

Barry Lee (00:04):

Barry Lee with 92.5 WINC FM, excited to host this second season of the City of Winchester's podcast, the Rouss Review. So twice each month on the second and fourth Thursday, we explore City services, programs, and events, and discuss information that you need to know. So, we're glad you're with us.

New Speaker (00:21):

Up first is the Council BLUF, that's a Bottom Line Up Front recap of the July 28, 2020 Council meetings. At the regular meeting, Council held the second reading and adopted the zoning ordinance text amendment that would modify existing use regulations for the B-1 and B-2 districts to allow for non-intrusive light manufacturing and commercial spaces. These changes will provide an opportunity for Winchester to attract new business investment, create jobs and foster economic growth. Council also discussed raising the fee imposed on criminal and traffic cases that are tried and convicted from \$10 to \$20 as allowed by a recent code of Virginia amendment. A second reading of the ordinance, public hearing and final vote will be held at the August 11, 2020 Council meeting. The general assembly recently amended the Virginia Code to authorize localities to impose civil penalties if a property owner fails to timely submit a plan for demolishing or repairing a derelict property. This amendment establishes a maximum civil penalty of \$500 each month that a plan is not submitted to the locality. Council discussed a proposed ordinance that would amend City Code to provide for this penalty, which would not only serve as motivation for property owners to submit remediation plans in a timely manner, but would also help offset the City's expenses relating to blighted property remediation when the penalties are applied. There are currently several buildings within the city, which meet the derelict building definition and could be subject to the civil penalties. Implementation of this proposed ordinance would assist the City with pursuing remediation efforts with the owners of these blighted properties. A second reading of the ordinance, public hearing and final vote will be held at the August 11th Council meeting. At the work session, Council received a presentation regarding a completed bike share study by the Winchester-Frederick Metropolitan Planning Organization. The study determined that a bike share program was feasible in the city and the report recommended strategies, a startup and logistics plan, and routing recommendations should Council decide to move forward? No action was taken since the agenda item was for discussion only. At the July 14th, 2020 Council Work Session, Winchester Public Schools Superintendent Dr. Jason Van Heukelum presented options to renovate the Douglas Community Learning Center with the plan to begin the project this fall. The most desirable option presented will need an additional \$1.8 million. Since that meeting, City staff developed a draft memorandum agreement and a plan to help get the project started quickly and fund the option in full, while providing funding to complete other minor capital projects in the future. The plan would allow the schools to carry forward their FY20 excess funds, which they always do at fiscal year end, for the completion of DCLC. The total estimated savings is \$2 million since the schools will not be using those carry forward funds for minor capital as they have done in the past and instead will be using it for the DCLC renovation, staff suggested that they be allowed to keep the proceeds of the sale of 12 North Washington Street. Once that property is vacated to replenish their capital funds, the memorandum of agreement will be brought back to the August 11th Council meeting for final vote. Council continued discussions of proposed SMART Scale funding applications for several potential projects since the application deadline was extended to August 17th. The first is a new pedestrian bridge over Millwood Avenue near Mall Boulevard. This project would be coordinated with roadway changes that are being planned for Millwood Avenue between Mall Boulevard and Apple Blossom Drive. The estimated cost of the pedestrian bridge project is \$3 million. The second project includes several priority improvements on Pleasant Valley Road as proposed by the VDOT safety study conducted earlier this year. The estimated cost of the Pleasant Valley improvements recommended for SMART Scale funding is \$5.4 million. If the

applications are approved by VDOT, funds will not be available until 2025 and there is no requirement for the City to provide matching funds. After the discussion, the item was not forwarded to the next Council meeting for official approval, and therefore, the applications for VDOT SMART Scale funding will not be submitted this year. Council continued discussions regarding the possible renaming of Jubal Early Drive. Council doesn't want to add the financial burden of a name change on local businesses during this difficult time and decided to table the discussion until after the COVID-19 pandemic and create guidelines and procedures for potential street name changes in the future. For more information on these topics and to view the agenda packet, or to watch the meeting video, visit the City of Winchester website and click "Council Meeting Agendas" under the "Government" tab.

Barry Lee ([05:20](#)):

Halfway into the year 2020, and history has already been made in several ways, leaving a lasting impact on communities throughout the nation. Today, we're going to focus on one of those history making events and with most things that have happened so far, this one will also have an effect on our community's future. Here with us today is Partnership Specialist Kathleen O'Connell with the 2020 Census Bureau regional team. Thanks for joining us today, Kathleen.

Kathleen O'Connell ([05:46](#)):

Hi, I'm happy to be here.

Barry Lee ([05:48](#)):

We all know that the census takes place every 10 years. Tell us why it's so important.

Kathleen O'Connell ([05:53](#)):

Well, many important decisions are based on census population data. It's used at the Federal level to apportion seats in Congress and determines how many representatives the State of Virginia will have in the House of Representatives for the next 10 years. It's used by states and localities to redraw congressional and voting districts. It also guides the distribution of billions of Federal dollars to local areas like Winchester every year. More than \$675 billion for programs that impact our schools, roads, transportation, health centers, and healthcare, housing, food assistance, and so much more. It's important that each person is counted to ensure our communities have the funding and resources. They need to provide these important programs and services for local residents on a local level. Since the data also informs decisions about where to build hospitals and schools and provides vital data for businesses and local nonprofits when they apply for grants.

Barry Lee ([06:50](#)):

So how's the Winchester area doing with their response rate so far?

Kathleen O'Connell ([06:55](#)):

Well, at this point about 64%, almost 65%, of households in Winchester have responded to the census, which puts the city a little behind our state rate for Virginia, which is 67.3 and a little ahead of the U.S. national rate of 62.6. Our goal is for a very complete and accurate census count and that really depends on everyone's participation. We want each and every person to know that their response matters and will impact the future of their community, the future of Winchester for years to come.

Barry Lee ([07:29](#)):

So what is the deadline? How long do people have to self-report and then what happens next if they don't?

Kathleen O'Connell ([07:36](#)):

Well, we really want people to know it is not too late to respond to the census. You can go online today and complete your questionnaire in less than 10 minutes at www.2020census.gov. Households that haven't responded by early August will receive a visit from a census taker who will collect their information. The final deadline for census response is the end of October on October 31st.

Barry Lee ([07:59](#)):

So, with the COVID-19 pandemic, how's that gonna work?

Kathleen O'Connell ([08:03](#)):

The safety of the public and our census workers is of course, our number one priority. Census takers will be wearing masks, they'll follow local public health guidelines when they visit homes. All census takers, completed virtual COVID-19 training on social distancing and other health and safety protocols before beginning their work in our neighborhoods. To verify the identity of a census taker, you can check to make sure they have a valid ID badge with their photograph, the U.S. Department of commerce watermark, and an expiration date. Census workers will also be carrying Census Bureau bags and other equipment with the Census Bureau logo. And, again, if you respond on your own, it is far less likely that a census taker will visit your home.

Barry Lee ([08:46](#)):

So, the best way to complete the census, and soon if you don't want someone to come to your door, is to do it online, right?

Kathleen O'Connell ([08:53](#)):

Absolutely. Our online form is the fastest and easiest way to respond to the census from the safety of your own home. Simply go to my2020census.gov to respond now. This has been the preferred response method for a majority of people in Winchester. Of the 64.8% of households that have responded, over 50% have done so through our online form. We also have a phone line that's staffed by census response representatives. The number is (844) 330-2020. Again, that's (844) 330-2020. Language support is available in 12 non-English languages for both the online and phone options. Responding on paper is also an option and questionnaires were mailed to residences in mid to late April. No problem, if you cannot find your paper questionnaire, just go online or call.

Barry Lee ([09:48](#)):

Alrighty. And what about security? Can you give us an overview about how the data is stored and how it's used?

Kathleen O'Connell ([09:55](#)):

Yes. So we know this is very, very important. Public trust is paramount for the work that we do. All census responses are confidential and protected by Federal law. Every census worker takes an oath of confidentiality and the Census Bureau will not share your information with any other agency. Rest assured that your information is safe.

Barry Lee ([10:17](#)):

Alrighty. And for those people who may not have internet or computer access, what local options or events are available to them?

Kathleen O'Connell ([10:25](#)):

Well, locally, we're partnering with organizations, such as libraries to provide access for people to complete their census questionnaire in case they don't have internet access themselves. We'll also have census staff available at community locations, such as markets, food pantries, public parks, and churches to provide both information and assistance with completing the questionnaire to the public. Here in Winchester, our staff will be at Jim Barnett Park a couple times each week, and also at local libraries.

Barry Lee ([10:53](#)):

Excellent. Cathy, thanks so much for taking the time out of your busy schedule to join us on the show. Anything else that you'd like to cover before we let you go?

Kathleen O'Connell ([11:01](#)):

Yes. I just want to say thank you to everyone who has responded so far to the census. Thank you for your participation and for being counted. If you have not yet responded, it's not too late. Visit 2020census.gov today. Your response to the 2020 census will benefit Winchester for the next 10 years. That's a really powerful motivator.

Barry Lee ([11:24](#)):

Thanks again, and stay safe.

Kathleen O'Connell ([11:26](#)):

Thank you so much.

Barry Lee ([11:29](#)):

And now it's time for the Now U Know segment where we talk about interesting City of Winchester facts that you may not be aware of or important information that you need to know. This week's segment outlines the various ways that residents and businesses can do business with the City while buildings are closed during the pandemic. Although most buildings are closed to the public, City staff are still available through phone or email during regular business hours. Find department and staff directories on the City's website for a list of contact information. Need to submit paperwork or payments? Drop boxes are available outside Rouss City Hall on North Cameron Street, the Creamery Building on South Kent Street, the Winchester Department of Social Services offices at 24 Baker Street, and outside the transit office in City Yards at 301 East Cork Street. These boxes are checked daily and can be used for dropping off any City-related documents or payments. Rather pay online? The City offers many opportunities to pay bills online for utility bills, personal property and real estate taxes, parking meter tickets, and code enforcement fees. Click the pay online button for links and more information, but please note a transaction fee may be applied by the vendor for some online payment programs and is not a fee charged by the City. If you'd rather use your phone, making a utility bill or tax payment by phone is also available. Find the numbers and the instructions on the City's website. Need help with food, childcare, heating or cooling assistance, healthcare, and cash assistance? Apply online 24/7 using CommonHelp. (<https://commonhelp.virginia.gov/>). You can also apply by phone for all social services benefit programs

by calling 1-855-635-4370 and that's Monday through Friday, 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM. The City offers an online 311 service request system as well for the following services: city tree issues, dead animal and roadway, fire hydrant issue, graffiti, missed trash or recycling collection, pothole, streetlight out, street sign down or missing, water or sewer service issue, and more. Submit a service request, track the progress, and communicate with City staff handling the request. The 311 system can also be used to search the database of frequently asked questions or to ask a question not found in the list. Access the 311 service request portal and FAQs on the City's website. There's a button at the top of the homepage or search for "knowledgebase". Also available using the 311 service request portal are several options for submitting a public records request online. Submit your request, track the progress, and then download the provided documents using the online portal. When the Winchester Parks and Recreation Department programs return after the COVID-19 pandemic, register for them online. A link is available on the Park's web page. For more information on these programs, services and more, visit the City's website at www.winchesterva.gov. Well, if you didn't know before now, you know.

Barry Lee ([14:41](#)):

And last but not least, several announcements to keep you up to date this week. Governor Northam launched the Rebuild VA grant fund program to help businesses and non-profits whose normal operations were disrupted by COVID-19. The types of qualifying small businesses include restaurants, brick and mortar, retail, exercise and fitness facilities, personal care and personal grooming services, entertainment and public amusement establishments, and campgrounds. Businesses and non-profits that are approved for a Rebuild VA Grant may receive up to three times their average monthly eligible expenses up to a maximum of \$10,000. Visit www.governor.virginia.gov/rebuildva for details. Did you know that the four City-owned museums are open? Of course, masks are required and capacity for tours is reduced, but the Stonewall Jackson's Headquarters, George Washington's Office, Abram's Delight, and the Hollingsworth Mill museums are open Monday through Saturday, 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM, and Sundays from 12 noon to 4:00 PM. More information can be found online at www.winchesterhistory.org. The City's public transit routes have resumed regular operating hours. Masks are still required and please do not use public transportation if you are sick. The fixed route and para-transit hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 6:00 AM to 7:58 PM, Saturday, 8:50 AM to 4:58 PM, and then closed on Sundays. Make plans to attend the free Regional Virtual Job Fair for the Northern Shenandoah Valley on August 19th. There are two sessions. Register for the virtual job fair at 12:30 PM or 2:30 PM on Eventbrite. Online job search tools and career resources are also available in the digital library on the Handley Regional Library System website at www.handleyregional.org.

Barry Lee ([16:43](#)):

That's going to wrap it up for this week's Rouss Review podcast. Thanks so much for joining us. I'm Barry Lee with 92.5 WINC FM, and we'll be back on the second Thursday in August at 5:00 PM. So stay safe.