

Barry Lee ([00:03](#)):

Hi, Barry Lee with 92.5 WINC FM, excited to host our second season of the City of Winchester's podcast, the Rouss Review. In this episode, I'm going to provide an overview of this week's Council meetings and catch up with our new Winchester City Manager. And after that, keep listening for a Winchester history lesson, the Now U Know segment, and some current announcements to keep you informed. So, let's get started.

New Speaker ([00:26](#)):

Up first is the Council BLUF, that's Bottom Line Up Front recap of the October 13, 2020 Council meetings. At the regular meeting, Council adopted an ordinance to rezone 654 Fox Drive for a development calling for 39 residential units. Council approved a resolution of sorrow for the passing of former City Council member Richard D Kern. Mr. Kern was a long-time resident of Winchester, a World War II veteran, who was awarded a bronze star and purple heart for his service and a Winchester City Councilor for 16 years. Council considered a proposed ordinance authorizing additional appropriation of funds for necessary expenditures in the current budget year. The appropriation included allocations for CARES Act funding programs and capital improvement projects. After discussions, Council amended the ordinance to increase additional appropriations in an amount not to exceed \$75,000 and direct staff to seek grant funding in order to conduct a housing study. Council also approved a conditional use permit for a neighborhood convenience establishment at 1200 Valley Avenue and added several conditions. The conditions include a six-month review by Council; the establishment must be used for personal services, exclusive of massage; and alcohol sales are not permitted. Council discussed a privately sponsored text amendment designed to give developers more flexibility in the design standards found in City Code for off street parking definitions. The amendment would add new parameters for ingress and egress from buildings to allow for seating and display of merchandise. Current code requires this area to be delineated by curves and this proposed amendment would allow bollards to be installed instead. Council approved the proposed resolution to authorize the creation of a finance committee, a public safety committee and a boards and commissions committee. These committees would be delegated the responsibility of conducting work session business concerning topically specific agenda items prior to being considered by the entire Council during regular meetings. Council believes that these committees will be able to work more closely with staff, devote more time and attention to, and delve deeper into the tasks and projects relating to these specific categories of public business, thereby creating efficiencies, synergies, and thorough work products. Last, Council approved a resolution declaring the City of Winchester's commitment to taking COVID-19 safety precautions to prevent the spread of the virus. These precautions include the widespread use of face coverings and social distancing, enforcing these principles in all City buildings and continuing to inform residents of safe practices, and strongly encouraging adherence to these principles throughout the community. At the Work Session, Council discussed using \$200,000 in CARES Act funding to implement a semi-automated solid waste collection pilot program. Earlier this year, Council expressed interest in moving toward automating collection to help reduce employee injuries and to provide uniform roll-off carts for all households. The proposed pilot program will install semi-automated tippers on the back of eight existing trucks and purchase 1,400 roll-off carts to be distributed to residents in four different areas of the city, including one area in each ward. To qualify for CARES Act funding, the purchases will need to be completed by December 31, 2020. Information learned from the pilot program will be valuable in developing a comprehensive city-wide program in the future. Following discussions, Council authorized staff to start the pilot program using CARES Act funding. For more information on these topics and to view the agenda packet or watch the meeting video visit the City of Winchester [www.winchesterva.gov] website and click Council Meeting Agendas under the government tab.

Barry Lee ([04:26](#)):

Our new City Manager, Dan Hoffman, has arrived in Winchester and is in our Rouss Review studio. Dan, thanks for taking time out of your busy schedule to join us on the show.

New Speaker ([04:36](#)):

Thank you very much for having me, Barry.

Barry Lee ([04:37](#)):

So, I know that you've just been here over two weeks, you're probably still living out of suitcases, but what have you gathered about the Winchester community, so far?

Dan Hoffman ([04:46](#)):

You know, one of the first things I noticed when I was interviewing for the job was the city has really strong bones. I mean, it's a historic city, it's got a great built environment. It's a great foundation for somebody like myself who's looking to come in and really build community. It's also a lot of pride. It's a very welcoming community, but they're very proud of their history of what they've been able to accomplish thus far. And I think it's my job to build off of that, you know, put some meat on the bones, build from that place of strength that Winchester really has already ingrained into its foundation.

Barry Lee ([05:28](#)):

Excellent. Excellent. Now you came from Gainesville, Florida, where you worked for three years as the Assistant City Manager. So, how is Winchester similar and different from Gainesville?

Dan Hoffman ([05:39](#)):

It's very different. Winchester is actually my fourth local government. I worked for DC government, Montgomery County, Maryland, just over the mountain, and in Gainesville, as you mentioned. What I would say Winchester has is a very healthy dialogue about the challenges it's facing. I saw this last night at the City Council meeting where there was a very engaged discussion about a conditional use permit, which might sound like a bit of bureaucracy or system arcane city process. But, you know, it's very important to that particular owner. And I heard City Councilors discuss the merits of it. It was a good constructive dialogue. Some of them agreed some of them disagreed, but at the end of the day, they moved forward. It was a healthy 6-3 vote. And I always tell my elected bodies, you don't have to have a unanimous vote all the time. Sometimes, it's really healthy to have a 6-3 or a 7-2. That's totally okay. And I see that as part of the dialogue in Winchester. Folks have a healthy dialogue, they want to address challenges. They're open to change, but they're very proud of what they've done, but they're going to talk through it and they're going to come up with a solution and see it through.

Barry Lee ([07:04](#)):

You've probably already covered some of this in your opening statement, but, anything else about Winchester that made you interested in this job?

Dan Hoffman ([07:12](#)):

Well, personally, it brings me back to the region. So I lived in the DC area for about 20 years. My mom still lives in Tacoma Park, Maryland. My sister is in Fairfax. My mom is already looking for a place to live out in Winchester. So, personally it brings me back to a region I really love. I love all four seasons and

professionally, this is a place where I can really build community. It's a, you know, I know someone might look at my resume and wonder 'is he just looking for a bigger place?' 'Is this a stepping stone for something?' It is absolutely not. You know, if I'm already about to close on a house. I intend to be here for as long as they're going to have me. So, it's a great place to not launch something, but really finish something.

Barry Lee ([08:06](#)):

Well put, well put. So, what have you been doing so far since September the 26th?

Dan Hoffman ([08:12](#)):

Lots of introductions. Lots of listening and that's really what I think any new City Manager needs to do. Come in, listen, don't make a bunch of snap decisions. Any City Manager that comes in and makes a bunch of quick snap decisions is purely coming from a place of ego. And it's not that I don't have opinions. It's not that I don't have my own ego that I have to keep in check, but it's this is really a time for me to get to know the staff. To get to know the residents. I am coming in from the outside, so I need to sit down, listen and learn for a bit before I can chart a path forward.

Barry Lee ([08:54](#)):

So, tell us a little bit about your beliefs, your philosophies as a City Manager, and what do you want our community to know about you?

Dan Hoffman ([09:03](#)):

I learned a good bit from my last City Manager I worked worked for and he used a phrase: 'building community' frequently. That's what I, and you'll hear it, you'll hear me use that phrase a lot. I want to come to a place and build community, but, that means building trust. So, whether it's my staff, whether it's the residents. I'm not going to be able to say yes to everything, we don't have a money tree out back. There's going to be tough decisions ahead. And if they don't trust that I'm listening, if they don't trust that I have the best interest of Winchester in mind, and if they don't trust that I care, it's all going to be for not, and I won't be here for as long as I would like to be. So, this is one of those love all, serve all types of types of jobs. I work for thousands of bosses. Every resident in the city, every City staff person and all nine Councilors. So, you really have to build community by building trust.

Barry Lee ([10:19](#)):

You're coming in at a pretty difficult, critical time with this COVID-19 economic hardships, revenue losses, high unemployment. I mean, the list goes on. So, in light of all that, what challenges is the Winchester City government facing currently?

Dan Hoffman ([10:39](#)):

I think you just named them all, actually. So, COVID is an unprecedented challenge for any jurisdiction. In Gainesville, I oversaw much of our response to the economic stimulus programs that we did for businesses. A lot of the enforcement of emergency orders. And this is the type of situation where you just have to, again, have trust, do what you feel is best and, then monitor and watch and hope because some of these things, no one's ever done before. We're now facing, we're going into the fall with a lot of uncertainty. You know, I just had a meeting about our budget schedule going into the next year. By April 27th of next year, we've got finalize a budget so we can get the tax bills out and who knows what's going

to happen between now and next April. We are going to approach the path ahead with caution, with care, but also with, with the degree of optimism. I think if the outlook is purely gloomy, if we believe things will be bad, then they'll find a way to be bad. But if we try hard, if we do what we feel is best for Winchester, difficult as it might be, we just have to hope that Winchester pulls together and pulls through. And I believe it will.

Barry Lee ([12:12](#)):

You pretty much just answered that next question about what you hope to accomplish in the next six weeks before the new year. And that pretty much sums that up.

Dan Hoffman ([12:20](#)):

Yeah. Listen, learn, lay out the path. Really between now and the new year, the City Council's in the midst of an election. I may or may not have new Councilors. That's for other prognosticators to figure out. They're going to be a lot of things that we have to take in stride as City staff and a City Manager. So, listen, learn, lay out the path.

Barry Lee ([12:48](#)):

Tell us a little bit about your family.

Dan Hoffman ([12:50](#)):

Next May will be my 20th wedding anniversary. I've got two boys, 15 and 12, at Handley and Morgan, and, almost as important, although he would, I'm sure he would disagree, is Murdoch the dog who will be in tow. They're still moving up from Florida. So they're on the way up, almost literally as we speak. And, they're very excited. They're very excited too about this next chapter. They're resilient. You know, kids are a lot more resilient than we give them credit for. I couldn't do this without support of a spouse who has followed me a bit around the country and two kids who have managed those moves as well as I think any child could.

Barry Lee ([13:48](#)):

Awesome. Awesome. Well, it's a pleasure to have you with our city as our new City Manager and thanks for being on the show. And I'm sure, we're going to be chatting with you again.

Barry Lee ([13:59](#)):

Thanks a lot, Barry. Alright. Dan Hoffman, our new City Manager. Up next, is the Winchester 101 segment with Tim Y the History Guy. Tim...

Tim Youmans ([14:07](#)):

Hey, this is Tim Y the History Guy bringing you another episode of Winchester 101. This time we look at the history of Winchester government, particularly beginning in 1871, when Virginia has established the creation of independent cities for many former large towns in the state. This was during the reconstruction period, following the Civil War. In 1874, the town of Winchester became the City of Winchester. Winchester is one of 38 independent cities that currently exist in Virginia. There were more of them in the past, but some cities could not remain financially sustainable on their own, so they reverted back to town status where they are again, part of the county that either surrounds them or joins them. As examples, the City of South Boston reverted back to being a town in Halifax County in

1994. The City of Bedford reverted back to being a town in Bedford County in 2013. Winchester was a town in Frederick County, much like Stephens City in Middletown are today. It is noteworthy that the Frederick County seat remains within the independent City of Winchester. This makes sense, given the concentration of services in the city and the presence of the city and county Joint Judicial Center downtown where many law firms are concentrated. There are only 41 independent cities in the entire United States. Only Baltimore, Carson City and St. Louis are located outside of Virginia. Of the 38 independent cities in Virginia, Richmond is the only one that does not use the council-manager form of government. It changed to a strong mayor form of government in 2004. This means that the administrative leadership of the city could change every four years if the Richmond mayor does not get reelected. In cities, such as Winchester, a city manager may remain employed over the span of many elected mayors and Council presidents. More about that in a minute. Staunton and Harrisonburg to the south of us, also operate under a Council-Manager form of government in 1908. Staunton was the first city to hire a city manager. Although, Sumter, South Carolina was the first U.S. city to implement the council-manager form of government. In 1912, Winchester adopted the council-manager form of government in 1916 and hired Arthur Fields as its first city manager. On March 21st of 1916, he resigned that position in August of 1918 to serve in World War I. Fields would return to be city manager in 1935. Following the terms of city managers, Trier, Dettra and Pilcher. After Fields resigned a second time, there was a period when three city managers each serve the city for long terms. The first was Lee Grant who held the position from 1939 until 1967. Upon Grant's retirement, his assistant Wendell Seldon served as city manager from 1967 to 1986. The third longest serving city manager was Ed Daley, who served from 1986 until 2007. Between them, they guided the city over a 68-year period. Winchester has had a total of 13 permanent city managers, including Dan Hoffman who began in September of 2020. Eden Freeman was the first woman city manager serving from 2014 until 2020. There were also eight known interim city managers who filled in between the permanent hires. Well, that's it for me, Tim Y the History Guy until the next episode of Winchester 101.

Barry Lee ([18:14](#)):

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 you need to know. This week's segment explains the council-manager form of government. The City of Winchester is a council-manager form of government. Now, this system combines the strong political leadership of elected officials in the form of a council with the strong managerial experience of an appointed local government manager. The form establishes a representative system where all power is concentrated in the elected council and where the council hires a professionally trained manager to oversee the daily operations and delivery of public services. The mayor and council is the legislative body and its members are the community's decision-makers. Power is centralized and the elected mayor and council, which approves the budget and determines the tax rate, for example. Council focuses on the community's goals, major projects and such long-term considerations as community growth, land use development, capital improvement plans, capital financing, and strategic planning. The city manager is hired to serve the council and the community and to bring the benefits of training and experience in administering local government projects and programs on behalf of the governing body. The manager prepares a budget for council's consideration, recruits hires, and supervises the government staff, serves as the council's chief advisor, and carries out the council's policies. The council and community count on the manager to provide complete and objective information, pros and cons of alternatives, and long-term consequences. And if you didn't know before, now you know.

Barry Lee ([19:54](#)):

This transcript was exported on Oct 15, 2020 - view latest version [here](#).

In this final segment, here are some special announcements to keep you up to date. Halloween is right around the corner. Please be aware that the City government does not regulate, schedule or cancel trick-or-treating. In the past, the Winchester Police Department has recommended a date and time for safety purposes, but when trick-or-treating occurs in the city is up to individual neighborhoods and families. If you go trick-or-treating, please follow all CDC and Virginia Department of Health guidelines. And here are some important deadlines that you need to know for voting in 2020. The registration deadline has passed, but the last date to request an absentee ballot is October 23rd. The last day to vote early in person is October 31st. For more information, or to request a ballot in Virginia, visit elections.virginia.gov. Winter right around the corner. Any city resident help with heating their home can apply for fuel assistance through November 13th. Apply online at commonhelp.virginia.gov/access. Or you can call (855) 635-4370. The City is currently seeking three Winchester city residents to serve on the board of equalization. Candidates must be current or former professionals in the real estate construction, financial or legal fields. The board meets for two or three days each year to review or hear complaints regarding real estate assessments. Please apply today as members must be in place by the end of the year. The Wentworth Drive Improvements Project has resumed after a brief delay due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Road closures are expected in intervals throughout the project. Check the City's road closure webpage at www.winchesterva.gov/roadclosures each week for the upcoming schedule, or you can sign up for the City's notification system to receive a text, email, or a phone call when closures are scheduled. Visit www.winchester.va.gov/getalerts for details and to register.

Barry Lee ([22:00](#)):

Well, that's it for this week's Rouss Review podcast. Thanks so much for joining us. I'm Barry Lee with 92.5 WINC FM. We'll be back on the fourth Thursday in October at 5:00 PM. So long for now.