



MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, February 27, 2018
7:00 PM

PRESENT: Frank DeToma, Chair; Imad Zubi, Vice-Chair; Diane LaRoche, Clerk; Tony Judge, Treasurer; Win LaVallee, member; Richard Harris, Planning and Conservation Department; Anne Capra, Planning and Conservation Department

The meeting for February 27, 2018 was called to order at 7:10 PM by SHRA Treasurer Tony Judge.

Richard Harris, Planning and Conservation Department Director, provided an overview of the new federal Opportunity Zones Program. The Tax Cut and Jobs Act of 2017 authorized the US Treasury, in consultation with state Governors, to establish Opportunity Zones in qualified Census Tracts, and the South Hadley Falls is within one of these eligible tracts. In O-Zones, qualified Opportunity Funds can make business and real estate investments and receive tax benefits of 3-7% depending on the number of years the so-called opportunity Fund holds the asset. O-Zones are nominated by governors, and cannot be more than 25% of a state's low-income census tracts. Those nominations are due as early as March 21nd, but the deadline is likely to extend into April. Criteria for designation currently include: opportunities, planning, and community demographics, however there is some consideration being given to regional applications. Richard and Anne Capra, Planning and Conservation Department staff, met with Marcos Marrero of the Holyoke Planning and Economic Development Department to discuss the potential for a regional collaboration with Holyoke and/or Chicopee. Investment opportunities may include downtowns; blighted properties which have had some expression of redeveloper interest; incubators and collaborative workspaces; and, industrial parks. The Gaylord Street industrial site may be a good candidate. The SHRA should think about potential sites and projects that may be of interest for this program.

Mr. Judge inquired about how likely this program is to be an incentive to draw new investment to the community. He stated that the SHRA's first priority needs to be completing the Urban Renewal Plan (URP), getting approval from DHCD, and seeking Endorsement at Town Meeting. Tony noted that the community outreach and marketing program needed to get the implement the plan and redevelop the Falls will be a big effort, and that there are more advanced RDAs in other communities that we will be competing against to draw investment. Mr. Harris referred to the City of Holyoke Redevelopment Authority and how they got started.

DISCUSS and CONSIDER Draft Urban Renewal Plan Final Edits and Approval – Chairman Frank DeToma joined the meeting, and made a motion to authorize the Chair to submit the Urban

Renewal Plan to DHCD for final approval. The members reviewed the letter drafted by Mr. Harris to Kathy McCabe, consultant responsible for the draft URP, regarding final edits to be addressed prior to submission to DHCD. Mr. Zubi noted a typo in the letter, which will be corrected by Ms. Capra prior to the Chair's signature tomorrow at Town Hall. Mr. Harris will submit the signed letter to Ms. McCabe via email tomorrow.

DISCUSS and CONSIDER Redevelopment Authority Website – Mr. Zubi stated that Dan called and he will secure “SHRedevelopment.org”, provide the login information, and only bill for the actual cost of the URL registration. The website should be operational within a few days.

OTHER BUSINESS

RDA Staff Support - Mr. DeToma stated that the Planning and Conservation Department staff, Anne Capra and Richard Harris, will be providing staff support to the RDA. Ms. Capra will post meetings to the Town website calendar, prepare minutes, and post them. Other task assignments to be determined.

Historic District Study Outreach Materials – Mr. DeToma stated he had previously sought authorization of \$500 for the design and printing of a poster and flier for the Historic District Study outreach events, however Lucia Foley will provide design services in gratis so the only expense will be for printing. Mr. Judge noted that the proposed Historic District is within the Falls and should continue to be an initiative that the SHRA supports and promotes.

MassWorks Grant for Gaylord Street – Mr. DeToma asked Mr. Harris for an update about the status of the MassWorks grant. Mr. Harris stated that Fuss and O'Neil are currently engaged in developing the engineering plans and survey work, and construction is anticipated for spring/summer 2018. Work will include upgrade and replacement of the water main, a new sidewalk, road re-paving, and improvements to the parking lot on Main Street. The addition of a sidewalk on Gaylord Street may require the elimination of the on-street parking in front of E-Ink. The Town Administrator is in communication with the business about this. Mr. Judge asked why Gaylord Street is the focus of this grant. Mr. Harris noted that the location met the eligibility criteria of the grant program (43D site, Smart Growth Zoning District, URP focus area) which made it the most feasible site. Mr. DeToma noted that Main Street is targeted for transportation improvements. Mr. Harris elaborated that these improvements are will be under the 2020 TIP, and include re-paving, crosswalks, and other bike/ped friendly accommodations.

Mr. Harris stated that the condominium project at 1 Canal Street is moving forward. The Building Permit has been applied for, but the Special Permit needs to be amended at the Planning Boards 3/12/18 meeting for the new entity that will actually own the site.

URP Next Steps – Mr. Judge asked about the timeframe for approval of the plan. Mr. Harris stated that it depends on when DHCD approves it. We can begin a public outreach phase now to generate support for the plan, but the Public Hearing cannot be scheduled until DHCD has approved it. Thereafter, it can go to Town Meeting, most likely for a Special Town Meeting in June or October 2018. Mr. Judge suggested the RDA members conduct individual meetings with select people in town to educate them about the vision of the RDA and URP in addition to several public forums. Rep Scibak would also be an important person to solicit support from.

Mr. DeToma suggested he meet with the Planning and Economic Department staff to discuss a framework for a public outreach process. Ms. Capra stated some sort of presentation would be useful to develop. Several RDA members noted that they already had presentations developed by Ms. McCabe from past community forums, and that they could forward these presentations.

South Hadley and Granby Chamber of Commerce Event – Mr. Zubi stated that the Chamber will be holding a reception on 3/15 from 5-7pm at the Mount Holyoke College Art Museum. Anyone interested in attending should email him and he will register them.

Next Meeting – Mr. DeToma requested that Ms. Capra send out a Doodle Poll to schedule a next meeting date for three to four weeks from now. The agenda should include Judy Gooch for the Master Plan Implementation Committee, who has requested an updated from the RDA. The agenda will also include discussion about the public outreach and community engagement process about the URP prior to Town Meeting.

Mr. DeToma made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:55 PM, seconded by Mr. Judge, and approved unanimously.