

Dan Hoffman (00:05):

Hello, and welcome to another edition of the Rouss Review. I'm your City Manager, Dan Hoffman. And not with me today is Amy Simmons, Communications Director. She's a little under the weather, so we wish her a speedy recovery. So, it's going to be sound a little awkward today. Just me alone in a room. But soon I will be joined by Alex, Jason, and Chris from our Parks Department and from our Old Town team. So we'll talk a little bit about all the holiday activities that are coming up. I know there's been a lot of questions about 'what is the City doing?' We're doing some different stuff this year. There's not the traditional parade but we have a ton of stuff to talk about and a lot of activities going on. So stay tuned. We're going to talk about that in just a moment.

Dan Hoffman (00:52):

I'm going to jump right in to our Council meeting agenda for tomorrow. Pretty full agenda, a few things to talk about. So first off we do have some land use issues, particularly second reading of our short-term rental ordinance. We're finally, I think, putting that one to bed for the time being. If you have any final thoughts on that, please feel free to show up and say your peace. A redevelopment, a rezoning over on Legge Boulevard. That's the one that we talked about last week, or two weeks ago. That's the one that's behind the Lowe's or the Home Depot. I believe it is. Over by the highway. And then one that I know there's going to be a lot of discussion and questions about that is the rezoning for, I think what is being called The Preserve, that is over there off of Jefferson Street. I'm sure there's gonna be a lot of discussion about that one. That one has raised a fair amount of questions. Now, that is a second reading and a public hearing. So you will have an opportunity to provide some feedback on that. Then onto the regular agenda. We do have a couple more things to talk about. So first off, I would say the biggest thing to discuss this Tuesday is the humanitarian shelter. The first reading of that ordinance it has made its way now out of the PED Committee. And it's been discussed at Planning Commission really at length. This is a text amendment that would give us, for the first time, a definition for what a humanitarian shelter, you might also call it a homeless shelter or something along those lines, is and where that should go in our city. The Planning Commission has weighed in they've provided their feedback. Now, it is time for the City Council to give theirs, so that I'm sure that's going to generate some discussion. We will then go into an executive session and the executive session, you know, I'm not going to talk much about that because it's an executive session, but we're talking about the acquisition of some property, as well as an agreement with the Frederick Water Authority. We will have a Work Session this week. We've got a few things to discuss. One of them is redistricting every 10 years, I believe it is. We do look at census data and determine if we need to adjust any boundary lines between the wards. This time, very, very minimal adjustments. Not a significant amount of change is going to be occurring, but if you're interested, please tune in or show up. That'll be discussed on the Work Session. And then we'll also be discussing a little bit about I think there's a CDBG item. That's a pretty standard pretty standard item. And I think that is going to be our agenda for the most part. So show up Tuesday six, o'clock say your peace of public comment or provide us feedback about any of the items on the agenda.

Dan Hoffman (04:05):

All right. With that, I'm going to go ahead and stop talking to myself alone here in a room and bring in some guests. So let me go grab Alex and Jason and Chris. All right. Welcome Chris, Jason and Alex, I'm gonna let you guys introduce yourselves and why you're here in just a second today. We're going to talk about all our preparations and plans for different holiday events. And when I say holiday events, mainly Christmas events. So if you're all listening to this and we're recording this you know, a couple of days before Thanksgiving, but a lot of this stuff takes time to plan. It didn't just happen on its own. So it's time

to let everybody know what we're doing for the holiday season. Really December is what we're talking about, for sure. But we hope everybody has a great Thanksgiving, but on to Christmas events. So I'm going to pass it over to the parks folks. First, Chris, who's no longer the newest guy at Parks and Rec. He's at four months now, and you've brought with you the newest person over there. Why don't you to introduce Jason.

Chris Konyar ([05:09](#)):

Yeah, so we have we had an open assistant director position and we were fortunate enough to hire Jason Brown. He started October 14th, right?

Jason Brown ([05:20](#)):

Yep.

Chris Konyar ([05:21](#)):

So we have a partner in crime, so to speak. So I'm pretty excited.

Dan Hoffman ([05:27](#)):

Let's be clear, no actual crime. Not literal crime. It's a euphemism for everybody out there.

Chris Konyar ([05:34](#)):

Yeah. So yeah, I'm very excited to have Jason on board.

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

Cool. Jason?

Jason Brown ([05:40](#)):

Yeah, I'm Jason Brown. I grew up in the Winchester area, went to all of the local schools. Went to Handley. Graduated from high school and went in the military five years in the Marine Corps. Went to college after that at Shepherd, then found my way back to Winchester. Worked for Frederick County for about 15 years and then was given an opportunity to come over here and work with Winchester. So I'm excited about that.

Dan Hoffman ([06:02](#)):

Awesome. Well, welcome aboard.

Chris Konyar ([06:04](#)):

Yeah, I've got a local guy, which is a bonus.

Dan Hoffman ([06:08](#)):

Cool. So tell us what we're doing for the holidays here.

Chris Konyar ([06:12](#)):

We're very excited about the holidays. One of my, obviously, favorite times a year. So we have a couple of things going on. On the smaller scale we have a Cookies with Santa class. They're doing the fall cookie

class right now. Got some pictures yesterday actually of some of the products from that class and it's pretty impressive, I have to say. So I'm looking forward to to see what comes out with the holiday cookies. That's registration is going on right now and it starts at the beginning of December. December 1st actually is the first session. So you can register on our website. Currently, we also have Santa Letters, which is kind of a unique program for for kids. We have our mailbox set up at the War Memorial Building in Jim Barnett Park. And then there's also a mailbox at the Visitor Center. So parents can come by, have their children write a letter to Santa for all of their holiday wishes and you know, their Christmas list, and that kind of thing. And they can drop the letter off at either mailbox. And then we make sure Santa himself, the big guy gets the letter, and then we we make sure that there's a response and that the child gets a letter back. So again, that's going on now, the mailboxes are set up. You have until December 1st for that. So a couple of weeks to get your letters together and get that in, so Santa has plenty of time to respond.

Alex Flanigan ([07:37](#)):

Now, is Santa mail operating on the same sort of delay that the rest of the postal service is dealing with right now. Or does he have some work around,

Chris Konyar ([07:44](#)):

Well, I think we have the inside track on Santa's time.

Alex Flanigan ([07:47](#)):

That's good. Because otherwise, it should've been a few weeks ago, if we're being honest. [Laughs].

Chris Konyar ([07:49](#)):

Yeah, yeah, exactly.

Dan Hoffman ([07:50](#)):

It can make no guarantees for a kids outside the boundaries of Winchester, but I know they have a special connection that will get the letters there. So sorry, all you county kids.

Chris Konyar ([08:02](#)):

[Laughs] Absolutely. Yeah. So yeah, we do have the inside track, but they can drop the letters off and good news to follow. That is going on as well. Our maintenance staff just got finished fully decorating the War Memorial Building. Putting up lights and decorations and all kinds of things like that. We're going to do our illumination on Monday, November 22nd. So we encourage people to come by the park, do a little drive by around 6:30 PM, when it's dark, and check it out. It's actually pretty cool. I was looking at it yesterday with the guys putting up all the you know, the decorations. It looks very nice.

Dan Hoffman ([08:45](#)):

We are switching it up this year. Last year, we did the drive through lights thing. For a variety of reasons: equipment, staffing, what have you, we're doing a little different this year. Next year, we're going to continue to build near that Winter Wonderland kind of experience out of the park for sure. View all this stuff as kind of an evolution to a point where we really want to make Jim Barnett Park and the downtown walking mall kind of the two holiday destinations.

Chris Konyar ([09:19](#)):

And you hit it on the head. I mean, it's an evolution and I've been trying to tell as many people, bear with us. We're trying to get through some, you know, some issues this year, but we obviously want to still do some holiday things. And then the last thing is the biggest one. It's our Holiday Open House on Saturday, December 11th. So we've got the morning shift from nine to 11 AM at the War Memorial Building and we have a lot of stuff going on. It's actually pretty impressive. We've got everything from performers, refreshments from donuts and coffee to the actual full breakfast. We have our kitchen in the social hall cranking up. I talked SAAA, Shenandoah Area on Aging, to get the kitchen going for us.

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

That's great.

Chris Konyar ([10:11](#)):

So we kind of upgraded our breakfast menu, so to say. We want people to come by, get some coffee, get some breakfast food, and then enjoy. We've got performers lined up throughout the morning. Everything from playing holiday music on the piano to singing carols to that kind of thing. We have a ton of activities for the kids: arts and crafts, games in the gym, just all kinds of fun, stuff like that. And then we also have some stuff for the adults too. We have a holiday fitness class, so you can get your work out on, in the morning to some holiday music.

Dan Hoffman ([10:48](#)):

Okay. Yeah. What kind of exercises are holiday related exercises? [Laughs]

Chris Konyar ([10:53](#)):

Exactly. I'm thinking workout to your favorite holiday jingle and then pop over to the social hall and have some coffee and some breakfast. And we have the scavenger hunt and then the Winchester Parks Foundation is doing a raffle. So we have all kinds of cool things. People can buy raffle tickets and put their stuff in and hopefully score maybe some Christmas gifts for people that they're looking for fulfill that a Christmas list thing. And then the most important thing is my man Santa is going to show up around 9:30, 10 o'clock to spend some time with the kids. And then around 11 AM, we'll put Santa...

Dan Hoffman ([11:39](#)):

So we're not doing the traditional parade, but we are doing kind of Santa's processional. At 11 o'clock, Santa will rise up, mount his chariot, which will be a fire truck. And there will be a bunch of us kind of along a route going from Jim Barnett Park, down Cork, right on Cameron, basically to the walking mall. So that's going to be, although it's not a formal parade, so to speak, that's going to be the route that Santa is going to take from the park over to the downtown walking mall. And there'll be some other people joining him. We will have kind of an escort with PD and other folks. So feel free to walk with Santa. If you want to walk with Santa, we're going to try to get a few other folks to join us along that route. There will be kind of a mini-parade, so to speak, going down to the walking mall where there will be more festivities. I'm going to pass it over now to Alex and folks that listen to this show every week, or I should say every other week. First off, thank you both for listening. But you probably have already met Alex, because Alex has been on. In fact, we did a walking tour of the downtown mall with Alex six months ago, maybe?

Alex Flanigan ([13:11](#)):

At this point, yeah, I guess so. Like right before we started Christmas planning.

Dan Hoffman ([13:15](#)):

Gotcha. You've probably met her before, but Alex remind folks who you are.

Alex Flanigan ([13:21](#)):

Yeah. Hey everybody, I'm Alex Flanigan. I'm the Main Street Program Manager. What that amounts to essentially is that I get to spend all of my waking moments in Old Town and I love it. It's so great to get to work with all of the local businesses down here, to get to really know the community, and to be involved in helping to keep things vibrant and alive and exciting down here. So this is a really exciting time of the year for me personally. And when Chris came to us with his Holiday Open House idea, I was so excited for it. And I'm still really excited for it because it hasn't happened yet. So, I'm hoping that everybody will come out and really make it a fantastic time. But it's a really cool concept because we're starting with all this really fantastic programming over at the War Memorial building. And then, as you follow Santa down to Old Town, the party's going to keep going, basically all day long. We'll welcome Santa down. We'll have some music, we'll have a little holiday party going at the Taylor Pavilion. We'll have some live music there. We'll have our friends at the Wine Room at Taylor Pavilion, sort of hosting some snacks and some some treats that you can get there, and we'll have a gift wrap table. So anything that you buy while you're down in Old Town, you can bring over to us at the Pavilion. And I will personally wrap it myself.

Dan Hoffman ([14:23](#)):

That is a great. I cannot volunteer at the table though. I am so bad at that.

Chris Konyar ([14:28](#)):

You and me both.

Dan Hoffman ([14:29](#)):

Even a simple box, I cannot. And that's why gift bags are my go-to. You throw it in the bag, you toss some tissue paper on top, and boom.

Alex Flanigan ([14:38](#)):

Well, then what you should do, Dan, is that you should shop downtown during the Holiday Open House, and then you should bring it over to me at the Pavilion and I'll wrap it for you. Totally free of charge.

Dan Hoffman ([14:47](#)):

I will. So much money last last year for Christmas presents on the walking mall. I think I'm still paying for it,

Alex Flanigan ([14:57](#)):

But it's time to start again.

Dan Hoffman ([14:59](#)):

The best thing, I'm going to digress here for a quick second. The best thing about the walking mall is that every single one of those businesses is unique and you're not going to find them somewhere else. So I got so many compliments on the gifts that I gave, because I was going to places like Blue Peacock, the antique store, where if you can't find a gift for somebody for anybody in there, you're not looking. You've got places like Mountain Trails across the way. Oh man, that is a dangerous place to go. Mountain Trails is our joint. It's very varied. You get, of course, food and drink galore along there. So if you're going to go shopping, have some lunch, do some more shopping, there's a bunch of other places I'm sure I'm forgetting about, but that's the go-to place if you want shop.

Alex Flanigan ([15:49](#)):

Yeah. You'll always find something original, no matter what you give from a business in Old Town.

Dan Hoffman ([15:53](#)):

Book store.

Alex Flanigan ([15:53](#)):

Yeah. Nobody's going to duplicate that gift. Nobody else is going to find it. But the other really amazing thing about shopping in Old Town is that when you go into a store like that, you can talk to anybody in that store and chances are, they're either the person that owns the store or they're a certified expert on the thing that they're selling. So, if you go into the Winchester Book Gallery, Christine is there. The owner of that store is there to talk to you and to tell you all about anything you could possibly hope for. It's amazing. The service is just incredible. And so, you're not just buying a product, you're buying the experience of making a connection with somebody in your community who is an expert on that kind of thing. And that's so cool.

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

Yeah. In and around the walking mall, you've got shops on Piccadilly and you're going over to Braddock, you've got Kimberley's and McKeys, Scarpa Ultra, and then all the way down to the south side.

Alex Flanigan ([16:42](#)):

Yeah. Some really, really phenomenal stuff. And everything will be all decked out for the holidays, cause we have all of our storefronts going up now. Some really just beautiful displays. The tree is up. Everything is lit and decorated and so cool. The atmosphere should be just about pitch perfect. We'll have music at the Taylor Pavilion. We'll have some carolers from local community groups going up and down the walking mall, some live musicians, performers. A bunch of folks will have different retail specials going on or special hours extended things. And all the decor. Santa will be walking around. I think it's going to be a really fantastic time. And then, actually, we have that portion of the day planned out until about 5:00 PM. So come down, grab lunch, do your shopping, visit us at the Pavilion. Stop by our holiday party, listen to some music. But if that's not really your scene, if you've already done all of your holiday shopping during Windependent Weekend, then you can come down at five when we have our Old Town Spirit license in effect. So from that point, what you can do is you can go into any of the establishments on the walking mall. You can get your beverage of choice, whether that's a nice hot mold wine, or a cider, or a beer, or a wine that you particularly enjoy from one of your favorite establishments, you can actually carry out with you on to the walking mall. And you can go do your shopping then. So this special license that we have, as long as you stay on the walking wall, and as long

as your drink is from one of our reputable Old Town businesses, you can carry it out with you. You can even take it into retail stores.

Dan Hoffman ([18:02](#)):

So long as that retail store says its allowed.

Alex Flanigan ([18:06](#)):

Yep. They'll be signage in the windows. So, if you want to grab a wine and go into the Book Gallery, or if you want to get a cider and then head down to Tin Top and look at the local art. Tons of really remarkable opportunities. So really cool atmosphere and that'll be going until about 10:00 PM.

Chris Konyar ([18:21](#)):

Wow.

Alex Flanigan ([18:24](#)):

Full day of programming.

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

Yeah. Pro tip here, check out the t-shirts at Tin Top. Always cool T-Shirts.

Chris Konyar ([18:29](#)):

Really? I'll have to check that out.

Dan Hoffman ([18:32](#)):

There you go. All right. So that's all December 11th, December 3rd, we also have a little event there.

Alex Flanigan ([18:39](#)):

We do. And that's another great collab between the Parks Department and Old Town. So Chris and I are getting to know each other real well this holiday season.

Chris Konyar ([18:46](#)):

Love the collab.

Alex Flanigan ([18:47](#)):

Yeah. We are doing the tree lighting this year. Maybe a little bit of a deconstructed parade. We're not doing the parade on the same day. But instead of doing that, we're having the standard processional and Holiday Open House and on the third, which is going to be our December First Friday. We're going to have the tree lighting. So the tree is up, it's decorated, but if you want to see it glow to life for the first time, then come down on the third. It's a Friday evening. We'll be starting at 6:30 and I think Parks has arranged to have some elves there. You guys really have the connect.

Chris Konyar ([19:16](#)):

Yeah. We're going to have elves kind of prep for Santa coming to the Open House. So Santa's elves will be there. We've got some some surprises with some performers. An acapella group that's coming in that's going to do some singing. And then, we'll count down and light up the tree.

Alex Flanigan ([19:34](#)):

Awesome. So come down and get your hot chocolate and go stand there and wait for the magic to happen.

Dan Hoffman ([19:40](#)):

Awesome. Yeah. Cool. So we've got clearly a ton of stuff for folks to do this season. Obviously, we still have Thanksgiving coming up later this week. Windependent Weekend is the Friday after. So that's the...

Alex Flanigan ([19:56](#)):

26th to 27th.

Dan Hoffman ([19:57](#)):

Real quick before we wrap up Alex, tell folks what Windependent Weekend is.

Alex Flanigan ([20:02](#)):

Yeah. So Windependent Weekend is my favorite weekend of the year. It's our big shop local push. So, you've heard of black Friday. You may have heard of Plaid Friday and Shop Small Saturday, and that's what we're celebrating here. We're celebrating local businesses and the power of giving back to your community just by doing your holiday shopping in a different place. So Windependent is our year-long push for folks to shop here in Winchester at Winchester stores to really celebrate the independent businesses that make Winchester specifically great. And there are so many statistics about the impact that it has when you buy a product in a local store, as opposed to buying it online or going to a big bulk retailer. Things that really make a difference. And part of what we're trying to focus on is we could quote the economic development statistics at you and chances are, that's not why you're listening to this. You know, there are meetings you could go to if you want to hear that sort of thing and they're a little bit more dry than this. We could talk all day about like what it means to the people in your neighborhood to help keep them in business. But what we're really trying to give you is the experience of shopping local and that's something so fundamentally different from going to a big box store or from sitting on your couch and ordering from Amazon. Is that when you go down here, you're running into people you know. You're meeting store owners. You're forging these really cool connections with the barista that learns your order. And so they have it ready to go when you walk in or the book seller that knows exactly what you like, or the person at the art store who will hold onto that item for you, or reach out to the person that made it and having a custom commission made for you. There's so many really cool connections you can make in your community by doing this, but there's also so much just happening in Winchester. That makes it a really cool and vibrant place that we really believe in that we're only going to get to keep celebrating year after year if the money is coming back here and staying in the community. So we're going to have, again, live music. We're going to have a kickoff breakfast actually celebrating all of our business owners and staff in Old Town on Saturday morning. So if you are listening to this and you're an Old Town business owner, or you work at an Old Town business, swing by the Taylor wine room on Saturday morning and come enjoy some complimentary breakfast, pick up some Shop Small swag. It will be really exciting and nice event, but yeah, anytime Friday or Saturday if

you come down, there'll be cool stuff happening. There'll be really amazing deals going on and just tons of cool stuff.

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

All right, excellent. So that's this coming weekend. You said it's Shop Small Saturday and Plaid Friday?

Alex Flanigan ([22:22](#)):

So, plaid Friday is just the branding essentially that came up as not a pushback on Black Friday, but a way to sort of capture that imagery. Instead of doing Black Friday, you're thinking about your rustic homespun, local businesses.

Dan Hoffman ([22:36](#)):

Got it. As opposed to getting trampled at a Walmart,

Alex Flanigan ([22:40](#)):

You could get trampled at Walmart or you could come downtown and have pastries and coffee. You could shop at a local business, you could buy something cool at Mountain Trails.

Dan Hoffman ([22:49](#)):

Excellent. Yeah. All right, guys. Well, thank you very much. Thanks for enlightening us and letting everybody know what's going on this holiday season. If you want more information about this, or if you want to make sure that you get updates please go to the City's website, [WinchesterVA.gov](#), and it'll all be up there as well. Great. And there's an Old Town website as well.

Alex Flanigan ([23:11](#)):

There is. [EnjoyOTW.com](#).

Dan Hoffman ([23:13](#)):

[EnjoyOTW.com](#). Excellent. All right, guys. Thanks very much for coming in. So that was the team that is putting together all of our holiday events, them of course, with a great staff over at Parks and with our Development Services team. So make sure you check out those events, check out the website in particular, if you want some specifics or if you want to attend some of those events. All the details you need are going to be on the City's website, [WinchesterVA.gov](#). With no Amy means we have no coming ups this time around, but you can also go to our website for any of the events that we've talked about today or other events. Make sure you go to [WinchesterVA.gov](#). For example, if you're curious about whether a trash pickup during the holidays, getting rescheduled, a leaf pick up, any closures that might be occurring during the holiday season, make sure you go to our website. You can also sign up for alerts and notifications there as well. So with that I'm going to bid you all adieu for this edition of the Rouse Review. I'm your City Manager Dan Hoffman. Have a great Thanksgiving, everybody and we'll talk to you in a couple of weeks.