

Barry Lee (00:03):

Hi. Barry Lee with 92.5 WINC FM, excited to host the final episode in the second season of the City of Winchester's podcast, The Rouse Review. In this episode, I'll provide an overview of this week's Council meetings and talk with a member of the City's Service League, Michael Recycle, about an interesting trash collection pilot program. After that, keep listening for some current announcements to keep you informed. So let's get started.

New Speaker (00:28):

Up first is the Council BLUF, a Bottom Line Up Front recap of the December 8, 2020 Council meetings. At the regular meeting, Mayor Smith presented two 2020 Mayor Excellence Awards to Kira Scala and Hideaway Cafe for their selfless service to the Winchester community, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Council adopted an ordinance that would amend section 20-26 of the City Code to allow the police department to accept designations from property owners, lessees, custodians, or anyone lawfully in charge of private property to issue and enforce trespass notices on their behalf. Virginia code authorizes localities to establish a procedure in which owners, lessees, custodians, or any other person lawfully in charge of private property to designate the local law enforcement agency as being in charge of the property for the purpose of enforcing trespass notices. These designations are granted to the localities law enforcement agency voluntarily in writing and kept on file at the agency in conjunction with this proposed ordinance. The Winchester Police Department will also implement an internal policy, documentation procedures and standardized forms for carrying out this public safety service. The City's FY20 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report or annual audit was presented to City Council by a contracted independent consultant. The audit ensures the City is compliant with multiple local, state and federal requirements and takes an in-depth look at the City's internal controls and expenditures. The consultant announced that the City had a clean audit opinion with no findings and that audit designation is quote, as good as it gets, unquote, when it comes to government fiscal management. At the work session, Council continued discussions on the proposed ordinance to rezone 6.23 acres of land at 222 Spring Street for a Planned Unit Development for 198 multi-family residential units, and two commercial buildings. Council forwarded the proposed rezoning ordinance to the January 12, 2021 regular meeting for a first reading. Council also discussed the draft resolution which would add the responsibility of reviewing the City's various memoranda of understanding and agreements to the boards and commissions committee, as well as create a fourth committee for planning and economic development discussions. The purpose of this committee would be to review and deliberate matters involving the subjects of planning, zoning, and economic development, and to make the appropriate and reports on those matters to the full Council. Council forwarded the proposed resolution to the January 12, 2021 meeting for a vote. And 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 (03:20):

In 2019, when we launched this podcast, our first guest on the show was Michael Neese, the City's Refuse and Recycling Manager or AKA Michael Recycle. So, it's only fitting that we close this era of the podcast with none other than Michael Neese. Mike, welcome back to the show.

Michael Neese (03:38):

Thanks for having me.

Barry Lee ([03:38](#)):

So the very first podcast episode was all about recycling changes. And now nearly two years later, you're back to talk about trash collection changes. So, what's this, I hear about a new pilot program.

Michael Neese ([03:50](#)):

We've got four pilot areas in the city. Each one of the neighborhoods is about 200 homes and we have three different can sizes that they're able to choose from. A 95-gallon, a 65-gallon and a 35-gallon. And these are made to be lifted by machines instead of what we're doing now, which is manually lifting all the containers.

Barry Lee ([04:10](#)):

So why now, why start this program?

Michael Neese ([04:14](#)):

For years, we've been doing the manual lift method and it just leads to lots of worker injuries. It's repetitive lift, up to 75 pounds, a thousand times a day. We can add more people to that to reduce the amount each individual's lifting, but then you just have more people for more injuries. So, trying to use technology to our benefit. The cans also have a fixed lids and because of the lifting mechanism, it prevents litter and loose things from blowing around to keep our city cleaner as well. The main thing, I guess, we touched on a little bit earlier is these four areas. We chose them because it represents the four different wards so that we were trying to have an equal and fair distribution of them. We also chose them because of the conditions of the road to see what's going to work for our vehicles as well, chose high density areas, low density areas, places with curb, gutter, median, places with just sidewalk, places with just curb places with no sidewalk and curb. Trying to get all the variables.

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

So specifically, where are the four areas and why were those areas selected?

Michael Neese ([05:20](#)):

The four areas are Kent Street and Highland for one, that's area to area. One is on West Cork behind the old hospital. Area three is Cedarmeade and area four is down at the end of Papermill and Pleasant Valley.

Barry Lee ([05:38](#)):

Alrighty. And is there a cost for residents to participate in the program and do they have to participate?

Michael Neese ([05:43](#)):

They don't have to participate. I will try to persuade them. We are trying to collect as much data as possible. The people that don't want to participate, I really try to persuade because we want to be sure we include any problems or negative data as well. If you don't give it a try, we can't figure out if there's problems that are solvable or insolvable.

Barry Lee ([06:05](#)):

Sure. So, you've begun distributing the roll-off cards to those in the pilot area. What will they be getting and what do they need to do different?

Michael Neese ([06:14](#)):

The only thing they need to do differently is instead of using the trash cans they had been using is to start using these cans.

New Speaker ([06:21](#)):

Okay. Alrighty. And, well, anything else change regarding collection for the residents that are going to be participating in the program?

Michael Neese ([06:28](#)):

No. No other changes. Not in scheduling, materials. No other changes. Just the container.

Barry Lee ([06:33](#)):

Alrighty. Alrighty. So how long do you expect, Michael, the pilot to last and what do you hope to figure out by the end?

Michael Neese ([06:40](#)):

We don't have a fixed date for the end. That's because if it just turns out terrible and everyone hates it and it's not right for our community, we can just stop. And ,hopefully though, instead, we'll find lots of little problems that we can solve. So until we've solved all the problems, worked the kinks out of the system.

Barry Lee ([07:00](#)):

Very good. So if you do determine that the program is in fact successful based on the criteria that you just mentioned and also feedback from residents, when do you expect to be able to expand the program to some more areas?

Michael Neese ([07:12](#)):

When do I expect? Oh, that would be when we have funding for the program. So when council approves funding. Yeah. So that's when we'll go.

Barry Lee ([07:20](#)):

All right. Well, this sounds like an exciting change that could have a lot of benefits for both the residents and our city. Looking forward to seeing how this works over the coming months. Anything else you'd like to cover while we have you here at the mic?

Michael Neese ([07:33](#)):

Oh, just thanks for this opportunity. Again, it's been fun these few years. Uh, the times we've been on and been able to chat. Gonna kind of miss it.

Barry Lee ([07:41](#)):

Oh, well, thank you. Thanks so much for being here. Thanks for all the hard work that you and your crew do each and every day. In all types of weather, you're out there picking up in the community's trash and recycling. And for that we say, thank you, stay safe and stay warm.

Barry Lee ([07:54](#)):

Thank you.

Michael Neese ([07:56](#)):

You too.

Barry Lee ([07:56](#)):

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 Now U Know segment focuses on the new local and state programs relating to past-due utility bills, which in the city relates to water and sewer services. First, assistance is available for city residents that are past due on their water and sewer bills. The City is receiving CARES Act funding to provide grants to those who have been negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and are unable to pay their bills. Applications should be submitted as soon as possible. Please visit the City's website at [WinchesterVA.gov/utilities](http://WinchesterVA.gov/utilities) for details, and to apply. In addition to the CARES Act funds that the State of Virginia has made available to help pay for water and sewer bills, there are also some new requirements from the State that we must inform you about. There is a state-wide moratorium or restriction that prohibits disconnecting utility to residential customers due to non-payment of their bill. This restriction will remain in place until the governor determines that the economic and public health conditions have improved such that the prohibition does not need to be in place or until at least 60 days after the current state of emergency ends. But note that the City Council may be allowed to approve an exemption to this requirement in the future, if they desire. Also, all customers that have a 30-day past due balance on their utility account are eligible for a COVID-19 repayment plan. The plan terms options can range from six months to 24 months, based on the customer's preference. Customers who qualify for the COVID 19 repayment plan will not be charged any new deposits, down payments, late fees, interest charges, or penalties, and none shall accrue during the moratorium. To be eligible for the COVID-19 repayment plan, a customer must attest that he or she has experienced financial hardship resulting from the COVID 19 pandemic. This does not mean that your bills are not due or that the amounts owed will be waived or forgiven. Rather, qualifying customers will just have more time to pay the past due amounts. If you're interested in a repayment plan, please contact Emily Lamb at (540) 667-2196 or email [emily.Lamb@winchesterva.gov](mailto:emily.Lamb@winchesterva.gov). There are also other local agencies that may be able to assist in helping with utility payments staff also encourages residents to reach out to these organizations for additional help. The agencies include the United Way of the Northern Shenandoah Valley, Winchester Department of Social Services, Salvation Army, and C-CAP or Congregational Community Action Project. We understand that COVID-19 has impacted many of our residents and businesses, and the City is committed to working with those impacted to assist wherever possible. If you have any questions about the information in this correspondence, please contact the Utilities Department at (540) 667-1815 and select option five when prompted. City of Winchester residents that are currently past due on their utility bills will receive a letter detailing this information. And if you didn't know before, now you know.

Barry Lee ([11:16](#)):

And in this final segment, here are several announcements to keep you informed. The Holiday Lane Lights in the Park Show is going on now and open daily from 5:00 to 8:30 PM. Drive through and see Jim Barnett Park decorated for the holidays for free through December 20th. But note, vehicles will not be allowed to enter holiday lane after 8:30 PM and may be canceled in inclement weather. Be sure to check the park website or Facebook page for updates. And oh, Santa is also expected to stop by on weekends, just for the kiddos and those young at heart. Winchester Parks and Recreation will be offering several athletics programs after the new year. Youth leagues include indoor soccer, basketball and flag football. Adult drop-in play in the Jim Barnett Park gym will offer basketball and pickleball, as usual, and spike ball will be added in January. Family Time Pickleball for ages five and up will also be available and last, save the date for the We Love Volleyball Hat Tournament in February. Register now for the youth leagues or the tournament online at [www.winchesterva.gov/parks](http://www.winchesterva.gov/parks) or call (540) 662-4946. Here's some holiday closures you need to be aware of in observance of Christmas and New Year's holidays. City offices, WinTran, the Jim Barnett Park Rec Center and courts will be closed on December 24th and 25th, as well as January 1st. Also, trash collection on Friday, December 25th will be moved to Wednesday, December 23rd. Collection on Thursday, December 24th is on schedule. Trash collection on Friday, January 1st is moved to Wednesday, December the 30th and yard waste collection is canceled on both December 23rd and the 30th. The City's 2021 informational calendar is coming soon and will include trash and recycling collection, holiday changes, public meetings, holidays, and City information. The calendar is expected to be mailed to all residents living within city limits and the limited supply will be available for pickup at Rouss City Hall, also the Visitor Center and the Jim Barnett Park Rec Center around Christmas.

Barry Lee ([13:28](#)):

Well, that's it for this week's Rouse Review, and my last podcast as host. City Manager Dan Hoffman is going to be taken over as emcee after the new year. So, look for that new podcast expected to launch on January 25th. Thank you for listening and maybe I'll see you on an upcoming episode of the City's publiCITY News Show or Go and See Virtual Field Trips. Amy and Caitlin won't let me go too far though. They also wanted me to know that they've enjoyed our time together and appreciate my help with getting the City's first podcast off to a great start. So...

Amy Simmons ([13:58](#)):

Barry...

Barry Lee ([13:58](#)):

What?

Amy Simmons ([14:00](#)):

Thank you.

Caitlin Diehl ([14:00](#)):

Yes, thank you.

Barry Lee ([14:00](#)):

Oh, was I supposed to pose there?

Amy Simmons ([14:03](#)):

This transcript was exported on Dec 10, 2020 - view latest version [here](#).

[Laughing] You were supposed to pause right there so we can give you this gift.

Barry Lee ([14:06](#)):

Oh, wow. Should I finish my script now? I'm going to open this gift. Barry Lee with 92.5 WINC FM signing off until we meet again. Stay safe. Now, what did you get me? Oh, Oh, you want me to actually open it. Oh my God. Oh my gosh. It's a 50-pound bag of peanut M&M's. Yeah, baby! [Clapping].

Amy Simmons ([14:27](#)):

Thank you, Barry.

Barry Lee ([14:27](#)):

This will get me through to the next publiCITY.

Caitlin Diehl ([14:34](#)):

Oh yeah! Whenever that may be.

Barry Lee ([14:40](#)):

Spring! [Laughing].

Amy Simmons ([14:40](#)):

This podcast wouldn't be the same without you.

Barry Lee ([14:40](#)):

Ah, thank you. Thank you. Dan's going to do a great job. Good luck, Dan, but I'm not going to share my M&M's. [Laughing]