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Dan Hoffman ([00:05](#)):

Hello, and welcome to another episode of the Rouss Review. I'm your City Manager, Dan Hoffman and with me is Communications Director, Amy Simmons. Hello, Amy.

Amy Simmons ([00:12](#)):

Hello Dan. What's up?

Dan Hoffman ([00:14](#)):

Not much. I enjoyed the beautiful weather last week.

Amy Simmons ([00:18](#)):

I wish we could have that all the time.

Dan Hoffman ([00:20](#)):

It was so fantastic. Right now, it is just a perfect time to be in Winchester. The valley this time of year is absolutely spectacular. So I'm enjoying my first spring, now getting into summer, in Winchester. I'm very happy that school is out.

Amy Simmons ([00:38](#)):

Hallelujah. [Laughs]

Dan Hoffman ([00:38](#)):

Oh, goodness. So, so thankful for that. I appreciate our public schools. I think my kids go to two very beautiful public schools here in Winchester: Handley and Daniel Morgan and I've been very impressed with it. All that being said, thrilled they're out of school and I'm looking forward to summer and kind of a change in routine.

Amy Simmons ([01:04](#)):

Yeah, I'm glad I don't have to do the back and forth, driving my daughter back and forth to school. I could do without that.

Dan Hoffman ([01:12](#)):

The morning routine of get out of bed, brush your teeth, make your lunch,

Amy Simmons ([01:16](#)):

Do you have your Chromebook?

Dan Hoffman ([01:17](#)):

Did you charge your Chromebook last night?

Amy Simmons ([01:20](#)):

No.

Dan Hoffman ([01:20](#)):

Yeah, I'm very happy that that is over. So tomorrow night. Meanwhile, back here in City Hall. Council meeting tomorrow. We've got a few things of interest on the agenda. A couple of second readings, the same blight ordinance that we talked about. That's at second reading as well. Some smaller land use issues, nothing major, on the consent agenda is something I want to point out to everybody. It is the authorization for me to sign an MOU with all of our volunteer fire companies around. You got Friendship, you got Shawnee, you got Rouss, you got South End. All of those buildings, for those who are unaware, the buildings and the most of the apparatus, the fire trucks and whatnot, are actually owned by the volunteers. We put career firefighters in them and operate them and we fund certain aspects of it. But there's really all, you know, the fire and rescue system in Winchester is really a partnership between the city, the volunteer companies in the community, of course, who funded through either their property taxes or they fund it through going to a BINGO game at one of the houses that do that. So this MOU was something that was one of the primary recommendations of the ESCI study that was conducted last year, really to kind of document the current state. Who is responsible for what critical activity in these stations, so that we're all on the same page, just to make it clear and more safe for our career firefighters and our residents at the end of the day. So I'm very happy that through a lot of hard work between our fire chiefs, previously Chief Culp, now Chief Henschel, all the presidents of the volunteer companies, their membership, that we now have this MOU and I'm looking forward to signing it tomorrow as soon as I get the opportunity. Also, we do have a work session. We've canceled the last couple of work sessions, but this time we do have a couple of things in the work session. We're going to have a small administrative issue related to the airport, but we will have also an Executive Session to discuss collective bargaining. Actually, no, I take that back. It's not an Executive Session. We had an Executive Session, now we're going to be having a public discussion about the Council's position on collective bargaining. Stay tuned for that. That is tomorrow night.

Amy Simmons ([04:00](#)):

Awesome.

Dan Hoffman ([04:00](#)):

And one of the more visible members of my senior staff, Chief Piper, is coming in here in just a second.

Amy Simmons ([04:09](#)):

I'm so excited.

Dan Hoffman ([04:09](#)):

Yep. I've been so impressed with Chief since I got here. When you come in as a City Manager, one of the first things you should ask is about the Police Chief. Especially given all of the different issues swirling around law enforcement nationally, you want to know what you're stepping into. I can safely say that between the Council, the staff, and the community, everybody really respects Chief Piper. So it gave me a lot of confidence and comfort coming into this position that I wasn't stepping into a very difficult situation as it came to police work. There's a great relationship between the community and police, and we've got a very supportive Council. So it was very comforting for me to know that we had a great Police Chief, and looking forward to chatting with him in just a second. In fact, I think he is here, coming in right now. Welcome Chief.

Chief Piper ([05:08](#)):

Hi, thanks for having me.

Dan Hoffman (05:09):

Excellent. So Chief, I've been here for, I think I'm going on my ninth month now, and you've been here what, going on five years?

Chief Piper (05:18):

Four years on September 1st.

Dan Hoffman (05:20):

Four years, September 1st. You're going on four years. So we're both, in City of Winchester employment terms, we're relatively new.

Chief Piper (05:26):

Yes.

Dan Hoffman (05:29):

And you know, we've got a chance to see other cities and other jurisdictions, how they do things in other places. And I know at least from my perspective, I've been really impressed. One of the things that we have that a lot of other jurisdictions don't is a police department that is trusted by the community with a great dialogue about some of the more sensitive issues. It puts me at ease because as the City Manager, I got to worry about those things and, you know, not getting fired because of those things. I'm guessing that you've seen a lot of that here when you stepped into this role.

Chief Piper (06:11):

Absolutely. It's a credit to our incredible staff, the amount of community outreach events that we've done. Deputy Chief Behan's been behind a lot of those and a lot of other staff in the police department, everything from coloring with a cop, coffee with a cop, our kids and cops camp that we do annually in June, and just a lot of different areas of the city where we're being visible. And we're kind of stripping away that facade of the badge and the uniform, and hopefully getting people an opportunity to see our police officers for the men and women that they are.

Dan Hoffman (06:43):

Yeah, and it's harder and harder. We were talking about this just the other day. It's getting harder and harder to get people to look at the law enforcement profession. Whether they're changing careers or whether they're starting their professional life, because of a lot of these bigger, nationwide or really worldwide issues. I would imagine law enforcement agencies all over the world are dealing with the different changes that are being thrown at them. But it's difficult to stay at full staffing. So a lot of these things that people might be used to seeing, we still try to do them as best we can, but right now, it's hard to keep at full staffing. Talk a little bit about where we're at with staffing because I know I get a lot of requests for officers to be at specific places at specific times. And sometimes it's difficult because we're not fully staffed at the moment.

Chief Piper (07:41):

Right. We're not alone in this challenge. You talked about that. It's a national trend. It's a regional trend. A lot of agencies right now are struggling to get qualified. And I think that's the key word. We never want to lower our standards. We want to have an incredibly talented, diverse workforce that represents the city. But along with that comes challenges. And frankly, there's not a lot of people that want to get into this profession right now. The people that do, I give them more credit than people that from my generation that got in, because they're getting into it with their eyes wide open, and they're looking at what's going on nationally, even though it doesn't represent what's going on here in Winchester, in my opinion. But they're still getting into this with everything going on in social media and national news cycle. And they're stepping up to serve, and it's pretty incredible.

Chief Piper ([08:23](#)):

So to answer your question, our authorized number of police officers or sworn officers is 79 right now, we currently, as of July 4th, we'll have 11 vacancies. Which is pretty significant for an agency our size. But I think it's also important for people to know that it's not just those 11 vacancies that impact our operational readiness. It's also the fact that we have 10 officers that just graduated from the academy that just started field training. Many of them are moving onto their second phase, but that's about 12 weeks of training that those men and women do before they're able to be out in the community solo as police officers. We have an officer on military leave right now, and we have somebody on family medical leave. So those things impact our operational capabilities. So when we get requests to do proactive things, as much as we're committed to being out in the community, unfortunately, sometimes we have to pull back those resources that we do have that are out here in the community, pull them back into patrol. And last year we had to pull back some of our shift configurations and move people to 12 hour shift, which a lot of people didn't like, frankly, inside the department, but it was necessary so that we can keep cops on the street responding to our emergency and non-emergency calls. We're committed to being out there in the community and I'm looking forward to 2021 being a better year for us as far as having more officers out there in the community. But it's an ongoing challenge right now.

Dan Hoffman ([09:47](#)):

Yeah. I know. I get questions with some frequency, about once a week, I get a request from a resident. Whether it's somebody's upset because one of their neighbors isn't cleaning up after their dog, which is a violation. Technically, it's considered littering. You got to clean up after your pet. Specific intersections, I hear this from Councilors all the time. "Hey, people are speeding all the time over at XYZ street." And can we send an officer over there? Well, it's difficult. I can't just say, "Chief Piper, send Officer Smith over to that place and just have them sit there." We can't, we don't have the luxury of doing that kind of thing right now. We will be looking at a lot of, in the case of traffic, we'll be looking at a lot of enhancements to that program, whether it's with motorcycles or other things that we're looking at doing to try to step up traffic enforcement, because that's an important function of the police department. But, we can't always just say, "Oh, we're going to pop an officer over at this intersection and just have them sit there all day." They've gotta be on patrol, they've gotta be out and about.

Amy Simmons ([10:56](#)):

Hey, he mentioned Officer Smith, can we get Craig back? Maybe he can do it.

Chief Piper ([11:01](#)):

He's part-time right now.

Amy Simmons ([11:02](#)):

Oh, is he? Good.

Dan Hoffman ([11:03](#)):

I wasn't referring to a specific Officer Smith, just for the record. That was the generic Officer Smith.

Amy Simmons ([11:09](#)):

But that Officer Smith's very beloved.

Chief Piper ([11:12](#)):

I think that's good point. And this is not to say that we're not out doing traffic enforcement, but I think where we have a finite number of resources, what we need to do is focus in the most impacted areas of the city. And in my mind, those are our schools zones or residential areas and our high crash intersections. And probably a lot of the listeners know what those are.

Dan Hoffman ([11:32](#)):

Jubal Early.

Chief Piper ([11:32](#)):

Yeah. Jubal Early, Pleasant Valley, and some of those areas, so we're targeting enforcement there. You will see officers out doing radar. We're out there doing traffic enforcement. It's also important for a lot of people to know that as of March 1st of this year, a lot of laws changed as far as what our officers can and cannot pull people over. And that was the criminal justice reform that was passed down in Richmond. So for instance, pulling people over for equipment violation, generally speaking, is not something our officers can do unless there's another violation they observed. I get concerned about that, particularly when it comes to impaired driving and our ability to pull cars over at night, but that's the direction that the state has gone in and that's the reality that we have to police in now. It's a different world.

Dan Hoffman ([12:18](#)):

And I know there's a lot of changes coming in terms of marijuana and the way we enforce the possession and usage of marijuana. Talk a little bit about that.

Chief Piper ([12:28](#)):

So that's coming really quick, July 1st. Drastic, pretty significant changes to marijuana possession in particular. Kick in there's some other legislation that is in the future in 2022 and 2024 that will most certainly impact localities, but that's a topic for another discussion. July 1st, generally speaking, adult possession use of marijuana will generally become illegal. I'm sorry, legal, in Virginia, up to an ounce. It's something that people need to be informed about. And I think we're not going to do it justice by talking about all the ins and outs of the new legislation. We'll be posting something on the police department's website and our Facebook page linking some of the new legislation here before July 1st. So folks can get up to speed and our officers are always available to answer questions that people may have.

Dan Hoffman ([13:18](#)):

We are not your attorneys, right? Do not rely on us for legal advice, but do get yourself educated, get yourself informed and go to the website for that. So in another area where we often get a lot of requests down in the walking mall, especially this time of year, it's beautiful out. We have a couple of faith based organizations that are feeding some of the homeless folks and that's attracting them to the walking mall. So we get a lot of requests for the police department to do something, it's always this vague request. Do something. "Could you do something about the homeless folks down there on the walking mall?" Or they're panhandling. And I think I've said it before on this podcast and all that, I'll have to say it again. Panhandling is not illegal. That is a form of speech and it's protected and Supreme Court's made that decision. A homeless person sitting out on a bench or sleeping on a bench, again, not illegal, loitering. Most of our loitering laws, we just went through the public safety committee, repealing some of the things that would not be constitutional. So we can't use the police department to address the homelessness issue. Now that being said, occasionally there are folks with mental health challenges that do hang out in some of our more public areas. And occasionally they do create problems or issues. We are being more present, a little more visible there as we can, given the staffing concerns we just talked about. So Chief, maybe just take a minute to talk about some of the things we're doing to be a little more visible and making sure that people feel safe, even though they are safe. When you're walking down the walking mall, you're safe, there's cameras everywhere. We frequently have officers down there, lots of eyes on the streets. So, just because you see a homeless person doesn't mean you're unsafe. But we're going to be there. We're gonna be a little more visible. So Chief, talk about that for a second.

Chief Piper ([15:15](#)):

Yep, and you're right. A lot of people want the police to come down and take care of this perceived problem, or the real problem, in some cases. And I understand that and I'm trying to be understanding, but I also think that we have to manage our resources effectively. Just yesterday I was down in the walking mall for half an hour, with two of my officers walking around. We're committed to being down there as much as we can. We realize that it's a place that brings a vibrant economy and a lot of visitors and residents out. Especially when we have nice weather like yesterday. So we want to be down there. We want to be visible. Can't be down there all the time because of the staffing issues that we just talked about. And I think it's also important for people to recognize that a lot of the folks that are, I would say the problem people down there, the ones that we get complaints about, a lot of those folks are not necessarily breaking the law. And we want to encourage people to call the police, the emergency or non-emergency number, depending on what's going on, if they see a law being broken we'll, of course, respond down there and take care of the issue. But a lot of these behaviors are just outside the norm of what most of us expect and what we're used to. That's, in my opinion, and I know it firsthand, is because a lot of these folks are suffering from mental health issues, substance misuse issues, or combination of the two. And when you combine those things, it's not necessarily a law enforcement issue. Sometimes it is, and we're down there and we're going to take care of the problem when it becomes a law enforcement issue, but we're also committed to working with our public and private stakeholders, whether it's department of social services or a local community services board and others like the rescue mission and C-CAP to make sure that we're steering those folks towards the services that they need. This is the consequence sometimes of having an urban setting downtown, like the mall, you're going to have diverse people down there. You're going to have people from different backgrounds.

Dan Hoffman ([17:12](#)):

Absolutely. A day like this past week, gorgeous weather. Every day, mid seventies, sunny, it was just beautiful. Tons of people out on the walking mall.

Amy Simmons ([17:26](#)):

This is what we want.

Dan Hoffman ([17:30](#)):

That's what they want to engage with. They want to engage with people. That's where they find opportunity for panhandling, it's where they find opportunities for food. So I encourage anybody who might be anywhere in the city, don't give money directly to panhandlers. It's not an effective way to get them help. I know it might feel good. It might scratch an itch, or you might feel obligated if it's a particularly aggressive panhandler. But it is not the best way to get those folks assistance. If you want to help those folks, look at the rescue mission, look at WATTS, look at C-CAP, look at the organizations that are actually trying to get those folks on a sustainable path to being better.

Amy Simmons ([18:18](#)):

Can we talk about something else kind of somewhat related? Can we talk about Leo?

Dan Hoffman ([18:23](#)):

Yes. How is Leo related to homelessness? That was a hard left.

Amy Simmons ([18:27](#)):

Not homelessness. That was therapy, mental health?

Dan Hoffman ([18:30](#)):

So let's be clear. We're not providing a therapy dog to homeless people.

Amy Simmons ([18:35](#)):

Now, but that'd be awesome.

Dan Hoffman ([18:39](#)):

Yeah. It almost makes me sad though. When I see a homeless person with a dog in places like in Montreal, it seems like every homeless person has a dog. By the way, I should point out, if you're on the walking mall, we've got a few very visible homeless folks. I see the same folks down there on a regular basis. We don't have a massive homelessness problem here in the city. I just want to be clear, having come from a different place that really did have a serious homelessness issue, and having been down in the district the last few weekends where you see massive tent encampments, shantytowns under overpasses. I mean, we are in pretty good shape. Now, we want to keep it that way. So we got to be proactive doing the things we've been talking about, but we don't have a massive homelessness issue here. We just need to be proactive to make sure it doesn't become a massive issue. And dealing with those folks puts a lot of strain on our officers, dealing with violence and other stuff. So, we do have a new member of the force, Leo. Which is intentional, that it's Leo, right? Law Enforcement Officer?

Chief Piper ([19:52](#)):

I'm sure that wasn't a coincidence. We also wanted a short name that kids could remember and speak easily.

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Amy Simmons ([19:56](#)):

Yes, Sam was the other one?

Chief Piper ([19:59](#)):

I think Sam was the other one.

Dan Hoffman ([19:59](#)):

Does that stand for something?

Chief Piper ([20:05](#)):

No, just a short name. Yeah, so for the folks that aren't familiar with Leo, we recently acquired through the Winchester and Frederick County Law Enforcement Foundation, through some funding, a first-ever canine therapy dog for the Winchester Police Department and his name is Leo, he is a yellow lab,

Amy Simmons ([20:21](#)):

Adorable.

Chief Piper ([20:21](#)):

He's still, I think about two months old and he'll be going into his formal training here in the next few weeks. When he is fully trained and out there in the community, he will be available to not only help our officers deal with the trauma that they inherently are going to see as part of their job, but also equally as important, he's going to be assigned our criminal investigation division under Detective Bansal. And she is his primary handler. She is going to be out, and she's dealing with our special victims. She's our Special Victims Detective. So she's dealing a lot of times with children who are in unfortunate situations, whether they're directly or indirectly the victims of crimes, or just around violent crime or drug use or sexual assault. And so Leo is going to be there during those interviews when it's appropriate and he's going to be there as a calming presence for those victims. I'm excited about it.

Dan Hoffman ([21:17](#)):

Oh yeah.

Chief Piper ([21:18](#)):

I think we're the first regional law enforcement agency to do that. There's some others across the country that we've modeled this program after. So, it's going to be a great thing.

Dan Hoffman ([21:27](#)):

I'm pretty sure every department's very jealous of this dog. Every department I've spoken to now wants their own dog. In fact, Mary in our office wants a therapy cat.

Amy Simmons ([21:35](#)):

Right.

Dan Hoffman ([21:35](#)):

Which I have said absolutely not.

Amy Simmons ([21:39](#)):

I agree with that one.

Chief Piper ([21:42](#)):

Speaking of the downtown mall, you'll see him out frequently with different members of the department, he was out, I think, yesterday on the mall and going for a walk with Deputy Chief Behan. And I actually took them home last night for a little visit. It was interesting. He's still a little handful. He's all puppy right now.

Dan Hoffman ([21:59](#)):

He's all puppy. And he's got that puppy belly, too.

Amy Simmons ([22:00](#)):

Oh, he's adorable. So cute.

Dan Hoffman ([22:02](#)):

He's got little needy puppy teeth that he just wants to chew on everything.

Amy Simmons ([22:05](#)):

The picture of him sitting on your lap during one of the meetings.

Dan Hoffman ([22:08](#)):

That was awesome. Yawning.

Amy Simmons ([22:08](#)):

Perfect.

Dan Hoffman ([22:11](#)):

Oh yeah.

Amy Simmons ([22:11](#)):

He's bored.

Dan Hoffman ([22:13](#)):

So that's been the highlight of my trips over to Timbrook over the last few weeks is visiting with Leo. It's nice. And I think it reflects the kind of thoughtful, proactive nature that we're taking with our police department. We're not just the same, we're not your grandfather's police department, put it that way. And a lot of that we see in our recruitment stuff. So back to staffing and recruitment for just a quick second, talk about some of the things that we're doing to kind of recruit folks. Not just as a recruitment tool, but also to kind of better reflect the realities of the next generation of law enforcement.

Chief Piper ([22:58](#)):

So one of the questions that I get very commonly from our community is we need to have a police department that better reflects the diversity of our community. And I couldn't agree with that more, but that's not something that I alone or members of the police department are going to be able to fix overnight. That becomes hopefully a community collaborative effort where people actually speak to young people in our community, along with our conversations and try to get them to consider law enforcement as a profession. I think we've made some strides. I know we have when it comes to diversity and Spanish-speaking officers, and particularly with women. We're actually about double the national average when it comes to sworn law enforcement officers and the Winchester Police Department. And as you know, several of our high ranking officials including both Deputy Chiefs right now are women.

Dan Hoffman ([23:47](#)):

Both Deputy Chiefs, yeah.

Chief Piper ([23:47](#)):

So I think that's a credit to some of the diversity, although we have some more to do. We have a July academy coming up and we go to a regional academy, Skyline Regional Criminal Justice Academy down in Middletown, along with most of the other area law enforcement officer or agencies around here. So we're hoping we're going to put a good chunk of officers in the next academy. Like I said, we have 10 that are in field training right now from the last academy. We only have two opportunities a year to fill those academies. The academy's six months long. When we hire somebody it's not an overnight process. It doesn't mean that you're going to see that officer on the street right away. Where we do have an opportunity to do that is with Virginia certified officers. So recently with Dan's support, we've been able to try to recruit some Virginia certified officers from other agencies to doing things that again, other agencies have been doing across the mountain or across the Commonwealth, which is offering a hiring incentive.

Chief Piper ([24:43](#)):

I think we calculated before it was about \$33,000 to hire and train a brand new officer. And that's everything that goes into that. A \$5,000 hiring bonus, in my mind, for a Virginia certified officer who we don't have to send to the academy, who we can just acclimate to the city and have out on the street rather quickly, is a win-win.

Dan Hoffman ([25:02](#)):

That's huge.

Chief Piper ([25:03](#)):

But I'll say that we do have some folks in the pipeline. I think we're going to have our first one hopefully hired here in the next couple of weeks.

Dan Hoffman ([25:10](#)):

Great.

Chief Piper ([25:10](#)):

But there's a lot of agencies competing for that talent pool right now and unfortunately, sometimes we lose people to other Virginia law enforcement agencies. So we're working hard. We're trying to think outside the box, so to speak, and do some recruiting in areas where we haven't traditionally done it. If people don't follow the Winchester Police Department on Facebook, please do so. We have an incredible following, I think upwards of 44,000 people, which is pretty incredible for a city of only 28,000 people. But if you've been on there, you'll see some of the very, very unique recruiting that we're doing. We've recently, changing with the times so to speak. We're allowing facial hair, if it's neatly trimmed and well kept, for our male officers. Our tattoo policies have loosened up considerably from what they were traditionally. Hopefully again, trying to recruit some officers into the profession that may not have thought about it before.

Dan Hoffman ([25:59](#)):

Yeah. So one last thing before we go, folks might've noticed there was an article in the paper last week. We do a lot of community outreach, a lot of community meetings and we have an amazing SRO, Officer Rice, it's something that I feel strongly about, it's a positive aspect. It's a positive presence there in schools. We're lucky in that we don't have a large amount of violent crime. Occasionally there is an incident and it gets a lot of attention, but by and large it's a very safe city because we address a lot of things proactively. We do a lot of outreach and engagement, we're present in schools, which is a very good thing. I think a lot of these bigger, national or macro concerns about what law enforcement is and should be in the future. I think my opinion is that we're doing everything the right way and SRO's are a valuable asset in schools. As we wrap up, talk a little bit about the general state of safety in Winchester and why SRO's are an important part of that.

Chief Piper ([27:17](#)):

Well, I'll start with the SROs. As you mentioned, we are going to have two SRO, School Resource Officers, assigned to both our middle school, Daniel Morgan and our high school, John Handley High School. We actually have a new officer, Officer Sosa who's a Spanish speaking officer, will be starting in the fall. And so this is a really close working relationship that we have with Winchester Public Schools. And the superintendent and I attended a community meeting, held at the PD this past Tuesday. We had some folks from the NAACP and other community stakeholders come out and we had a really good conversation about the SRO program. Hopefully, what people learned from about that, and Officer Rice was there, is that this is not an opportunity to put kids in jail or to have officers involved with disciplinary actions. That's not what we're doing here. What we're doing is building positive, important relationships with children in our community. And we're preventing stuff, I know that for a fact, before bad things happen. And as you mentioned, these are important relationships to build so that people in our community or our young people in particular start seeing police officers for humans. And I think that translates to when they interact with them out in the community. You mentioned the violent crime in the city. Violent crime is very, very low for a city our size. Our per capita violent crime is very low. I think that's a credit to this community and the close working relationship it has with this police department. But rightly so, if we have a murder, if we have another violent crime in the city, it does get a lot of attention. And in part, because it does happen so infrequently. Anytime someone is killed or murdered, of course it's tragic, and that's going to be the top priority for this police department. I'm proud of the investigative work that goes in with our regional partners to solve those crimes in a very expeditious manner and bring those people to justice. But I think it's important. People also know that it's not something that's happening very frequently out here. We're still averaging about a murder a year in a city of 28,000 people. One murder is too many. We would all agree with that, but those proactive things

that we're doing, working closely with the community, I know are preventing other crimes from happening.

Dan Hoffman ([29:25](#)):

Absolutely. Well Chief Piper, thank you very much for taking some time to chat with us. Looking forward to seeing Leo grow and develop and coming over and visiting us in City Hall. And keep an eye out for updates on the City's website, regarding the things we talked about, whether it's upcoming community meetings, some information about the changing laws related to marijuana or any of the different things that might help you be informed about your safety and the safety of your community in Winchester. Thank you very much, Chief.

Chief Piper ([29:58](#)):

Thanks for having me.

Dan Hoffman ([29:59](#)):

So, like I said earlier, before he got here, see? Chief Piper is awesome. Very knowledgeable, been around the block. I typically like to promote from within like I did with the Fire Chief whenever it makes sense and whenever we've got a great candidate, but sometimes, a few years ago when they brought in Chief Piper, they made the right move.

Amy Simmons ([30:26](#)):

Absolutely.

Dan Hoffman ([30:26](#)):

They brought in somebody that had that external perspective, a broader perspective of how things are done in other places. He's been very well received here in the community. So thanks to Chief Piper for coming and spending some time with us.

Amy Simmons ([30:42](#)):

I know I was so excited when he came here, the first thing he wanted to do was just increase our community outreach and our events before the police department. And so we all got together and we came up with all those. His idea with the Coffee with a Cop, because that's a national thing, and then we kind of ran from there. We did Color with a Cop, and there was another, I think, Cocoa with a Cop we tried one time.

Dan Hoffman ([31:04](#)):

Only things that start with C. If it's any other activity that doesn't start with C we cannot do it with a cop.

Amy Simmons ([31:09](#)):

Nope. But it was so much fun. We did so many fun things.

Dan Hoffman ([31:12](#)):

We could do painting with the police or I guess we could do things that start with P as well.

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Amy Simmons ([31:16](#)):

Oh, we did. We did Cookies with a Cop too, with the senior center at the park.

Dan Hoffman ([31:19](#)):

Oh, cookies with the cops. That was starts with a C.

Amy Simmons ([31:20](#)):

That was fun. Yeah. So anyway, that was one of his main initiatives when he first got here.

Dan Hoffman ([31:26](#)):

Parasailing with police.

Amy Simmons ([31:28](#)):

No, maybe not that one.

Dan Hoffman ([31:29](#)):

We don't have any of those facilities.

Amy Simmons ([31:30](#)):

Yeah.

Dan Hoffman ([31:31](#)):

Wow. Pickleball with the police.

Amy Simmons ([31:34](#)):

That would be fun.

Dan Hoffman ([31:35](#)):

That would be fun.

Amy Simmons ([31:36](#)):

Yeah.

Dan Hoffman ([31:37](#)):

One day.

Amy Simmons ([31:37](#)):

Maybe next year.

Dan Hoffman ([31:38](#)):

Maybe next year. And next time he better bring the dog.

Amy Simmons ([31:42](#)):

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Yeah. But Leo's going to be all grown up by the time we have him back.

Dan Hoffman ([31:45](#)):

Oh no, he better not be. He is such a fat little puppy right now. He's awesome. So keep an eye out for Leo, out and about. Also you should keep an eye out for some of these things that are coming up. Amy, what do we got coming up?

Amy Simmons ([31:59](#)):

Okay. Well, last weekend on Saturday we dedicated a new historic marker at City Hall. And that is right beside the cannon over here on the north side.

Dan Hoffman ([32:11](#)):

Yep, on Juneteenth.

Amy Simmons ([32:11](#)):

Right. It's a Civil War interpretive marker about local African-American troops who fought in the war. So a Winchester-Frederick County Convention of Visitors Bureau and the McCormick Civil War Institute and the Civil War Trails Organization, as well as the local chapter NAACP, they all helped make it happen. So check that out.

Dan Hoffman ([32:28](#)):

Yep. That was this past weekend. I got a chance to be out there and say a few remarks. It's an interesting bit of history, an interesting bit of information. If you get a chance, make sure you stop by and give it a read.

Amy Simmons ([32:44](#)):

The indoor pool at Jim Barnett park will be closed until June 28th and the outdoor pool be closed June 25th through the 27th for an annual swim meet. So there's only certain things that they're doing with the indoor pool, but they're going through some maintenance. Look for the new schedule on June 28th on the website. As of yesterday, the fitness room at the Rec Center is now open and Winchester Parks and Rec is now accepting pavilion rentals. All during COVID it was first-come, first-served. Now, they're taking reservations. And the Rec Center will be closed on July 5th in observance of independence day. But, so will we. Speaking of that, City offices, WinTran and the Joint Judicial Center, the courts, will also observe Independence Day on Monday, July 5th. So we'll all be closed that day. Rockin' Independence Eve, not happening this year. That's usually July 3rd.

Dan Hoffman ([33:35](#)):

Yeah so for people who are upset that we're not doing 4th of July fireworks or whatnot, those are the kind of things that you got to book a ways in advance.

Amy Simmons ([33:46](#)):

A year ago we didn't know what's going to happen this time.

Dan Hoffman ([33:49](#)):

Even four or five months ago, we did not know. We encourage everybody to celebrate in the way they feel best.

Amy Simmons ([33:56](#)):

Come on down to Old Town.

Dan Hoffman ([33:59](#)):

Come on down to Old Town, walk around. There will probably be a few activities going on, but no, there won't be fireworks. Next year.

Amy Simmons ([34:06](#)):

Yeah. July 3rd, which is when we would normally have this, would have been on a Saturday. It's going to be on a Saturday. So it's a perfect day to come down, have some dinner downtown. As if cicadas weren't enough, you know all about those in your backyard.

Dan Hoffman ([34:21](#)):

Yep.

Amy Simmons ([34:21](#)):

I don't have too many at mine, thank goodness. We're still battling the spotted lanternfly.

Dan Hoffman ([34:26](#)):

Yeah. I'm battling those in my backyard right now.

Amy Simmons ([34:28](#)):

Are you squishing them?

Dan Hoffman ([34:29](#)):

I'm spraying them, squishing them.

Amy Simmons ([34:33](#)):

Capturing?

Dan Hoffman ([34:33](#)):

I'm doing everything I can to murder them things. Cause they're eating my grapevine right now.

Amy Simmons ([34:37](#)):

And they're just nymphs right now. Right?

Dan Hoffman ([34:41](#)):

They're just nymphs. I was talking to somebody about this just the other day, they look very different than the full grown ones that you might've seen last year.

Amy Simmons ([34:49](#)):

Right.

Dan Hoffman ([34:49](#)):

They're little black with white spot bugs, they jump around.

Amy Simmons ([34:53](#)):

Or red. But as they get older they get red.

Dan Hoffman ([34:54](#)):

They can turn a little red, they get more and more scary looking. And if you see one, they're not like, oh, a little spider or something like that. No.

Amy Simmons ([35:04](#)):

Get rid of them.

Dan Hoffman ([35:04](#)):

They're bad bugs. Smush them.

Amy Simmons ([35:07](#)):

Yes. Squish them ASAP before they become big, because then they become invasive and they start destroying our plants and trees and crops. So like COVID, we need to stop the spread of the spotted lanternfly.

Dan Hoffman ([35:21](#)):

Yes we do.

Amy Simmons ([35:22](#)):

So Virginia Career Works is offering a free state-wide virtual online job fair on July 8th at 1:00 PM. I put the information on our website, on the community events calendar, so go there and sign up. And this job fair is just in time for the launch of the Governor's new Return to Earn grant program. He set aside \$3 million to match payments from eligible small businesses. I think that you have to have less than a hundred employees that can provide new hires up to a thousand dollars in hiring bonuses. So get back to work. Hiring bonus, is basically what that is. And last I checked the City had over 30 jobs that we would desperately need filled. So please apply for those.

Dan Hoffman ([36:02](#)):

Yup. Come be a police officer, come be a firefighter, come be a solid waste worker, come be anything.

Amy Simmons ([36:07](#)):

Yeah. And we desperately need benefit programs.

Dan Hoffman ([36:10](#)):

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Benefit programs, oh yeah.

Amy Simmons ([36:11](#)):

Family services.

Dan Hoffman ([36:11](#)):

Go over and work at social services, all of them. Great place to work.

Amy Simmons ([36:13](#)):

It's a wonderful department. Yes. And they desperately need a lot of help there. So on the next episode of publiCITY, we are taking a tour of the Innovation Center behind Handley High School. The superintendent gave us a tour and it is amazing. So look for that.

Dan Hoffman ([36:33](#)):

Very cool.

Amy Simmons ([36:33](#)):

Yep. The last Wednesday in June, which is the 30th, I believe. So we'll be posting that on YouTube and on social media and it is a phenomenal project that is going to open at this next school year.

Dan Hoffman ([36:46](#)):

Yep. Absolutely. Anything else?

Amy Simmons ([36:49](#)):

That's all I have.

Dan Hoffman ([36:51](#)):

Alrighty. Well, thanks everybody for listening. Make sure to check out the website for all that information. We are getting ready to start looking at updating, not just updating, but completely replacing the website. So if you have any thoughts about that, feel free to reach out to Amy. And in the meantime, thanks everybody for listening and we'll see you around City Hall.