

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

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

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

Hello, Dan, how are you?

New Speaker ([00:15](#)):

I'm very good. Alright. We've got what is fun for me a topic that really applies to everybody. We're talking trash today. Talking trash with Mike Neese.

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

And recycling. Oh my.

Dan Hoffman ([00:31](#)):

And recycling, oh my. Trash, recycling, we're talking compost. So we weren't quite sure what to call this particular podcast. You know, talking trash, gabbing about garbage, socializing solid waste, uh...

Amy Simmons ([00:54](#)):

Keep it going. What else you got?

Dan Hoffman ([00:55](#)):

I'm out of alliterations, but hey, we're gonna get into some stuff that I know a lot of people might think is gross, but trash is...

Amy Simmons ([01:10](#)):

It's necessarily.

Dan Hoffman ([01:11](#)):

It's necessary. Trash is a very important topic for all city governments? We spend a lot of money on it. We spend a lot of time on it. It's important to public health. It's important to the environment. So we're going to spend some time talking trash today with Mike. Neese.

Amy Simmons ([01:24](#)):

I'm excited. And you'll see that his hair has grown really long and his beard. Did you know that he recycles that as well?

Dan Hoffman ([01:33](#)):

That's interesting. I look forward to seeing that

Amy Simmons ([01:39](#)):

He composts, he recycles.

Dan Hoffman ([01:41](#)):

He composts his hair.

Amy Simmons ([01:42](#)):

He doesn't compost it, he recycles it. He sends it off somewhere. They make something out of it.

Dan Hoffman ([01:47](#)):

I don't even know where to begin asking him about that because I am made of questions right now.

Amy Simmons ([01:53](#)):

He does it every year.

Dan Hoffman ([01:56](#)):

Every year. I wish I had that problem. Uh, but sadly...Maybe I need to get some of his extra hair because he has plenty to spare.

Amy Simmons ([02:05](#)):

You know, whenever you see him walking around town and he's got short hair, you'll know that he just recently recycled it.

Dan Hoffman ([02:11](#)):

He just recently recycled his hair. Well, if that's any indication of how passionate Mike is about recycling, it's sure to be an interesting conversation.

Amy Simmons ([02:18](#)):

Absolutely.

Dan Hoffman ([02:19](#)):

Today we're going to start off talking about the agenda for the Council meeting tomorrow. Again, it's going to be a pretty light agenda. It was light two weeks ago. It's going to be light again this week and that's because a lot of stuff is going into committees. We'll talk about that a little bit later. So I'm going to do a real quick rundown of what you can expect to hear tomorrow. During the Council meeting, there is something that came out of the Planning and Economic Development Committee, a zoning ordinance. On the consent agenda, we've got some resolutions regarding affordable housing. We do have a resolution approving us to begin disconnecting past due accounts again for water. Now, I know that might generate some questions. We are still emerging from the pandemic, we're still in it. But it's an important time for us to start taking this step, mainly because we have so many programs in place that help people with payment plans, financial assistance, and we need more people to take advantage of those. And, you know, a cutoff is an incentive to take advantage of those plans. We don't want to cut anybody off, and folks have multiple opportunities to avoid that. And we want to push folks to take advantage of the different tools that we make available to them. Also, a resolution renaming one of our old council chambers after Mayor Charles Zuckerman who recently passed away. And then there's going to be a couple of other things, an ordinance around destruction of buildings destroyed by fortuitous happenings.

Amy Simmons ([04:06](#)):

There's that word again?

Dan Hoffman ([04:07](#)):

There it is. We talked about that last time. It's now for first reading and a new ordinance about right of way permits. On the Work Session, very light, all there's going to be is committee reports. What that's going to be is an opportunity for our chairs of committees, and our committees are the Planning and Economic Development, Finance and Audit, Boards and Commissions, and Public Safety. The chairs of those committees will give a brief report out of what happened in their committee. In some cases it might be an item that was just discussed in the regular meeting. In some cases it might be something that was just presented as information at the committee level, like an update on the ESCI Fire Study that was done. We give quarterly updates on that. There was the chicken ordinance that I'm sure you've read about in the paper, if you cracked open the Winchester Star recently. That basically did not move out of committee. So the Council will hear all of these different reports and if they choose to bring something out of committee by a vote of the full Council, they can still do that or they can just listen and hear what the committees have been up to. So, that's going to happen. That'll be the main item on the agenda for the Work Session tomorrow.

Dan Hoffman ([05:29](#)):

Now, let's welcome in Mike and start talking trash. Mike Neese is my Refuse and Recycling Manager, but I think that is really an understatement in terms of what he does. He really is the heart and soul of all of our solid waste, trash, garbage, whatever you want to call it, recycling, compost. Basically, if you're done with it, he's not done with it. It's something that when I got here, you know, I know it comes off as a bit wonky, but I hope my enthusiasm about this topic really came through in my first meetings with Mike and with Perry, who's also here in the studio, because this is such an important part of what a city does. It's important to public health. It's important to quality of life. Now, it's taken, especially over the last decade plus as the issues regarding climate change have come more to the forefront. There's now a more global importance of how we deal with our waste. It's taken on a much more important context. So, we've got Mike with us today to talk about one of the improvements we're making. Some residents have already experienced this. It's the new roll off containers. We'll cover a few other topics as well, but first off, welcome Mike.

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

Thank you.

Dan Hoffman ([07:08](#)):

Before you get into trash, tell us, you've been with the City for a while. Tell us a little bit how long you've been with the City.

Michael Neese ([07:13](#)):

Sixteen years, I believe.

Dan Hoffman ([07:14](#)):

16 years.

Amy Simmons ([07:19](#)):

And he's just not Refuse and Recycling Manager, you know.

Dan Hoffman ([07:23](#)):

Really? What else is he?

Amy Simmons ([07:26](#)):

He is Michael Recycle.

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

Oh, that's right. That's right. There was a commercial. He is actually, he has been animated, uh, more so than he is in real life. [Laughing] He is literally animated in the Michael Recycle commercial. So, if you go to our, where can we find that on the website?

Amy Simmons ([07:45](#)):

It's just search for 'service league'. And he is part of a band of superheroes that we have serving the city. So when the metropolis is in trouble; when there's too much trash on the street; Mike is there to serve. He comes to the rescue.

Dan Hoffman ([08:04](#)):

So, the guy is, he's dressed in green, he's got the beard. It's actually a very accurate rendition. The muscles are actually real too, the whole thing. In fact, if you could be here now, he has a cape.

Amy Simmons ([08:20](#)):

Yep. Head to toe.

Dan Hoffman ([08:21](#)):

So, he actually wears that on a daily basis.

Amy Simmons ([08:26](#)):

But all jokes aside, he does go to elementary schools in his Michael Recycle costume and teaches the kids about recycling.

Dan Hoffman ([08:33](#)):

Now this I did not know.

Michael Neese ([08:34](#)):

Yeah. That's a lot of fun.

Amy Simmons ([08:37](#)):

I've got pictures to prove it. Okay.

Dan Hoffman ([08:39](#)):

Okay. I think we need to put some money in the budget for like standard uniforms.

Amy Simmons ([08:46](#)):

[Laughing] Yes. Cause we have Michael Recycle, The Snowman, and Farrell Faucet.

Dan Hoffman ([08:50](#)):

Farrell Faucet?

Amy Simmons ([08:53](#)):

Yes.

Dan Hoffman ([08:54](#)):

What is that like cats that drink out of a faucet. What is that?

Speaker 3 ([08:58](#)):

No, Farrell is our water treatment plant operations manager. So he's in charge of keeping our water clean. So, instead of Farrah Fawcett, his name is Farrell Faucet, spelled a little differently.

Dan Hoffman ([09:13](#)):

Yeah. [Laughing] Otherwise, I'm sure the actual Farrah Fawcett, timely reference, would really probably take issue with it.

Speaker 3 ([09:20](#)):

Yes. And The Snowman, of course, he's been busy these days. He's clearing the streets and he has his own jingle. So, we'll have to play that one day.

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

And snowman is Justin, right?

Amy Simmons ([09:30](#)):

Yes.

Dan Hoffman ([09:31](#)):

Justin Hall.

Dan Hoffman ([09:32](#)):

Yeah. And that doesn't look like Justin though.

Speaker 3 ([09:35](#)):

No, Justin's lost a lot of weight.

Dan Hoffman ([09:37](#)):

I know. Well, I was like, why did you guys do this to poor Justin? Like this doesn't look anything like him. No, Justin's as fit as a fiddle.

Amy Simmons ([09:45](#)):

He is.

Dan Hoffman ([09:45](#)):

Yeah. So, we just talked to snow removal just in the last one, too. We should have him come in and talk a little bit.

Amy Simmons ([09:54](#)):

He can come in the fall when we talk about leaves.

New Speaker ([09:56](#)):

Good call.

Dan Hoffman ([09:57](#)):

Alright. Well, on to recycling. So in some parts of the city folks have gotten new, very nice sturdy roll-off containers. What areas of the city have got those?

Michael Neese ([10:10](#)):

There's four wards in the city, so there's a small section in each ward that got them. We chose those areas so it'd be equally distributed between the wards, but also to have different road conditions to see how well they do up in and on curbs, places with limited parking, places that don't have curves.

Dan Hoffman ([10:30](#)):

And then we're not the first jurisdiction to do this. So it's new to us, but in fact, every jurisdiction I've ever worked in [laughing] actually has had these now that I think about it.

Amy Simmons ([10:39](#)):

So we're behind the curve.

Dan Hoffman ([10:40](#)):

Maybe a little bit. We'll talk more about that in just a moment, but it's actually a great thing because it allows us to better manage the amount we pick up, and really apply the proper fees and costs to people who generate more trash, and those who are very good about generating less waste. So, we've got it in four different parts of the city, about how many cans was it total?

Michael Neese ([11:04](#)):

A little over a thousand.

Dan Hoffman ([11:05](#)):

Okay. And if we were to roll it out, city-wide, we'd have to add another what, how many?

Michael Neese ([11:11](#)):

We'd add another 7,000.

Dan Hoffman ([11:13](#)):

Another 7,000. So a little more than 10% of the city got these. And we did a survey to see what people thought, what did we find out?

Michael Neese ([11:22](#)):

We found out lots of good stuff. I separated the data out by the wards so that I could see the difference from those curb and street edge settings. I also did it by can size to see we'd have three different sizes out there, the 95, 65 and 35, just to see which ones perform the best and which ones people were happiest with. And I was really surprised to see the medium size, the 65 gallon, was not well-liked

Dan Hoffman ([11:50](#)):

Really? Medium-sized was not well-liked?

Michael Neese ([11:53](#)):

I guess we're a little bit on the extreme end. The people that had the 35 gallons were overwhelmingly happy. People that had the 95s were overwhelmingly happy. The 65s, not as much.

Amy Simmons ([12:04](#)):

Hmm, wonder why?

Dan Hoffman ([12:06](#)):

It was probably people that thought they produce a lot less waste than they actually do, like the Hoffman house. [Laughing] And in the places where I've lived that have these, we always end up with the largest one, even though we aspire to do better. I'm sorry, Mike.

Amy Simmons ([12:21](#)):

Do you recycle?

Dan Hoffman ([12:23](#)):

We do. We'll get into recycling in just a minute and some things that I know we're looking forward to doing, but back to the cans. So, we have the large ones, the small ones, which probably makes sense cause you got some folks. Maybe single folks.

Speaker 3 ([12:42](#)):

Couples.

Dan Hoffman ([12:44](#)):

Couples, folks living alone, retirees that aren't generating massive amounts of waste because they order stuff off Amazon every other day.

Michael Neese ([12:53](#)):

Yeah. That's where we see most of the 35s going, people that live alone, typically ones that are only putting out one kitchen trash bag a week or maybe two, three of the Walmart grocery bags. It seems to work well for them cause it's slightly bigger than a kitchen trash can. But, not by much. So it's easier for them to manage as well.

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

And that's important for us too, from a cost perspective because our tipping fees, for folks that don't know what a tipping fee is, those tipping fees are going up. Mike in a few sentences, tell everybody what a tipping fee is.

Michael Neese ([13:31](#)):

When we take the trucks to the landfill or even to the recycling centers when we open the back of that truck and we tip it out, pound for pound, we have to pay for what is in that truck.

Dan Hoffman ([13:45](#)):

Got you. So folks that generate more trash in the city, they cost the city a little bit more.

Michael Neese ([13:49](#)):

Yes.

Dan Hoffman ([13:49](#)):

So, we like it when folks generate less trash. And we also currently give folks, and for the foreseeable future we'll still continue to give folks, an amazing deal on what they pay for their solid waste fee. So, right now, folks pay five bucks a month for their solid waste. If they were going to pay for that themselves, whether they were out in a rural area or if they just paid a private company to come pick it up, the cost is closer to

Amy Simmons ([14:22](#)):

30, 40.

Michael Neese ([14:23](#)):

40.

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

\$30 or \$40.

Amy Simmons ([14:26](#)):

I pay \$30, I think.

Dan Hoffman ([14:26](#)):

Yeah. The city actually subsidizes solid waste to the tune of over a million dollars a year. And it has not gone up in five years, since we instituted the solid waste fee. So, there may be a time when we have to adjust it just because tipping fees go up, our costs are going up. These cans are not cheap. You know, these are nice sturdy cans.

Michael Neese ([14:52](#)):

Yes, we chose the commercial grade cans instead of the retail cans. So, while you can get something of a similar size and maybe even a similar shape at any local retailer, it's not made of the same plastic. It's not nearly as durable and the way the parts are assembled together, make it more rugged and last longer.

Dan Hoffman ([15:12](#)):

They're really nice cans. Did we ask any questions about the the quality of the cans or were folks happy generally with that?

Michael Neese ([15:22](#)):

We asked about the use and the storage. Were they satisfied with being able to take it to the curb and back, to be able to store it until the next week. And we did see some difficulties there. I don't like to say anything was negative. It just shows things that we need to improve or things that we'll need to help people with. Some people have limited mobility, some people have limited space, so we have to take those things into consideration.

Speaker 3 ([15:49](#)):

A lot of the comments were about that just didn't have anywhere to put it, and that was what was most concerning to them. If they put in the garage, they didn't have enough space for the car in the garage, or if they put it beside the house or they couldn't get it through their fence, if they got the larger can. It was just the how do you store it, basically?

New Speaker ([16:07](#)):

Yeah, the logistics of it.

Dan Hoffman ([16:10](#)):

Which, I mean, one of the nice things about having such a nice, slightly bigger high quality can is that you don't have bags laying out for animals to tear into. On a windy day, like we have very often around here, we see trash blowing around because it blows out of cans. It really does, there's so many positive aspects to this. Plus, those flimsy cans that you get at Lowe's or Home Depot, they might last a year or two before they finally get beat up to the point that the handle breaks or the wheel breaks. Those are 25, 30 bucks a pop. Even if there was a slightly higher fee, you're basically getting a free can, a free high quality can for life. Because there our cans, in essence. We replace them if something breaks. If your City-provided can breaks, we come out and we give you a new one. So you never have to go buy a trash can again, an external trash can, at least, if you don't want to.

Michael Neese ([17:07](#)):

And even to save more money, it depends on the type of breakage. If it's a wheel or an axle, those can be replaced on site. Even a lid, that can be replaced.

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

Nice.

Michael Neese ([17:17](#)):

If there's permanent damage to the entire body, then yeah the can would need to be replaced.

Dan Hoffman ([17:22](#)):

Yeah. And you see, oftentimes people spray painting on their trash can, like the house number or the name of the person cause it's where they're worried about it getting stolen. No more of that. These are nicely marked, nicely equipped cans. So, any other things jump out in the survey? Tell me what the staff think. What do our solid waste guys think about it?

Amy Simmons ([17:46](#)):

There was a big smile on his face when you asked that.

Michael Neese ([17:49](#)):

That was one of my favorite parts of the survey. I didn't do their's in a quantifiable survey, one to five scale. I just wanted to see what keywords, what ideas were repeated most between our 18 staff. 100% across the board wanted to see it go city-wide. That was their number one thing. There were a few issues with snow and limited mobility, which yeah, no surprise. But they really liked them. It makes their jobs so much easier.

Amy Simmons ([18:19](#)):

Yeah. That's one of the reasons why you did it other than taking out the confusion of how much trash to put in these carts is to help with injuries and having to lift what, 70 pounds, thousand times a day.

Michael Neese ([18:33](#)):

Yes. 2019, we were lifting just on trash collection 6,587 tons in a year.

Amy Simmons ([18:46](#)):

With their muscles.

Dan Hoffman ([18:47](#)):

Their muscles. Well, that's where Mike gets all his muscles.

Amy Simmons ([18:50](#)):

That's right.

Dan Hoffman ([18:50](#)):

That's why he's Michael Recycle.

Michael Neese ([18:52](#)):

And that was a fairly average year for the last 10 years of data. 2020 of course was a little different as we all experienced.

Amy Simmons ([19:01](#)):

Did we have more trash in 2020?

Michael Neese ([19:01](#)):

Oh yes. We were at 7,152 tons.

Dan Hoffman ([19:05](#)):

People are at home more. There you go. So, let's talk a little bit about recycling. Now. These are just trash cans, trash roll-off cans. We're still using the bins.

Amy Simmons ([19:17](#)):

The blue bins.

Dan Hoffman ([19:18](#)):

The blue bins for recycling.

Michael Neese ([19:18](#)):

Little 16 gallons.

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

Yes. So I know we get frequent questions about what we recycle, what we don't recycle. There's a lot of stories out there about what happens to it. Does it really get recycled? About China doesn't take certain things anymore. Let's dispel a few myths first off. Glass, we do or do not recycle glass.

Michael Neese ([19:47](#)):

We do not recycle glass.

Dan Hoffman ([19:48](#)):

Got it. And why is that?

Michael Neese ([19:51](#)):

For recycling, just in broad terms, each material stream is treated as a commodity. No one recycles for free, it's a business. So when commodity prices drop or manufacturing is limited, then the prices and the demand for that commodity drops. Virginia doesn't have a glass beneficiation location in the entire state. Pennsylvania has one and North Carolina has one.

Dan Hoffman ([20:21](#)):

What is glass beneficiation?

Michael Neese ([20:23](#)):

Remember how it said each stream is a commodity? Glass itself is multiple streams. It's due to the specification of what it's going to turn into. Typically, it's sorted by color: blues, greens, browns. But also by type: window glass, cups, bowls, that sort of thing. Each one of those has to be separated out and meet a certain specification. That's why it goes to a beneficiation facility so that it changes this massive multicolor or this mass of different streams into each one.

Dan Hoffman ([20:58](#)):

Got it.

Michael Neese ([20:59](#)):

But yeah, we don't have one of those. So, [laughing]. The other thing is we collect co-mingled plastic bottles and metal cans. It couldn't even go to a beneficiation facility because it has to just be glass. So, for us to recycle glass, to collect glass curbside, we would need to put an additional truck and crew on the road just to pick up glass, just to drive to either North Carolina or Pennsylvania.

Dan Hoffman ([21:25](#)):

Got it.

Amy Simmons ([21:28](#)):

We don't get money back for glass, right?

Michael Neese ([21:30](#)):

Oh no. We'd have to pay for that.

Dan Hoffman ([21:31](#)):

Yeah. We've got the two bins now, cardboard and then the other one, which is metal and plastic, right?

Michael Neese ([21:42](#)):

Yes.

Dan Hoffman ([21:42](#)):

So that's called dual stream for folks, because obviously dual meaning two, there's two different streams. Technically, we don't even really, it could be divided down into more streams, but we kind of generalize it. Now, some people out there who know a little bit about recycling, they also are familiar with something called single stream. It might seem simpler. It might seem easier. They say, oh, well, it's easier for people just to throw it all into one can, but it's actually not better. Tell us why.

Michael Neese ([22:12](#)):

I guess you could say it's better on the service end because you get a larger volume of recyclable materials. You'll also have more contamination and waste in there and it is easier. You don't have to think about it. You know, you have a trash can and recycled, then it goes in one or the other. I can see the benefit on that end. The downside is the quality of material you're getting out of that is much less. And of course the contamination. If one person has put in, say a mayonnaise bottle or a mustard bottle, then that spreads throughout the entire load of materials. That's a lot of material being contaminated, even the people that were doing single stream the right way. But that's also all of these mixed commodities together. So, now it has to go to a processing facility, they're called Material Reclamation Facilities.

Dan Hoffman ([23:03](#)):

Resource recovery. A few different names for it, yeah.

Michael Neese ([23:06](#)):

Yeah. We like to call them Murphs, because it rhymes with Smurf. So it makes me smile.

Dan Hoffman ([23:11](#)):

Murph is an acronym that stands for...

Michael Neese ([23:13](#)):

Material Reclamation Facility. The single stream materials would go there and then they're processed out into their individual streams, excluding things that would have been contaminated. If memory serves, food waste being the primary contaminant and I believe the second is glass because the glass gets crushed. Of course, as it's collected and as it's transported, and those tiny bits of glass will get into the fibers of the paper. Now, if you're selling to a paper mill, they're going to have to remove all of that paper to be able to recycle the paper into something new. Paper, of course, is a down-cycling process. It doesn't go from a white paper, like print paper, back to white print paper. It down-cycles because the fibers get more loose. So, we go to newsprint, to tissues, to toilet tissue and that sort of thing. So from the recycling processing, and you're not going to want to make toilet paper with bits of glass.

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

[Laughs].

Dan Hoffman ([24:12](#)):

That sounds undesirable.

Michael Neese ([24:16](#)):

[Laughs].

Dan Hoffman ([24:16](#)):

That's, um...

Amy Simmons ([24:17](#)):

Perry's shaking his head.

Dan Hoffman ([24:20](#)):

I think Charmin probably doesn't want to put that in an ad campaign with some bears.

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

Good job, Mike.

Dan Hoffman ([24:25](#)):

Uh, so thank you very graphic but appropriate description. We do dual stream. Now, some places around the world do up to eight. Sweden, I think you and I have talked about a little bit. Sweden does what they call eight fractions, where it's eight different streams. They do different colors of glass. They do different types of metal, different types of plastic. And you know, when I've talked to folks from there about it, how do you do that? That seems like impossible. They've been doing it for a generation.

To them it's like second nature. There's no big education campaign that they're doing. They did it literally a generation ago. Kids grew up and that's all they know. Now they have big trucks with roll off containers that have eight compartments, and they throw it into different things, including compost. So, talk a little bit about organics. This is an area where most jurisdictions in the country do little to nothing with their compost, but it's about a third of the total waste stream. So talk about compost. We got a new program. I know that we're about to kick off because of a grant. Talk a little bit about compost.

Michael Neese ([25:38](#)):

I love compost. And so cut me off if you I go to long.

Dan Hoffman ([25:42](#)):

You compost at home, correct?

Michael Neese ([25:43](#)):

I do. Yes. I also teach composting classes within the city, but also in my volunteer time for the master gardeners and some of the other organizations. I love composting.

Amy Simmons ([25:54](#)):

Did you see the face light up?

Dan Hoffman ([25:57](#)):

Yeah. Really.

Michael Neese ([26:00](#)):

[Laughs]

Dan Hoffman ([26:01](#)):

Do you have a composting toilet?

Michael Neese ([26:03](#)):

I do not.

Dan Hoffman ([26:04](#)):

Okay. Good.

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

[Laughs].

Michael Neese ([26:05](#)):

When I first moved into the city, I did have an anonymous phone call to Perry saying that I was going to switch over my gray water system and all of that. And it was so much fun when he called me back. He was very professional and very courteous. Then he realized it was me and said no. [Laughs] That was fun.

Dan Hoffman ([26:28](#)):

Wow.

Amy Simmons ([26:28](#)):

He's always playing tricks on people.

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

So you really walk the walk here?

Amy Simmons ([26:33](#)):

Yes.

Dan Hoffman ([26:33](#)):

And, like I said, it does make up a big part of the waste stream and there is a ton of things that can be, very beneficial things that can be done with it. So tell us.

Michael Neese ([26:45](#)):

The current method, of course, is unless you're composting at home, it's going in your trash and it's going to the landfill. You hear a lot of bad things about landfills, but it's a shared problem because we're all putting into it. The big thing you hear is the methane that's generated at the landfill. It's a greenhouse gas, and it's coming from our organics, our food waste. Luckily, our landfill does capture the methane and generate electricity, which is great, but it's still a waste to create and put in there. We want to try and capture some of that and keep it at home instead of for electric use, instead of for generating methane, to create better soils, to create fertilizers. We live in a city that we don't have a constant influx of trees and animals like a forest cycle that's constantly rejuvenating the soil. It just constantly degrades and erodes. So, we need to be putting these things back. I think most people would be familiar with it from their lawns. That's the biggest agricultural product in the United States is grass. And you think of all of the fertilizers and treatments and things people are putting into it that could've been compost. Now, it's just because of the soil degrading. Anyway, sorry, a bit of a tangent there.

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

No, that's why we do it. And we got a grant, a small grant that is going to a non-profit, called Sustainability Matters. I think that's the name of it. Tell us what they're going to do.

Michael Neese ([28:20](#)):

They're going to help us encourage more backyard composting and to do it properly. One of the reasons we don't have a composting program is a lot of organics are leftover food waste that draw bugs. They have microscopic life and they're harder to manage. The DEQ has very strict standards on that sort of material. Yard waste and that sort is easier to handle. People can handle it in their backyard without drawing vermin and microbes and nastiness if they do it properly. And that's what this program is about is to get people to start doing it properly in their backyards where they have a use for the compost. And hopefully with enough people doing this in their backyard, and as popularity grows, hopefully it will become something that could then be done on a larger scale with an individual collection.

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

Awesome.

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

It's similar to our leaf collection process.

Dan Hoffman ([29:17](#)):

Exactly.

Amy Simmons ([29:17](#)):

We compost, those.

Dan Hoffman ([29:18](#)):

And a lot of places collect the lawn clippings, leaf stuff, and they end up selling it by the bag. They call it leaf grow or some other type of product. For those types of organics, they're easier to compost into something safe. For lot of stuff that I think we all generate in our house, stuff that might have some dairy in it, some meat, the occasional bone here and there.

Michael Neese ([29:47](#)):

Pasta at my house.

Dan Hoffman ([29:49](#)):

Pasta at your house. That's the kind of thing you gotta be. There's a science to it. It's not hard, but you gotta do it, right.

Michael Neese ([29:58](#)):

Yes.

Dan Hoffman ([29:58](#)):

Back to glass real quick before we wrap up. We're in the midst of budget discussions, and one of the things that folks, like I said, we get asked frequently about is why do I have to throw away my glass bottles? I know every time my wife throws away a bottle, an empty bottle of wine, she just feels horrible about throwing this glass in the trash. So, in this year's budget, you know, I will be proposing that we purchase a glass crusher.

Michael Neese ([30:29](#)):

I'm very excited.

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

I know. I know you just get a little shimmy in your chair.

Amy Simmons ([30:33](#)):

A little dance.

Dan Hoffman ([30:35](#)):

So tell me a little bit more about what a glass crusher is, and what it does and how it would work, if the city were to have one.

Michael Neese ([30:45](#)):

And not just a glass crusher, but a pulverizer.

Amy Simmons ([30:49](#)):

Oh, exciting.

Michael Neese ([30:49](#)):

Yes. So you can crush a glass bottle on the ground and have broken glass. You're going to have limited uses on it because it's mixed specifications and it's sharp and it's broken glass. A pulverizer, pulverizes all the sharp edges off of the glass. It turns it into an aggregate that can be used to replace some stone uses things like gravel, backfill even concrete, if you'd like some of that decorative look to it. It also makes sand. Those are the two sizes that come out and the sand, same way, can replace sand and concrete and asphalt. It can be used as backfill. It's also fairly decorative. I've seen a couple of places that use it as a replacement for mulch.

Dan Hoffman ([31:34](#)):

Interesting.

Michael Neese ([31:35](#)):

You can touch it and not get cut or anything like that. And that way we're not shipping the material to identification, plant, paying the fee for it to go there, and then if we want the product purchasing the stuff we dropped off back from them. Instead, we are keeping all of our waste here so far as glass is concern, and then being able to use it here.

Dan Hoffman ([31:58](#)):

When was the last time we did a waste stream composition study?

Michael Neese ([32:02](#)):

Oh my, let's see. I'm going to say a decade ago if it wasn't a little longer,

Dan Hoffman ([32:09](#)):

For those who don't know, that is basically a quick study to determine what types and volumes of those types of trash we generate. About what percentage is glass?

Michael Neese ([32:25](#)):

Glass is a very low percentage by weight. By volume it's much larger.

Dan Hoffman ([32:31](#)):

Interesting. But if it is a few percent...

Michael Neese ([32:34](#)):

About three, three to five.

Dan Hoffman ([32:38](#)):

About three to five percent, and we do how many tons a year?

Michael Neese ([32:43](#)):

Last year without glass, we did 296 tons. The year before, which had some glass for a few months, was 215 tons more than that. Let's see. 512.

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

Roughly back of the napkin, glass per ton is what?

Michael Neese ([33:08](#)):

42?

Dan Hoffman ([33:10](#)):

42 tons last year.

Michael Neese ([33:12](#)):

Oh, I'm sorry. Tons. If all of that was glass...

Dan Hoffman ([33:17](#)):

Which it's probably not. So we can probably shave some off.

Michael Neese ([33:18](#)):

Yeah, that would be 215 tons in a year.

Dan Hoffman ([33:23](#)):

215 tons of glass in the city that we're paying to go to a landfill.

Michael Neese ([33:27](#)):

Yes.

Dan Hoffman ([33:28](#)):

With the glass crusher, we actually turn it into a product that our Public Services Department can use in sidewalks, can use for fill in other projects. Maybe some of it we can do for more creative uses. There is a return on investment for that particular piece of infrastructure.

Amy Simmons ([33:49](#)):

Can we sell it to developers to you use this backfill, make some revenue off of it?

Dan Hoffman ([33:54](#)):

Possibly, kind of depends on the product that we put out, right?

Michael Neese ([33:58](#)):

Well, there's a few places that use this type of equipment that do sell it back. Fairfax has a similar piece, of course they're higher volume, so it's a much larger pulverizer.

Dan Hoffman ([34:10](#)):

Arlington just started one.

Michael Neese ([34:12](#)):

It was, if I remember correctly, \$12 a ton to tip the glass there and then \$10 a ton if you wanted to purchase it back for use.

Dan Hoffman ([34:23](#)):

Interesting.

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

So for this crusher, would we be able to pick it up, the glass, from residents or do they have to drop it off at some kind of center?

Michael Neese ([34:32](#)):

So that's where we get into budget.

Dan Hoffman ([34:35](#)):

Yeah. In the near term, it's going to be a drop off situation.

Michael Neese ([34:39](#)):

Yes. Cause it would still have to be separate from the other materials.

Amy Simmons ([34:41](#)):

Right.

Dan Hoffman ([34:43](#)):

Yeah. But maybe, one day in the future, when we do roll off containers for recycling, we'll also be able to, at the same time, start collecting glass. But in the near term, we're going to be asking folks, I think, to come drop it off over at a very easy [location]. And we're a small city, so it's not like you're driving 30 minutes out of your way. We'll be asking folks to come drop it off here with us, and maybe the County folks will want to participate as well.

Amy Simmons ([35:11](#)):

Maybe.

Dan Hoffman ([35:11](#)):

Maybe we'll see. Alright, well Mike, thank you very much. I could keep going for, and I know you could too, for quite a while. We will definitely have you back to talk trash more in the future. Before we wrap up anything folks need to know about the pilot or how to find more information on the website. Amy?

Amy Simmons ([35:40](#)):

Yeah. On the website it's WinchesterVA.gov, of course, slash pilot, take you straight to it.

Dan Hoffman ([35:46](#)):

There you go.

Amy Simmons ([35:46](#)):

What are the next steps? Can I ask that real fast before you leave? What happens next?

Michael Neese ([35:51](#)):

Well, now that we have data and we have the pilot, the next steps are to present it to Council and see at what rate they're willing to fund it.

Dan Hoffman ([35:59](#)):

Yeah. It's about \$390,000 to spread this out. Cause those cans are not cheap. So for about 390,000, we'll make this city-wide. Then, of course, the step after that, would be to get an automated truck. That'll save us not just a lot of time because there's a lot of manpower that goes into picking up these cans, but also reduces our workers' comp situations. There's a lot of repetitive stress injuries that are solid waste workers have to endure and that in turn costs us productivity, costs us money. So, hopefully in the near future, we'll just continue to improve a system that, clearly, if Mike is any indication has a lot of really talented, dedicated, passionate folks working for it. Now, we just got to give them the tools to improve it.

Michael Neese ([36:53](#)):

The automation also allows us to expand as the city grows because we've been collecting higher volumes for more households for as long as the city has been around with the same number of people.

Amy Simmons ([37:08](#)):

And trucks too. Do you have new trucks recently, or have you been using the same trucks over and over again?

Michael Neese ([37:14](#)):

Recently? [Laughs]

Dan Hoffman ([37:14](#)):

Same trucks. We put a little bit of new equipment on them too.

Michael Neese ([37:19](#)):

Yeah, the tippers, lift assist bars.

New Speaker ([37:19](#)):

For the pilot. Yes, but we don't have a fully automated new truck yet. Hopefully in the near future one day we will. Well, Mike, thank you very much. Thank you for coming in. We will be back with you I'm sure. Probably sometime in the near future, probably after budget. If approved, we will be expanding the program. So, we'll bring you back shortly thereafter to talk a little bit more.

Michael Neese ([37:48](#)):

Great. And then first week of may is Composting Week. So, you'll probably be hearing from me and Sustainability Matters then as well.

Speaker 3 ([37:57](#)):

Awesome. Looking forward to it.

Amy Simmons ([37:57](#)):

Thanks Mike.

Dan Hoffman ([37:57](#)):

Alright. Thank you very much, Mike. So that was Mike.

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

That was Mike.

Amy Simmons ([38:02](#)):

Long hair, long hair at all.

Dan Hoffman ([38:04](#)):

Long hair and all. I didn't ask him about the hair thing.

Amy Simmons ([38:06](#)):

Next time.

New Speaker ([38:07](#)):

I felt a little awkward.

New Speaker ([38:09](#)):

[Laughs] We'll ask him next time.

New Speaker ([38:10](#)):

Yeah. Cause that's interesting. That is very interesting.

Amy Simmons ([38:13](#)):

I think at one point he had it made into something that would help clean up the oil spill that was down in...

Dan Hoffman ([38:19](#)):

What? How much hair does this guy generate?

Amy Simmons ([38:22](#)):

Well, of course he didn't do all it. [Laughs] He was contributing to that effort.

Dan Hoffman ([38:26](#)):

He's cleaning up oil spills with his extra hair. He doesn't seem like that hairy of a guy.

Amy Simmons ([38:31](#)):

[Laughs] No, but it was just going to that kind of effort. Going back when we had that big oil spill down in the Gulf of Mexico a long time ago.

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

Mike Neese and Dove soap, cleaning up oil-soaked birds. This guy.

Amy Simmons ([38:41](#)):

He's a superhero, after all.

Dan Hoffman ([38:42](#)):

He's a superhero. He is amazing. And clearly cares about what he does and again, I can't praise our City workers enough. We've got a lot of folks like Mike that just really care about the subject. They care about the work they do. Whether it's our Police Chief, whether it's our Recycling Manager, or our CFO, they really are subject matter experts. So, he is an awesome guy. And we talked a little bit about budget. So before we get into some announcements, I wanted to talk a little bit about where we are in the budget process and give a very brief Budget 101. Right now, we're in the process of developing a draft budget to start talking to Council about.

Amy Simmons ([39:31](#)):

Which we started in October.

Dan Hoffman ([39:32](#)):

Yes. We started back in October. I put the call out and give some direction to my department heads. They start looking at what they did last year, what they spent, what they need. They present then draft budgets to the Finance Department. Our CFO, Mary Blowe, and, her teammate, Celeste Broadstreet. They then compile all of it and they bring it to me. I meet with the department heads and I begin to construct what our draft budget looks like. At the same time, we're starting to get revenue estimates, how much money am I going to have to work with.

Amy Simmons ([40:09](#)):

How is that looking?

Dan Hoffman ([40:10](#)):

So, you know what? Our appraisals came in higher, which is good. The pandemic has not hurt our residential real estate market, very much, so it looks very solid. Commercial is soft. In Virginia, you can either do nothing and adopt what is the revenue neutral rate. If appraisals increase property tax naturally goes up, right? You have an asset that is worth more. Now, it's going to get taxed more. So, that increase if we were to stay at 93 cents, which is our current tax rate, I would have increased amount of money to work with, which is great because naturally every year our costs go up. Some of it's just natural inflation, some of it, or our contractual increases. If we were to go to 89 cents, which is the revenue neutral rate, in essence, I get no more money. In fact, this year, if the Council were to adopt the revenue neutral rate, we'd get an extra \$233,000 that, and I know that might sound like a lot to folks, but just the increase in our retirement contribution is \$237,000. So we couldn't even cover the minimum Virginia Retirement System increase. The new Shihadeh Center that's about to go online...

Amy Simmons ([41:44](#)):

Behind Handley.

Dan Hoffman ([41:44](#)):

Just the operating and maintenance of that building's, about a quarter million dollars. So \$233,000 is kind of off the table as an amount. There's no way we're going to build a brand new building, over behind Handley, and then just not use it. So, I will be proposing that we stay at the current tax rate. We're not increasing the tax rate, we're keeping it, holding it steady and that gives us just enough because of the increase in appraisals. That's going to give us just enough to do some bare minimum things. We're going to be focused a lot on public safety, doing some things too that have a return on investment, like investments in our solid waste system and, a few other what I feel are critical, foundational elements. Small cost of living increases for our employees, and some strategic, additional positions, particularly over in Social Services and with our fire department. So, we're in the midst of developing that budget and I'll start going to different committees with it. We had our first initial discussion with the Finance and Audit Committee last week. There's going to be a report out tomorrow about that discussion. We have another Finance and Audit Committee on the 16th of March. We have a Public Safety Committee that will look at all the different public safety budgets on the 17th. Those committee meetings will keep going really into April and it's in April when I start finalizing my proposed budget. I'll bring it to the City Council, we'll do a bigger formal presentation. Then there will be several more opportunities for the public to engage, to provide feedback, Councilors to ask questions. You have that opportunity at the committee level too. Our committees are meeting in person again. Finance Committee's meeting in Council Chambers. Public Safety Committee's meeting in Council Chambers. All of those committees are meeting in person again. If the public wants to participate, come speak, there are public comment opportunities at committee meetings as well. So there are easily, almost a dozen different opportunities for the public to speak about the budget, about the tax rate, whatever you have on your mind. So we encourage people to participate.

Amy Simmons ([44:04](#)):

Yeah, and if they don't want to participate, but they just want to hear the discussions, they can watch those online through our agenda portal.

Dan Hoffman ([44:10](#)):

Absolutely. It's just WinchesterVA.gov [Council Meeting Agendas' under the Government tab] and if you want to watch, you can email in your comments. They'll be added to the record. So, we will do, pretty

soon, is we will advertise our tax rate to be transparent. We will, we pay for ads, we post online, what we to set the not-to-exceed tax rate at. So, if the Council accepts my proposal of 93 cents, pretty soon we have to publish that. And it's a not to exceed rate. The Council could go lower. If they felt they could, if they felt there was additional things or investments they didn't want to make at this point. But we will publish that not-to-exceed rate before the budget's actually even approved. It at least lets me know what I have to work with. It's not until really into May, the deliberations and discussions go through April, they'll continue and we'll eventually finalize everything in May. There's a date in May that I can't remember off the top of my head, but, in May they'll approve it and it goes into effect July 1, which is our fiscal year. That's a little bit of budget 101. We encourage people to participate and provide us your feedback on it. Now, before we wrap up, Amy, you have some updates.

Amy Simmons ([45:36](#)):

Yes. I have just a few. Winchester Parks and Recreation., I seem to always start with them, they've got a lot of stuff going on. They've announced several Easter programs and the registration is going on now. We have the Cookie Decorating Class for ages 14 and up, and that's on Tuesday, March 23rd. Registration is due March 16. Easter Bunny Eggivities, it's a play off 'activities'. Eggivities.

Dan Hoffman ([45:57](#)):

Yeah, I got that.

Amy Simmons ([45:57](#)):

Yeah. Thank you. Will be available for pickup this year. Instead of, usually they bring all the kids into the social hall and they have huge tables set up and a million different crafts. I'm exaggerating, of course, but every table has a different craft.

Dan Hoffman ([46:10](#)):

So, it's not actually a million?

Amy Simmons ([46:11](#)):

It's not actually a million this time. No.

Dan Hoffman ([46:13](#)):

Slightly less.

Amy Simmons ([46:13](#)):

Maybe one day. So, this time, instead of bringing everybody in where they can touch everything and, you know, use all the same scissors and all that fun stuff, they're going to provide it as a pickup Eggivities. So, they'll have a bag full of crafts that kids ages one and up can pick up. Actually the kids can't pick it up, the parents need to come pick it up for them. And so it's just like a drive-through pick up your bag, order it in advance. You have to register by March 22nd. So, along the same lines, the park is also offering a Make and Go Easter Craft Programs for kids ages seven to 10. You can make a 12-inch Easter basket and you register for that by March 10th. And then for teens and adults aged 16 and up, there's a six-inch papier-mache Easter egg you can make. And that's kind of in the Faberge type of style.

Dan Hoffman ([47:05](#)):

We're very specific about the sizes of these.

Amy Simmons ([47:07](#)):

I know, isn't that funny.

Dan Hoffman ([47:07](#)):

Size 12 inch basket. Six inch egg, you know, that's what we had the budget for.

Amy Simmons ([47:11](#)):

I included that because it must be important.

Dan Hoffman ([47:12](#)):

It must be important. Do not expect a 13 or 14 inch basket.

Amy Simmons ([47:17](#)):

Twelve and a half.

Dan Hoffman ([47:17](#)):

It's 12 and a half inches. Exactly.

Amy Simmons ([47:20](#)):

No just 12.

Dan Hoffman ([47:21](#)):

Twelve, sorry, 12 that's the government standard issued Easter basket.

Amy Simmons ([47:27](#)):

[Laughs] That's hilarious. Okay. So register by March 11th for that Faberge Egg craft. So in addition to all the drop-in athletic programs, private music lessons, indoor swimming, the Rec Center is really hoppin' this month.

Dan Hoffman ([47:40](#)):

Oh, hoppin'.

Amy Simmons ([47:40](#)):

It's Easter. Right?

Dan Hoffman ([47:42](#)):

It's Easter.

Amy Simmons ([47:43](#)):

It's hoppin'.

Dan Hoffman ([47:43](#)):

Oh, I get it now.

Amy Simmons ([47:46](#)):

[Laughs] Little delayed.

Dan Hoffman ([47:46](#)):

Little delayed on the uptake there.

Amy Simmons ([47:47](#)):

Yep, they're hoppin'.

Dan Hoffman ([47:49](#)):

It's a thinking man's joke.

Amy Simmons ([47:50](#)):

So, okay. Moving on. Valley Health has released dates for their upcoming COVID-19 vaccination clinics and those are March 9th, 10th and 11th. So those are only for people that qualify under the 1A and 1B groups and they will open registration one to two days approximately in advance of the clinics at noon. So, you gotta be on the website already ready to push that button and refreshing often because the appointments go within minutes, if not seconds.

Dan Hoffman ([48:20](#)):

Yeah. If it's your turn, go get your shot.

Amy Simmons ([48:22](#)):

Yes. And that link is [valleyhealthlink.com/C19vaccinations](http://valleyhealthlink.com/C19vaccinations). And that'll take you directly to where you can register for those March clinics. And last but not least, the detours and road closures will continue on Papermill Road between Roosevelt and Tevis through at least end of April. But that, project, the Hope Drive Extension Project is going to be going on through next summer, summer of 2022. So this is just one of those preliminary closures, but we'll have access going still for businesses in that area and residents.

Dan Hoffman ([48:54](#)):

That's awesome. Well, thanks everybody for listening. If you've made it through to the end with us, I appreciate it. We'll see you again in a couple of weeks as we look forward to what's happening with the Council. And we'll probably talk a little bit more about budgets, some of the upcoming meetings, ways for you to participate. And in the meantime, I will see you around City Hall.