

Music ([00:00](#)):

[Intro music]

Barry Lee ([00:04](#)):

Hi Barry Lee with 92.5 WINC FM, excited to host the second season of the City of Winchester' podcast, The Rouss Review. In this episode, I'll provide an overview of this week's Council meetings and talk with the City's Human Resources Director about career opportunities. After that, keep listening for some current announcements to keep you up to date. So let's get started.

Barry Lee ([00:25](#)):

Up first is the Council BLUF, a bottom line up front recap of the October 27, 2020 Council meetings. At the regular meeting, Council adopted an ordinance authorizing additional appropriation of funds for necessary expenditures in the current budget year. The appropriation included allocations for CARES Act funding programs, capital improvement projects, and \$75,000 for a housing study. Council adopted a privately-sponsored ordinance authorizing an amendment designed to give developers more flexibility in the design standards in the City Zoning Ordinance 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. At the Work Session, Council discussed several conditional use permit requests for specific properties in the city, an ordinance to rezone a parcel of land next to the Laurel Center on North Cameron Street, and a Zoning Ordinance text amendment regarding signage within the Medical Center District. All items were forwarded to the November 10, 2020 Regular Council meeting for official vote. Council discussed a proposed ordinance to rezone 6.23 acres at 222 Spring Street to allow for 192 multifamily residential units and two commercial buildings along the Spring Street frontage. The Comprehensive Plan identifies this area as a redevelopment site where Planned Unit Development is encouraged. The owner will develop the front portion with commercial development as was done along the east side of Spring Street, where Roy Rogers and Tropical Smoothie are located. No connections to Greystone Terrace are proposed. After discussing concerns about density, traffic, and impacts to the adjacent neighborhood, Council decided to forward the current proposal to the November 10th meeting [for first reading] recommending denial. However, the developer will have the opportunity to address the concerns before the official vote. And Council retains the option to table the item if the developer requires additional time. For more information on these topics and to view the agenda packet, or to watch the meeting video, just visit the City of Winchester website and click Council Meeting Agendas under the Government tab.

Barry Lee ([02:53](#)):

Throughout 2019, Winchester's unemployment rate stayed below 3%, which was lower than the national average. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the area, unemployment rose to 9.9% in April [2020]. Well, thankfully that number has continued a downward trend since, and by the end of August, the unemployment rate for Winchester was 4.7%, which means there are still many local residents in need of a job. So, here to talk about available positions with the City of Winchester government is Human Resources Director Paula Nofsinger. Welcome to the show, Paula.

Paula Nofsinger ([03:27](#)):

Hi Barry. Thanks so much for having me.

Barry Lee ([03:30](#)):

Well, I'd like to talk about the types of jobs that the City has available right now, but first, tell me about the last six months. How did the pandemic affect human resources here at the City?

Paula Nofsinger ([03:40](#)):

That is a great question because, as you know, we continued our services, so our employees continued to work through the pandemic. Our first priority was the safety of our employees. We secured all the various types of personal protective equipment required for the different positions we have. We modified our workspaces with plexiglass and enhanced our sanitizing methods and tools. We were also very fortunate to have several positions that could telework. So, we set up employees to do that. And for employees who had to work from our offices, we were able to stagger shifts so that the number of employees in the office at one time was minimized. Finally like a lot of other employers, we conducted virtual meetings and worked electronically.

Barry Lee ([04:29](#)):

Excellent. Excellent. So, you're hiring, which is great news, but what jobs are you finding hard to fill right now?

Paula Nofsinger ([04:36](#)):

You know, we do have a few that I would like to mention. One is an electrician in our Public Services Department and we have a few in our Department of Social Services. They are a Family Services Specialist, a Benefits Program Supervisor, and a CSA Coordinator. And of course we are always looking for Firefighter/EMT and Police Officers.

Barry Lee ([04:58](#)):

And what type of qualifications to candidates need for those jobs?

Paula Nofsinger ([05:02](#)):

Each of these positions have unique experiences, certifications or degree requirements. So, all of those details along with all of our other open positions can be found on the City's website [www.winchesterva.gov].

Barry Lee ([05:15](#)):

Okay. And what types of benefits does the City offer? Let's start with the big one, health insurance.

Paula Nofsinger ([05:21](#)):

Of course, the City offers a bundled health care plan. So that means it includes medical, dental, vision, and prescription coverage. We are very fortunate to have affordable rates for our employees and their families. In fact, we are the only local government in the region that offers free health care for our standard plan for our employee-level coverage.

Barry Lee ([05:47](#)):

Excellent. Wow. And what about paid time off and sick leave? That's pretty important these days.

Paula Nofsinger (05:52):

Yes, it is. We offer a generous, paid time off program for employees to use for vacations, intermittent days off, brief illnesses, school functions, whatever the reason. We also have 13 holidays in addition to other leave like military, civil and bereavement leave.

Barry Lee (06:11):

And what about retirement? Do you offer retirement benefits?

Paula Nofsinger (06:14):

Yes, we do. The City participates in the Virginia Retirement System (VRS) and that also includes life insurance. The City will contribute 5% of our employee's salaries and then the employee contributes an additional 5% towards the plan. The life insurance is valued at two times the employee's annual salary.

Barry Lee (06:34):

And Paula, what about short-term disability?

Paula Nofsinger (06:36):

I'm very proud of this one. The City provides a short-term disability plan to all of our full-time employees. The benefit is 60% of the employee's wages up to six months. If for some reason the employee needs longer than six months, the Virginia Retirement System offers a long-term disability plan.

Barry Lee (06:56):

Well, I mean, that's all the benefits I can think of. Is there any that I've missed or left out?

Paula Nofsinger (07:01):

Oh, there are a lot more that we offer. We have a lot of optional benefits that our employees can choose from to pay for through payroll deductions. We have a cancer critical illness, accident protection, flexible spending accounts for medical and dependent care. We offer identity theft, legal protection services, and we also offer a Roth IRA, 457 deferred compensation accounts.

Barry Lee (07:27):

Oh, that's a big, big list. And a lot more than I expected.

Paula Nofsinger (07:32):

It's important to the City to take care of our employees so that they can take care of their families. They work hard for the citizens and visitors of the city to provide these essential services.

Barry Lee (07:42):

So, let's talk about part-time jobs. Do you have many of those and do they receive the same benefits?

Paula Nofsinger (07:49):

We do have a few part-time positions with limited work hours or timeframes, but those positions are not eligible for benefits. We are looking for part-time Lifeguards or Maintenance Techs to help us out.

Barry Lee ([08:03](#)):

Alrighty, thanks Paula so much. This is some great information and I hope it helps encourage some of our local residents to apply for a vacancy and either get a leg up or get back on their feet. So, if someone finds a vacancy that they're interested in, what happens after they apply what's the application process?

Paula Nofsinger ([08:19](#)):

Sure. We are actively recruiting all of our open positions. Each position may have a slightly different step here or there, but in general candidates that meet the qualifications will be contacted for an interview is the first step of the process. And, of course, our public safety positions and social services positions are much more involved.

Barry Lee ([08:39](#)):

Great, good information. And before we let you go, anything else that you'd like to add?

Paula Nofsinger ([08:44](#)):

I would just say the City is a wonderful place to work and anyone who's interested in applying, please do.

Barry Lee ([08:51](#)):

Excellent. Paula Nofsinger, thank you very much for spending the time with us. We appreciate it.

Paula Nofsinger ([08:54](#)):

Thank you.

Barry Lee ([09:00](#)):

And in this final segment, here are several announcements to keep you informed. Over the past two months, the City of Winchester has participated in the Virginia Department of Emergency Management's new Health Equity Pilot Program. The program provided staff training, PPE and public health information for distribution in underserved and vulnerable areas in Winchester, especially in areas in need and at-risk of contracting COVID-19. Staff distributed hand sanitizer, cloth masks, and health safety information in English and Spanish to 15 areas. For the third round of the City's CARES Act Emergency Grant Program, the City of Winchester will be awarding grants of up to \$10,000 to eligible locally-owned businesses and 501(c)3 non-profit organizations that have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. New this round, businesses and non-profits that received funding from a previous round of the grant program are eligible to apply again with new expenses. Visit Winchesterva.gov/latest-news for more information, and to apply. Application deadline is November 13th at 5:00 PM. If you are past due on your City of Winchester utility bills due to income loss caused by the COVID 19 pandemic, apply for assistance through the City's CARES Act Utility Bill Assistance Program, which is managed by the United Way of the Northern Shenandoah Valley. Help with mortgage or rent payments is also available. There are approximately 1,200 city residents past due on their utility payments. To check for eligibility and to apply online now, visit the United Ways CARES Act Rent and Utilities Assistant Program webpage at www.unitedwaynsv.org. The 2020 curbside leaf collection season will begin on November 2nd in Area 2. Visit the Public Works page on the City's website for details, and to find your area number. City offices, the Joint Judicial Center and the Jim Barnett Park Rec Center are going to be closed on Veteran's Day, November the 11th. Also, WinTran routes and yard waste

collection are canceled on Veteran's day. Winter is right around the corner, so residents needing help with heating their home can apply for fuel assistance through November 13th. Apply online at commonhelp.virginia.gov/access or call (855) 635-4370. Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, restrictions applied by phase three of Virginia's reopening plan, and for the safety of the community, the City has canceled the 2020 Holiday Parade and Tree Lighting Ceremony held annually in Old Town Winchester. In its place, [singing] happy holiday, happy holiday. A light show in Jim Barnett park called Holiday Lane will be available for our community to experience for free and from the safety of their vehicle. The lights and holiday scenes will be installed around the road that meanders through Jim Barnett Park from Oak Drive, past the dog park and ending near the Rec Center on War Memorial Drive. The lights in the park and holiday lane show will be available from 5:00 PM to 8:30 PM, seven days a week, November 23rd through December 20th. And who knows, maybe the big guy, HO HO HO, will show up too. And last but not least, we urge you not to let your guard down as COVID-19 cases in Winchester are rising. Please, please remember to practice the three W's: wear a mask, wait until you're able to social distance and wash your hands often. If we all do our part, we can protect each other and slow the spread.

Barry Lee ([12:50](#)):

So, that's going to do it for this week's Rouss Review podcast. Thanks for joining us. I'm Barry Lee with 92.5 WINC FM. We'll be back on the second Thursday in November at 5:00 PM. So long for now and stay safe.