Frank DeToma called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM.

1. **Discuss and Consider Discussion with Frank Polito of Polito Development Corporation about Best Practices for Attracting Developers to South Hadley Falls**

Chairman DeToma introduced Mr. Polito, who is also his cousin. Chair DeToma stated that the Redevelopment Authority (RA) is seeking guidance and information about strategies for attracting new business to the Falls. He also provided a summary of the vision for the redevelopment of the Falls as a “walkable canal village”. Mr. Polito provided background about his company, based originally in Worcester and then Shrewsbury, Massachusetts. They perform a range of construction activities from residential to commercial, as well as some public infrastructure projects. As a developer, he stated that a flat tax rate is a sign that the community is “business friendly”. He noted that South Hadley’s tax rate of $17/$1,000 assessed value was reasonable. Proximity to highways and major transportation routes is also of importance to a company when seeking a place to locate. South Hadley is a little off the beaten path for major commercial or industrial business to consider. Mr. Polito thought the town’s best business sector to develop was residential services and amenities such as medical services, shops and restaurants. Mr. Polito inquired about town owned or RA owned land and/or buildings that were available for sale. He stated that one strategy other towns use is to issue Request for Proposals (RFPs) to develop certain parcels. He’s found this to be a good strategy for town’s to get the type of business they are seeking. He also recommended creating site profile sheets for specific properties to quantify the building space, etc. available. This signals to developers that the town is ready for development. He inquired about any 43D Expedited Permitting process that developers could take advantage of in South Hadley.

Mr. Polito also recommended having an economic development potential assessment done by a professional consultant, sometimes called EDSAT (economic development self-assessment tool). This can help the community understand what types of economic development the market and region could accommodate. He stated that mixed use development is a very big trend across the state and nationally. He says he is seeing some large developments going up, particularly along major roadways. The redevelopment of Spag’s in Shrewsbury is an example of this. He recommended working with regional economic development agencies to get technical assistance for marketing and targeting appropriate developer networks.

Members discussed the demographics of neighboring towns and the possibility of attracting new residents to small and affordable housing development/redevelopment. An arts and
culture district may also be another tool the Town could consider to attract the creative economy. Mr. Polito recommended developing some info about the area for developers and then letting developers talk to property owners. “Start somewhere! Put yourself on the line!” were Mr. Polito’s parting words of wisdom.

2. Discuss and Consider Final URRP Approval by Selectboard
Town Counsel has advised that the Selectboard to now vote to endorse the plan since it has been adopted at Town Meeting. This is on the agenda for their 1/7/20 meeting. Anne will attend to answer any questions.

3. Discuss and Consider Approval of Meeting Minutes from 11/13/19 Meeting
No action was taken.

4. Other New Business (topics which the Chair could not reasonably expect to be discussed/considered as of the date of this notice)
There was no new business.

Meeting was adjourned at 2:15 PM.