Reece asked when that would be posted. Chief Moore said about October 1, 2010. They have the August schedule set and they will then be in the midst of converting to the wireless fire alarm system. He said last year they did over 900 business inspections and there were no citations handed out.

EDC Projects

I Shop Crystal Lake

Rewards - Website

Mr. Richter said they have been in contact with the Shop QA people and have answers to the questions that were raised at the special meeting last week. He reviewed the items that were previously discussed such as restricting who can sign up for the site; generating a list of businesses; no limit to the number of photos and videos a business can upload. Mr. Richter stating this is a more robust engine than what we currently have. They did receive a bid from the company who revised the I Shop website and they wanted approximately $4000 to upgrade the website plus $50 per month to maintain the site. He said they are working with Shop QA to reduce their cost of creating the website since we are currently customers of theirs.

Ms. Feddersen asked if an e-mail blast can be sent out from this website. Mr. Richter said he will ask them again but there is an opportunity for shoppers to sign-up for business' news letters and e-mail blasts.

Mr. Richter said Ms. Palya is gathering quotes on the rewards cards and is working on the design. The mailing list is being worked on to eliminate out of state addresses and multiple names to one address. He said they don't currently have a roll out date.

Economic Development incentives update

Façade and Commercial Tenant Improvement Program

Current requests – Restrictions

Mr. Richter said they have two pending applications. Yumz will be taking half of the 2nd Wind space which is in the building in front of Showplace Theaters. Ms. Feddersen suggested that 5 Guys Burgers take the remaining space. Mr. Richter said they have a concern with the parking on Friday and Saturday night, plus they need 2,500-3,000 square feet which is no longer available.

Mr. Richter said the second application is from a business that has already completed the improvements which makes it ineligible for this year's program. The business owner has requested to appeal to the City Council.

Ms. Feddersen asked about the no sale tax days for school merchandise. Mr. Reece said it has been all over the news and will probably be well publicized in the media as the time comes closer. Mr. Richter reminded the Committee that it is the state tax that will not be charged but the City tax will be. Mr. Reece asked if the City was going to have something on their website. Mr. Richter said that we can do some web-based advertising to promote Crystal Lake retailers.

Staff projects

Attraction update

Mr. Richter said Family Video is still interested in building their own building. He said the business has a rather large adult movie section and they were informed of the City's restrictive ordinance.

Mr. Richter said CVS is still interested in the corner of McHenry and Route 14 but can't acquire additional property. Also Little Caesar's is interested in returning to Crystal Lake. He added that Good Will is in negotiations for a location on Northwest Highway even though this is a smaller location than what they had submitted for a conceptual review.

Mr. Richter said Tilted Kilt is also interested in Crystal Lake and the former Block Buster will be an auto parts store. He said the Five Guys Burgers will be visiting McHenry County in the next few weeks. Export Fitness is also looking at a site in Crystal Lake.

Ms. Feddersen said she understands that Al & Joe's Deli is working with a bank that is open minded and should be moving forward soon.

Retention update

Business Park Meeting (tentatively schedule)

Mr. Richter said Ms. Palya has been working on holding a business park meeting for Terra Cotta Tech. Ms. Palya said the invitation will be sent out soon and the meeting will be at the end of August at 3:30 p.m. Mr. Richter said he will let the members know the exact time and location when it is finalized so they can also attend if they would like to.

Organization Reports:

Downtown Crystal Lake

Mr. Fowler said there will be construction on the east side of Williams Street. Mr. Richter said it will be sidewalks, trees, etc.

Committee for Business Support
There was no report.

McHenry County Economic Development Corporation
Mr. Richter said he had nothing to report.

City of Crystal Lake
Mr. Richter had nothing additional to report.

Comments from the Committee
Mr. Riley asked about the Three Oaks Recreation Area. Mr. Richter said they are a little behind because of the recent strike but that we should be able to have a soft opening yet this fall.

Adjourn
There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:15 a.m.