City of Crystal Lake Economic Development Committee
January 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, DeHaan, Reece, and Fowler were present. Members Dalzell, Haleblian, Hymes, Riley, and Saidler were absent. There was no quorum present.

James Richter II, Assistant Director of Economic Development, was present from staff. Jack Sebesta, President of McHenry County Youth Sports Association, and Jim Sabo with Crystal Lake Babe Ruth, were also in attendance.

Approve Minutes of the December 6, 2011 EDC Meetings
Mr. Fowler stated that since there was no quorum, the minutes will be voted on at the next meeting.

Public Participation and Comment
Mr. Sebesta gave a Power Point presentation. He said this is the 20th year there will be a baseball tournament in Crystal Lake. His organization had been associated with CABA for 15 years and recently ended this partnership. Now the MCYSA is reaching out to the teams in the community that were associated with CABA to give them an opportunity for the kids to play baseball here locally. Mr. Sebesta said this is a community effort to put on these tournaments and it could not happen without the City of Crystal Lake and the Park District. This started as a Chamber committee and has grown into what goes on today. He said they need over 350 volunteers to put this on every year. Also they give out Justin Schroeder Student/Athlete Achievement Awards which totaled $46,000 in 2011.

Mr. Sebesta said international players stay in local community homes. There are 108 players and usually there are two players per household. It is a big commitment from the resident. He said they will have 8 countries represented in this year's tournament. There will be over 200 teams coming to Crystal Lake and will take up approximately 3500 hotel rooms. Mr. Sebesta said he has been told by Best Buy that these 10 days have the best sales for the year other than the holiday season.

Mr. Sebesta said he is asking for the Committee's support and to spread the word about the home stay for the international teams. They need the support from businesses. He said they receive support from most of the hotels in the area except one, who says they don't need to support this endeavor because the people will come to their hotel whether they contribute or not. Mr. Sebesta added that they do not have the support of District 155 although they do have the support of Crystal Lake Central and Cary-Grove High Schools to use their fields. He said they don't use the fields for free; they do compensate the programs and do limit the use of the fields.

Mr. Sebesta said the tournament will be from July 27 to August 5 with the international teams coming in a day or two before the start. Mr. Fowler said they can also send a letter of support to City Council. He said it should be added to their next agenda.

Mr. Sebesta thanked the Committee for allowing him to make his presentation.

I Shop Crystal Lake

Holiday Gift Certificate Contest update

Advertising for the Holiday and Spring GC Contests

Mr. Richter said the City spent approximately 1/10th of their ad budget compared to past programs and we offered 3% of the prize money and still received over 2,000 entries. Our advertising was comprised of 1 Northwest Herald ad on Thanksgiving Day, social networking, and e-mail blasts. He added the some businesses had the application out for customers to take. Mr. Richter said 83% of the entries came from Crystal Lake. Mr. Reece said they need to get out the information to people outside of this community. Mr. Affrunti said there are many communities who are starting emphasizing shopping within their community that are competing with I Shop Crystal Lake.

Mr. Reece asked what percentage of our e-mail blasts are sent to people outside of Crystal Lake. Mr. Richter said he will check into that.

Mr. Richter said so far there is a very low participation in the Winter Contest and said they have about $5,000 in the budget for advertising. He has spoken with the Northwest Herald and reviewed the options that they had given him. Mr. Fowler said they also have two more programs they need to be concerned with. Mr. Affrunti suggested one ad per week for the last three weeks of the contest. Mr. Reece said to tell the Northwest Herald that there are other options and what we want is one ad per week on Sunday for the last three weeks of each contest. He said anything is doable and added that we need to verify that this ad will go to all subscribers and not just those in Crystal Lake.

Mr. Richter said in the press release sent out there was a photo of the winner included which the paper did not chose to use. Mr. Fowler said there were several double winners and suggested that people can only win once in the contest. Mr. Reece suggested that the winners do a video that they were one of the winners in the Holiday Contest and that could be run on the Northwest Herald website as well as the City's.

ShopQA Automated Call

Mr. Richter said in the Gov QA, the hosting agency for www.ishopcl.com, offers a free program called Robocall. Automated calls to business owners and shoppers could be sent, free of charge, to promote I Shop Crystal Lake. Mr. Fowler said he hangs up on calls like that. Mr. Richter asked how the others in the committee felt. Mr. Reece and Mr. Affrunti said they did not like those types of calls. Mr. Richter asked if doing the Robocall with a very recognizable voice such as the Mayor or an EDC member would be a good idea. Mr. DeHaan thought they should do it and it's free. Mr. Fowler thinks it's too early to decide.

Mr. Fowler suggested that this be tabled to the next meeting since there wasn't a quorum.

Strategy for 2012-2013

Mr. Richter asked the members to start thinking about strategies for next year's program. They have not made their presentation to the Council for the funds and would like to have ideas to present to them. Mr. Fowler said they need to keep the I Shop in front of the consumer.

Mr. Reece suggested sending an e-mail to the businesses about the I Shop program and tell them there were over 2,000 entries in the Holiday contest.

Mr. Affrunti asked about the stickers-on-the-car contest. Mr. Richter said that offer ended. Mr. Fowler said but it could come back in the future.

Incentive grant programs update

Mr. Richter stated that the City Council reviewed 4 grant applications at the last meeting and there was a discussion regarding Olive Tap. They had included the owners as employees as well as two part time employees. A few of the Council members had difficulty with owners being counted as employees. Mr. Fowler said with SBA loans, owners are considered employees. This will impact the small business owner who needs to money most. Mr. Richter said all of the applications he has received meet the requirement on the fixtures alone and the employees are irrelevant. Mr. Fowler said they don't want to make this complicated.

Mr. Reece asked if awarding a grant like this is a plus for getting a loan. Mr. Fowler said it does.

Mr. Richter said this will be placed on next month's EDC agenda.

EDC business visitations/tours

Mr. Richter said they have been working with the McEDC and have come up with a list of businesses to visit. He asked the Committee how many tours should be set up in a month. Mr. Fowler said one a month is good since they want good attendance at them. Mr. Affrunti and Mr. Reece agreed. Mr. Richter asked if there should be a Community Investment Award given at each visit. Mr. Fowler said if a plaque can be given then it should be presented then. He would also like the business anniversaries to continue – possibly 2 presentations per year.

Organization Reports

Downtown Crystal Lake (Brian Fowler)

Mr. Fowler said the Downtown is getting ready for their "Slide-walk" sales and suggested that we take contest applications to the businesses for them to hand out.

McHenry County Economic Development Corporation (Brian Fowler)

Mr. Fowler said it is good that the McEDC is now in Crystal Lake and they are part of the business tours that the EDC takes. Mr. Richter said there was a webinar set up in November which was cancelled and rescheduled for the end of January. He will send the information to the members.

Chamber of Commerce (Gary Reece)

Mr. Reece said the Pride in Crystal Lake award will go before the Chamber's board on Friday. As for Expo – they have sold 113 booths and last year at this time they had only sold 76. The Leaders in Action group had 54 participants. Mr. Reece said the State of the Community will be held on February 3 and the City has two tables. He said the Governmental Affairs policy was recently passed and the Chamber will be sending a letter to the JCAR Committee in Springfield not to approve the residential sprinkler amendment that is pending. Mr. Reece added that membership is up at the Chamber.

Monthly Report to the City Council

Mr. Fowler asked if there needed to be a bullet point report for the City Council since no action was taken at this meeting. Mr. Affrunti suggested that there still be a report sent stating that there were discussions on several things but no action due to a lack of a quorum.

Comments from the Committee

Mr. Affrunti asked if the grant money was used up. Mr. Richter said no, that $47,500 has been granted out of the total budget of $80,000.

Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:40 a.m.