

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

Hello, and welcome to another edition of the Rouss Review. I'm your City Manager Dan Hoffman. And with me is Amy Simmons, Communications Director. Hello, Amy. Did you have a good weekend?

Amy Simmons ([00:15](#)):

Always.

Dan Hoffman ([00:15](#)):

Good.

Amy Simmons ([00:15](#)):

More softball.

Dan Hoffman ([00:16](#)):

Weather was nice. More softball?

Amy Simmons ([00:17](#)):

Yeah.

Dan Hoffman ([00:18](#)):

It's just like every other week, every weekend almost.

Amy Simmons ([00:21](#)):

It has been four in a row so far.

Dan Hoffman ([00:23](#)):

Wow.

Amy Simmons ([00:24](#)):

She loves it. So what am I going to say?

Dan Hoffman ([00:26](#)):

Such a good mommy.

Dan Hoffman ([00:27](#)):

At least it's nice outside.

Dan Hoffman ([00:28](#)):

Well, I hope they appreciate you.

Amy Simmons ([00:30](#)):

Let's hope so. [Laughs]

Dan Hoffman ([00:32](#)):

You'll find out when you're older.

Amy Simmons ([00:33](#)):

That's right.

Dan Hoffman ([00:34](#)):

Okay. So we got a few things to talk about. We got a Superintendent Jason Van Heukelum comin' on in. We're going to talk about the school year in general, the innovation center, and some other improvements going on in the city, on the school front. And then we're going to talk about well, I'm about to start talking about the agenda for tomorrow.

Amy Simmons ([00:55](#)):

Let's do it now.

Dan Hoffman ([00:56](#)):

And let's do that now. Okay. We do not have a Work Session, just all regular meeting. We've got a few different land use kinds of things. You'll see there's a few public hearings about some right of way vacations. Those are not the fun kind of vacations for those of you not familiar with what a right of way vacation is. It is not at a tropical island. A right of way vacation is when the City vacates its public property. Our interests in a property, we are vacating those interests. So in some cases we own the land outright and some cases we have an easement or there's some public purpose for the land. You know, maybe we intended to put a road there one time. It never did. Or maybe we intended to put some water pipes in, or maybe there were some underground utilities or something. If the land no longer needs that easement, if we no longer need access to that land, we vacate our interests, our right of way, in that property. We got a few of those that you'll see on the agenda. Nothing controversial. As we do frequently throughout the year, we have an ordinance to authorize the additional appropriation of funds.

Amy Simmons ([02:10](#)):

Another way of saying, we're just moving some money around.

Dan Hoffman ([02:12](#)):

Moving some money around in the budget. Nothing major there either. We are now adding a few positions that were approved in the budget or that were approved when our stimulus money, our ARPA money spending package was approved.

Amy Simmons ([02:29](#)):

The bus drivers, is that for the Lord Fairfax trip?

Dan Hoffman ([02:33](#)):

Yes. We are adding...

Amy Simmons ([02:35](#)):

Four I think.

Dan Hoffman ([02:35](#)):

Yeah, we need four to run our new route which will actually go from the Shihadeh Center. Right now, and this is all tentative, but it'll go Shihadeh, over kind of through town, get on 81, and then go all the way down to Lord Fairfax. Now, for people that are saying, 'why don't you just run it down Route 11 and pick up a bunch more people'. We can't do that, actually. This is an express route and it's funded entirely by the City of Winchester. Well, with a lot of assistance from the State and Federal government. But this is a City-funded route otherwise. And if we start, there's a little kind of complex rule around bus routes. If you run a bus route through an area you're also responsible for all the para-transit associated with it. Because this route would go through a significant portion of the county, we the City would be responsible for the paratransit all the way along that route. And we can't. That's just something we can't afford to do. It would also make the route stop multiple times along Rt. 11. It would make the route very long. So for a lot of different reasons, mainly those, this is going to be an express route from the city down to Lord...it will be Laurel Ridge pretty soon, I think, right?

Amy Simmons ([04:08](#)):

Yeah.

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

So yeah, that's in there as well. Let's see. Also on the agenda, we have a few other little land use things, nothing major. We will talk again about short-term rentals, otherwise known as Airbnbs, but there's a lot of different services out there that do it. We're hoping to finally put that to bed.

Amy Simmons ([04:28](#)):

That would be nice.

Dan Hoffman ([04:29](#)):

That would be nice. We've been nibbling at this apple for the better part of a year now.

Amy Simmons ([04:34](#)):

At least.

Dan Hoffman ([04:36](#)):

And then, last in the agenda, you'll see an Executive Session. I've been here one year. So, it's to discuss the annual performance evaluation and contract with the City Manager.

Amy Simmons ([04:48](#)):

So if you're not here at the next podcast, we'll know would happened. [Laughs].

Dan Hoffman ([04:50](#)):

Exactly. You can drag Mary Beth back out of retirement for another go at it.

Amy Simmons ([04:56](#)):

Oh, no. Poor Mary Beth.

Dan Hoffman ([04:57](#)):

It's been a great year. I'm pretty going into this pretty confident. Of course, I always appreciate the feedback and any constructive criticism and I'm sure that they will give that to me. I look forward to having that discussion with them.

Amy Simmons ([05:12](#)):

Don't make me do this podcast alone.

Dan Hoffman ([05:14](#)):

It's just going to be you in a room by yourself.

Amy Simmons ([05:16](#)):

How boring.

Dan Hoffman ([05:16](#)):

So boring. So yeah, and like I said, no Work Session. That is the agenda for tomorrow.

Amy Simmons ([05:26](#)):

Easy peasy.

Dan Hoffman ([05:26](#)):

And it should be easy peasy. Don't jinx us there.

Amy Simmons ([05:31](#)):

Oh, God, sorry.

Dan Hoffman ([05:31](#)):

Okay, so now we're going to talk to Jason. I'm sorry. I think he's Dr.? Well, we'll confirm. Doctor, are you a doctor?

Jason Van Heukelum ([05:39](#)):

I am a doctor, but not that kind of doctor according to my daughter. My daughter says, 'daddy, you're not that kind of doctor'.

Dan Hoffman ([05:45](#)):

Okay, good. I thought it was Dr. Van Heukelum. Okay, we have Dr. Jason Van Heukelum. Welcome, Jason.

Jason Van Heukelum ([05:51](#)):

Thank you. Glad to be here. Always a good time to hang out with our City Manager.

Dan Hoffman ([05:57](#)):

Oh, excellent. We've got a few things we wanna chat about, but first off we are in October. Our first year...Well, year one after COVID or would we consider this...we're still in it. But we're kind of back.

Amy Simmons ([06:16](#)):

Well, we shut down in March of 2020. So this is the second year, basically.

Jason Van Heukelum ([06:22](#)):

Second year of COVID, but first year with COVID and all our kids back.

Amy Simmons ([06:25](#)):

Yeah.

Dan Hoffman ([06:25](#)):

Exactly. So is this not the first year of the new way of doing things? Cause we still anticipate going back.

Amy Simmons ([06:33](#)):

Hopefully. Good Lord. Yeah, I couldn't imagine kids doing this year round every year.

Dan Hoffman ([06:40](#)):

So we're still wandering the forest basically of COVID with schools.

Jason Van Heukelum ([06:45](#)):

Yeah. Absolutely.

Dan Hoffman ([06:46](#)):

And if the vaccines get approved for five to 11, which we anticipate, that's going to impact you guys even more. So far this year, how's it going?

Jason Van Heukelum ([06:57](#)):

That's a great question. When we started the school year, there was a lot of hope that this school year would be drastically different than last school year. That we would quote, returned back to normal. That we would have our stamina back, et cetera. And quite frankly, it's been anything but. This school year has been one of the hardest years I've experienced as a school leader, harder than last year. And quite frankly, when you added all the students back and COVID, it generated a lot of quarantine procedures. The stress has just been very palpable in our schools. As teachers have to flip from, in-person learning to digital learning literally on a moment's notice for a group of students, that's very challenging for our teachers and our staff in general. Combine that with just a general labor shortage I think that we're all experiencing across job classifications and job wages and inflation and things like that. There's a lot of pressures from outside forces that are making the business of school operations more difficult this year than in previous years. On a positive note, we're very excited about vaccinations being approved for our youngest students. Certainly they've borne the brunt of quarantines because they have not been able to get vaccinated. Certainly wanna encourage folks to get vaccinated. From a student point of view, if you're vaccinated, then you do not have to quarantine should someone in your close contact area have

COVID-19. We're excited about that. In fact, we'll be launching several sites on school property for student vaccinations in the middle of November. So we're looking for that information coming soon.

Dan Hoffman ([08:41](#)):

That's awesome. I'd seen something about teachers and vaccinations? What currently is the school's position with teachers and vaccinations? It's not mandated yet or it is? I can't remember.

Jason Van Heukelum ([08:52](#)):

We have been discussing requiring vaccinations for all staff, not just teachers and that's been on our school board agenda for two sessions and will be again on Monday night. On Monday night, October 25th [2021], we do expect the school board to take a stand on that and vote up or down on whether we're going to require vaccinations for all staff. We're also including athletes in that vote. There is a testing requirement. I want to be very clear. This is not what some would call a mandate. It's an either/or. Either you provide proof of your vaccination or you submit to weekly testing. And we've been very fortunate to partner with a State-level program called Vista out of VDH, the Virginia Department of Health. And we will be providing that testing onsite, trying to make it as seamless and easy as possible. But quite frankly, the hope is that by making this stand, that those who are not vaccinated would rather get vaccinated than go through a weekly testing protocol. We hope to shrink that number even more. Currently, about 80% of our teaching staff that are working with kids every day are vaccinated. That's a good number, but when it goes to the rest of the staff, you're down to about 65%.

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

Yeah. I think City-wide we're it's 73 [percent], but when you get to like certain pockets, like our police officers are at mid-eighties. We've got some of our smaller departments are in eighties, but then there's some departments that for whatever reason, some pockets, the adoption just isn't quite there yet. But, hopefully that will bump up the numbers.

Jason Van Heukelum ([10:34](#)):

Absolutely. It has had an impact on operations. The number of staff that have missed work because of quarantining who are not vaccinated is almost twice that of un-vaccinated. That affects our operations, our ability to keep schools open and certainly causes extra workload on the staff that are covering for our staff members who are out.

Dan Hoffman ([10:58](#)):

And also new this year. In the midst of dealing with all of this, you guys also opened the Shihadeh Center, a dramatically different type of facility, beautiful facility that is also requiring educators to change the way they do things even a little bit more. I'm a huge proponent, for a wide variety of reasons, of the style and the approach that you guys are taking at the Shihadeh Center. Explain to folks why this is different. It's not just a new building and we're doing business as usual. And 'Hey, look, we got some new microscopes.' It's a really, it's a seed change from what they typically might've experienced when they were growing up in school.

Jason Van Heukelum ([11:47](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. I would like to lead with just a fundamental shift in the messaging to students and families. For well over a quarter of a century, the message to students was 'you should go to college'.

Almost as if college was a destination. We promoted that. High schools around this country are designed to send kids to college. Then, of course, we had our career technical education classes as well, but they were kind of in the margins. They were on the side. They were not promoted. It was for other students per se. And quite frankly, as kids matriculated through high school, they made some choices and they said, 'I'm either going to college', which means advanced placement classes, or 'I'm going to work and I'm going to go CTE'. We made a very clear decision when we launched the innovation center, the concept that we were not going to make kids choose. We want them to do both. We believe that the skills that students experience in those career technical education classes are valuable, regardless of whether you go to college or not. They have transferable skills that you will use in your life well beyond high school. Whether you ever become a welder or not, that experience in welding class is a good experience and valuable for your human development. We also really wanted to make sure that we maintain social cohesion among our student body. We did not want to have students in this group stay at Handley and take AP classes and students in this other group go up to the Shihadeh Center and only take welding and carpentry, et cetera. We wanted to maintain that social cohesion. That's also what industry and colleges and universities are telling K-12 education is 'we need kids that have skills'. And it's not all about knowledge. It's not all about academic knowledge. So, we gotta continue to do academic knowledge, but we have to add to that. And that's the hope and dream of the Shihadeh Center. What you're going to find is there's a lot of student agency. The students are up there for three hours at a time. There's no bells. Every day looks a little different, a lot of project-based learning. So, students working towards a deadline. The students, when they're there, have complete ownership of the entire campus. They are doing some individual work at times and in some individual spaces, they're doing small group work. Sometimes they're working in a large group setting. It's a really good feeling. You're trying to treat them like young adults preparing them for the real world

Dan Hoffman ([14:19](#)):

Which is fantastic as you and I have discussed before. If you're in the 12th grade and you are a month or two away from graduation, you're raising your hand to go to the bathroom in lot of places. You're waiting for a bell to tell you where to go every 60 to 90 minutes. In a few months, there'll be off to college or working, and they...

Amy Simmons ([14:45](#)):

Have to manage their time.

Dan Hoffman ([14:46](#)):

Exactly. We've institutionalized them for the vast majority of their life up until that point. I would see it with interns, back when I would have interns more regularly. They just didn't understand that, 'oh, I have to schedule time to talk to you. I can't just walk into your office and sit down and start talking.' No, this is a workplace. The amount of coaching that goes into, in essence, kind of retrofitting these kids to be ready for the workplace. We hear it in industry all the time. They're just not ready.

Jason Van Heukelum ([15:25](#)):

Absolutely.

Dan Hoffman ([15:26](#)):

They might know the subject matter, but they don't know how to actually conduct themselves.

Jason Van Heukelum ([15:31](#)):

Right. It's been an excellent opening and certainly our students and staff have had to adapt. At first there was some growing pains, if you will, as kids kind of figured things out. But now two months in, when I walk around that place, I got a big smile on my face because the students and staff are navigating and negotiating time the way we do in the real world. They're being held accountable for projects and deadlines just like we are in the real world. And you know, it's been a good thing. We'll continue to iterate and grow and develop, but a successful launch, no doubt about it.

Dan Hoffman ([16:12](#)):

The building, the Shihadeh Center, it's a gorgeous building. It's the old John Kerr. I never saw the old John Kerr, but the layout's fantastic. The facilities are fantastic to match up with the gorgeous Handley campus. Which I was just talking, we're getting our tourism strategic plan put together, and I was talking to the consultant this morning. A lot of our tourism is from family visitors and friends that are here staying with other folks. He's like: 'so when you have people in town and you're showing them your city, what are the things you show them?' 'What are your go-to places that you use to sell the city?'

Amy Simmons ([16:58](#)):

That's easy.

Dan Hoffman ([16:58](#)):

It was so easy. I was like: walking mall, Handley High...

Amy Simmons ([17:01](#)):

Handley Library.

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

Handley Library and MSV. You can name off a handful of places. Especially if those visitors have school-aged kids. I keep a picture of Handley on my phone. And I just...

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

Whip it out.

Dan Hoffman ([17:19](#)):

I whip it out when people are like, 'oh, tell me about Winchester a little bit'. Then I say, 'well, let me show you our high school'. And then they're blown away. It's like a college campus. It's gorgeous. So we have now this complimentary gorgeous facility just a little bit up the hill to go with it, which is fantastic.

Jason Van Heukelum ([17:35](#)):

Absolutely. And I do want to give some shout outs first. To our school board for having the vision to do that over many years. Second, to City Council for bringing the dollars to bear to make that happen. It wasn't cheap. It was close to an \$18 million renovation. And certainly, we had to do that with bond money, et cetera. The taxpayers, and then, of course, our Winchester Education Foundation. We had quite a bit of private donations up to \$4 million in private donations to help make that happen. And

together and collectively, we're able to do something really well and we're able to do it with excellence. Something that's a multi-generational gifts to this community.

Dan Hoffman ([18:17](#)):

I'm very proud of that. And that's not the only major project we've got going on. We've got the Douglas School. It was also under what's the status on that?

Jason Van Heukelum ([18:26](#)):

Yeah. We are well underway of construction with the Douglas renovation. If you're traveling on North Kent Street, you're going to see a very different landscape when you travel north on North Kent Street on the right hand side. The 1920s portion of the old Douglas School is currently under renovation. The 1950s and sixties portion has been removed. Then, in the back there, we will be building a purpose-built brand new section that will connect to the 1920s portion. Ultimately, we'll relocate all of our administrative services for the school system to that site. Have one place for that and we're very excited about that. We're probably, I'd say 14 to 16 months out from final completion but earth is being moved and people are on site every day working, and that is our next project. We look forward to that completing. Of course, when we do that, we'll vacate the 12 North Washington Street office space that we currently occupy.

Dan Hoffman ([19:27](#)):

And then we'll put something else there.

Amy Simmons ([19:29](#)):

And it's not just offices for admin. What else is there?

Jason Van Heukelum ([19:32](#)):

The front part really will be a meeting place for the whole community. You'll have several meeting rooms, including a large meeting space. You'll have a quasi kitchen that will be connected to that meeting space so that you could bring in a catered event. Then, you'll have as far as our purposes, you'll have all of our operations, including transportation, not the buses, but the maintenance and custodial, food service, et cetera. Then, in the back, of course we have the park. So that's a nice connection point too. Now, the City Parks and Rec run the park side, but it's going to be a nice place for that community and really look sharp.

Dan Hoffman ([20:16](#)):

Absolutely.

Amy Simmons ([20:17](#)):

Do we have money in the budget for the renovations at that park?

Dan Hoffman ([20:19](#)):

Yes. In fact, I was just looking at the plans for it this morning. We're going to be redoing the field that's right behind the portion. There's going to be a couple of multi-use fields. We're going to put some bathrooms and new lighting in. The playground equipment's already in great shape out there. Then, I think we'll probably be resurfacing the basketball court and doing some other more aesthetic types of

things. But my hope is that between your project, the park, and some of the other improvements we're making along North Kent, that the Douglas renovation kind of becomes an anchor for that end of Kent Street. And then we just kind of fill it in with awesomeness all the way down into the core.

Jason Van Heukelum ([21:02](#)):

Agh. That's great. We're looking forward to it. In a few short months, 40-50 people will be showing up to work there every day, including myself, and I look forward to it.

Dan Hoffman ([21:12](#)):

It's going to be great. All right. Well, Jason, thank you very much for coming in. Great to see you as always. And yeah, we'll have you back in maybe some time over the summer and we're getting ready for your next school year or something.

Amy Simmons ([21:24](#)):

Yeah. See what changes are being made.

Dan Hoffman ([21:26](#)):

It's a gorgeous weekend. How's the football team doing?

Jason Van Heukelum ([21:29](#)):

Oh man, we have a great football team this year. And looking forward to some future playoff appearances, really proud of our kids and our coaching staff. It's one of the best seasons we've had since I've been here. And of course there's a long history and legacy of good strong football teams at Handley High School. So we hope to build on that.

Dan Hoffman ([21:50](#)):

Awesome. Well, Jason, thank you very much for coming in. Good to see you as always. So that was Jason.

Amy Simmons ([22:59](#)):

That was Jason.

Dan Hoffman ([23:00](#)):

Jason is a very impressive guy. I was at the ribbon cutting for Shihadeh, was it last week?

Amy Simmons ([23:07](#)):

Me too. Oh, not that one. I was thinking of the other tour.

Dan Hoffman ([23:09](#)):

Well, there's the little tour. And then there was the thing they did a couple of weeks or was it last week? Maybe even.

Amy Simmons ([23:13](#)):

Two weeks ago, I think.

Dan Hoffman ([23:16](#)):

Two weeks ago? Yeah. Where the governor was there and whole bunch of elected officials and it was the kind of ceremonial grand opening, even though it's been open for like a couple of months now. It was kind of the ceremonial ribbon cutting for the innovation center. And Jason gave a little speech that was so good. Such a good public speaker.

Amy Simmons ([23:39](#)):

And when I did the tour before the ribbon cutting his enthusiasm, so moving, and it just seemed so real.

Dan Hoffman ([23:49](#)):

Exactly.

Amy Simmons ([23:49](#)):

He's real.

Dan Hoffman ([23:49](#)):

Because it is real.

Amy Simmons ([23:50](#)):

Because he is real. We know with some people who are really good public speakers, that sometimes they can come across as, you know, maybe this is just a great speech. But no, it was from the heart and he loves this place.

Dan Hoffman ([24:02](#)):

Absolutely. Absolutely. He puts words together good. Yep.

Amy Simmons ([24:10](#)):

[Laughs] Unlike...what you just did there.

Dan Hoffman ([24:11](#)):

I know. That was a joke, Amy.

Amy Simmons ([24:12](#)):

I know. Wasn't it funny?

Dan Hoffman ([24:15](#)):

[Laughs] All right. So that's about it for us for this edition of the Rouss Review.

Amy Simmons ([24:23](#)):

Not yet.

Dan Hoffman ([24:24](#)):

Oh no, that's right. We've got coming ups. My bad.

Amy Simmons ([24:28](#)):

Yeah.

Dan Hoffman ([24:29](#)):

Go ahead.

Amy Simmons ([24:29](#)):

I put this together for a reason, so don't make me not do it.

Dan Hoffman ([24:32](#)):

All right. Read.

Amy Simmons ([24:34](#)):

Okay. So...

Dan Hoffman ([24:35](#)):

Put good words together.

Amy Simmons ([24:35](#)):

I'm trying, it's not very, it's not easy. Millwood Avenue, the traffic improvements project and the phase four, the Green Circle Trail. We're still looking for feedback from the public on those, so please go to the website, fill out the survey, review the information. We're looking for information or feedback from the citizens and our community by November 19th. Let us know what you think and then we'll be taking it to Council. And then Parks and Rec is bringing back their activities guide this fall. A lot of their programs have been on hiatus and so has the guide. No point in having a guide, if you don't have programs. All of that's coming back and it's full of all new things you can do at the park. So check that out.

Dan Hoffman ([25:18](#)):

Are we printing this thing?

Amy Simmons ([25:18](#)):

No, not this one. This one of the be online, but the next one. The spring/summer will be printed and mailed to everyone again. Well, that's the plan anyway.

Dan Hoffman ([25:27](#)):

That's a lot of paper.

Amy Simmons ([25:28](#)):

It is, but it's worth it. Okay. Speaking of the park they have this new program thanks to our partnership with SU. All of our youth basketball leagues are free for city residents now. That's junior, senior basketball for ages nine to 13 in Pee Wee basketball for ages five to eight. If you're a city resident sign up for those and there'll be free. Then, if you haven't noticed the construction happening around near the roundabout...

Dan Hoffman ([25:58](#)):

Which roundabout?

Amy Simmons ([25:59](#)):

Our only roundabout [laughs]. THE roundabout. Crews are installing a monument naming the roundabout after Hunter Edwards. Look for that unveiling coming in later this fall, and for anyone who needs assistance with heating costs or past due utility bills, the Virginia Department of Social Services has their Energy Assistance Program. And they're accepting applications through November 12th. Just go to www.commonhelp.virginia.gov. And then the splash pad, sad news, is closing for the season or has closed. Actually, it's already closed. It closed on Friday. It's getting a little too chilly outside, so we need to close that and then it will reopen in the spring. Do you want to give the good news about our bond rating?

Dan Hoffman ([26:44](#)):

Oh, yes. We got our AAA bond rating reaffirmed.

Amy Simmons ([26:48](#)):

For the sixth time.

Dan Hoffman ([26:50](#)):

Sixth time. Because we're on this streak, I think one of the things that's easy to overlook is what they always say after the AAA bond rating. And that is that we have a stable outlook. We're not on watch. We're not on like some type of weird probation or there's not some other negative circumstances. When they look at our financial picture in totality, they don't anticipate that changing. So, it's a stretch. We're solidly AAA rated, which is fantastic.

Amy Simmons ([27:29](#)):

And that also goes along with, we manage the money according to...

Dan Hoffman ([27:33](#)):

We manage the money good.

Amy Simmons ([27:34](#)):

Yep. [Laughs]

Dan Hoffman ([27:34](#)):

Thanks to Mary Blowe and Celeste Broadstreet. You know, that helps us borrow money at a much cheaper rate.

Amy Simmons ([27:46](#)):

Yep. We saved money on large projects when we borrow. And did you know that it's the highest rating of course, that we can possibly get. And we're one of only 12 cities in Virginia to maintain that AAA rating. There's only 12.

Dan Hoffman ([27:59](#)):

Really? Wow that's really good.

Amy Simmons ([28:00](#)):

So it's pretty prestigious. We should pat ourselves on the back.

Dan Hoffman ([28:03](#)):

We do.

Amy Simmons ([28:04](#)):

Actually, we'll pat Mary on the back.

Dan Hoffman ([28:07](#)):

Well, everybody.

Amy Simmons ([28:07](#)):

Everybody.

Dan Hoffman ([28:07](#)):

And the Council.

Amy Simmons ([28:09](#)):

That's so true.

Dan Hoffman ([28:09](#)):

Because at the end of the day, we can bring them all kinds of great policies, but if the Council doesn't approve it.

Amy Simmons ([28:15](#)):

And if our staff all doesn't follow through with everything.

Dan Hoffman ([28:18](#)):

Yeah. Absolutely. And a lot of these things, they might seem a little counter-intuitive. But when we were having discussions about the property tax rate this year, we reminded the Council that when these rating agencies look at the City, it's not cutting your budget and cutting taxes. That's not actually something they look positively upon. They see it as a sign of distress. So holding things flat. Being able to generate the revenue you need to pay for the services you provide, that's seen as a positive thing. They don't like to see jurisdictions going backwards. They want to see your tax base growing.

Amy Simmons ([29:06](#)):

And Winchester is doing that. That's been obvious. Look at all the people trying to find housing here to move to Winchester.

Dan Hoffman ([29:13](#)):

Yeah. We should talk about housing again.

Amy Simmons ([29:15](#)):

Again? We just did that last podcast.

Dan Hoffman ([29:16](#)):

We can't talk enough about housing.

Amy Simmons ([29:18](#)):

And we did it at the last Council meeting.

Dan Hoffman ([29:19](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. So anyways.

Amy Simmons ([29:22](#)):

I've got one more.

Dan Hoffman ([29:23](#)):

Go ahead.

Amy Simmons ([29:24](#)):

Speaking of needing housing and progress, the EDA, the Economic Development Authority, sold their lot at the former Winchester Towers. Right there on the corner of Cameron and Piccadilly to Lynx Ventures, which is who they were partnering with to redevelop that entire block. We'll have a mixed use development with a studio apartments, one and two bedroom apartments, and a parking garage there. So moving forward, getting some more housing.

Dan Hoffman ([29:52](#)):

Excellent.

Amy Simmons ([29:53](#)):

That's all I have.

Dan Hoffman ([29:54](#)):

Alrighty. Well, everybody, thanks for hanging out with us for a little bit. We will see you hopefully around City Hall.

Amy Simmons ([30:01](#)):

Hope to see you there.

Dan Hoffman ([30:03](#)):

See you there.

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