

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

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

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

Hello.

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

It's very nice day out. It's spring. We've survived Apple blossom.

Amy Simmons ([00:19](#)):

Yes. It didn't even seem like it happened.

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

Did you do it any Apple Blossom events?

Amy Simmons ([00:23](#)):

Sorry. I did not.

Dan Hoffman ([00:24](#)):

My goodness.

Amy Simmons ([00:25](#)):

I know.

Dan Hoffman ([00:25](#)):

Well, it was a weird year for it.

Amy Simmons ([00:27](#)):

I think I also had a softball tournament. I have an excuse.

Dan Hoffman ([00:29](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. You had a bunch of kids stuff.

Amy Simmons ([00:31](#)):

Yes. I had kids stuff.

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

I engaged in what Apple Blossom events were happening. I did Wine Fest. That was nice. I did the Commonwealth Luncheon and that was nice. And we got such great weather that day, particularly Saturday. Although, we didn't have a parade this year, I saw some impromptu parade stuff happening along what was normally the parade route. I know there's next year. I think we're all optimistic that it

gets back to normal. And you know, maybe there's some lessons learned out of this kind of weird adapted Apple Blossom that we can apply and make next year even better.

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

But just to clarify, when you say we...

Dan Hoffman ([01:18](#)):

Oh, thank you very much. This is not a City event. People always think: 'Oh, the City puts on Apple Blossom.' All credit's got to go to Brad Veach and his team over at the Apple Blossom...committee?

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

Organization, I think it's a non-profit.

Dan Hoffman ([01:32](#)):

It's a non-profit organization. All credit has to go to them. This is actually, obviously it's a city tradition.

Amy Simmons ([01:40](#)):

Right. Private event.

Dan Hoffman ([01:40](#)):

So when we talk about the city itself, the city at large, not City government. We support them, because it is part of the culture and history of Winchester, but all credit goes to Brad and his team for pulling it off.

Amy Simmons ([01:54](#)):

Yeah. All we have to do is help with the security, safety, those kind of things. Clean up.

Dan Hoffman ([01:58](#)):

Absolutely. So, tomorrow night, we've got another meeting. We're in the home stretch of the budget. It should be a relatively, well, I don't want to jinx it.

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

Yeah, shhh. [Laughs].

New Speaker ([02:12](#)):

It should be a reasonable meeting length. Knock on wood. We've got a few second readings...

Amy Simmons ([02:20](#)):

Which means public hearing.

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

Public hearings. These are things that have already been heard. You've had a chance to speak with Council about them at the committee level at first reading. So, I'm going to skip over a lot of the second

reading ones. Also in the agenda is we are dedicating the National Avenue gateway roundabout. It's that little roundabout in front of Timbrook [Public Safety Center] to fallen officer Hunter Edwards. That came out of the Planning and Economic Development Committee. I think we'll be doing some type of ceremony when the sign actually goes up. So, tonight's just approving the resolution. Also, a lot of those second readings are all related to the panhandling and noise issues that have been happening downtown with the warmer weather. They just want to make it clear to some folks that might be listening and concerned about it. The ordinances that we are repealing we're repealing them because they are unconstitutional. No, we are not repealing them because suddenly we're trying to open the floodgates on panhandling. That is not the point of this. The reality is that the Supreme Court has declared that panhandling is a form of free speech and it's protected in many ways. Laws and ordinances all around the country have been struck down because they do not meet constitutional scrutiny. So, we've got to go back to the drawing board on some of these, but we have to repeal some of them that are in place. We are enacting a few new ordinances. Some around trespassing in our garages and use of amplified noise down on the walking mall. We're putting some new things in place to make sure folks can enjoy and make use of the walking mall. All of that's at second reading. We are excited about that. A few other code changes regarding non-conforming uses. We won't get into what that means. Feel free to tune in, but it's some land use issues. Then, really the big item of the night is first reading of the City's budget. Last meeting, they approved on second reading, the 93 cent tax rate, which is the same tax rate we have had last year. We've actually been able to hold all of our rates but one, we've been able to hold them steady, whereas some jurisdictions have raised a rate or increased a meals tax, we've held our tax rate the same. We've held our meals tax the same. Sorry, I should say our property tax. We've held our property tax the same. Our meals tax the same. Our bed tax is the same. There's no other increases. The one thing that we are adjusting is our solid waste fee, which is long overdue to be adjusted. And we are bringing forward in this budget, instead of going from \$5 to \$10, we are offering kind of a staggered rate. So, if you want the smallest size can, remember there are three sizes, your rate's only going to go from \$5 to \$6. If you want the biggest size can, that is a \$10 can.

Amy Simmons ([05:34](#)):

It makes sense cause you're producing more trash.

Dan Hoffman ([05:36](#)):

Absolutely. And we pay for everything that goes into the landfill. So it's kind of a pay as you throw system. The budget, this is a first reading for the budget itself, not the rate. It's largely the same thing. That's been with a few very small changes. It's the same thing that we've discussed in all of the committees, in other Council meetings. This is probably the eighth or ninth either committee or Council meeting where some aspect of the budget's been discussed. We're on the home stretch. First reading tomorrow, on the 11th, and then the 27th?

Amy Simmons ([06:13](#)):

Fifth.

Dan Hoffman ([06:13](#)):

25th. Thank you. The 25th for second reading. And then...

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

Then it's done.

Dan Hoffman ([06:16](#)):

Then we have a budget.

Amy Simmons ([06:17](#)):

And then we start working.

Dan Hoffman ([06:19](#)):

Yes. And we start working in a few months after that. We start the budget for the next year.

Amy Simmons ([06:22](#)):

Right? October. Yes.

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

[Laughs] October. And then after that there is a work session. The only thing on that agenda is an executive session about some acquisition of property, but it's an executive session, so I'm not going to talk about it.

Amy Simmons ([06:37](#)):

Can't talk about it. Nope.

Dan Hoffman ([06:38](#)):

Can't talk about it. Okay. So today we've got, very proud. Last week, I announced my pick for fire chief. Chief Jon Henschel. He and Interim Chief Culp, I should say, well at this point, he's still kind of our interim chief. He'll always be a chief in our hearts.

Amy Simmons ([06:57](#)):

Just call him chief.

Dan Hoffman ([06:57](#)):

I'm just going to call him chief. Chief Culp, who has been our interim for the past, about a year or so, will also be in here for some words of wisdom.

Amy Simmons ([07:06](#)):

He's got lots of it.

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

Yep. Absolutely. I've enjoyed my story time with Chief Culp.

Amy Simmons ([07:12](#)):

[Laughs] We need a podcast for that.

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

I know. We should. We would need more than 30 minutes. I think they're outside the door now, so we're going to go ahead and bring them in. But Amy first...

Amy Simmons ([07:24](#)):

Did you know that May 4th was International Firefighter Day?

Dan Hoffman ([07:27](#)):

I did not. It was also a May the Fourth Be With You.

Amy Simmons ([07:30](#)):

That's right. How timely is this little podcast we're doing here?

Dan Hoffman ([07:33](#)):

It is. It is. International Firefighter Day.

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

Some very good planning going on.

Dan Hoffman ([07:36](#)):

Interesting. Yes, I know. [Laughing] I'm sure this happened all by design.

Amy Simmons ([07:41](#)):

All by coincidence.

Dan Hoffman ([07:42](#)):

Absolutely. And what else do we have going on? Anything else?

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

Nope. Not before we can talk to our chiefs.

Dan Hoffman ([07:51](#)):

Well, I think they're outside the door, so let's go bring them in.

Amy Simmons ([07:53](#)):

All right.

Dan Hoffman ([07:54](#)):

Okay. Hey Chief John Henschel and Chief Culp. Welcome. So, I'm going to start off, kind of City Manager's privilege here. When I first got here about seven, eight months ago, it was an interesting time. Middle of COVID. I didn't know anybody. And the first thing I know that I'm going to have to start figuring out is what's the deal with the fire department? It's no secret. Been a bunch of stuff in the Star, so I'm not going to act like it's some big mystery, but there it was a time of change. Everyone's reacting differently to COVID, there had been some issues in the past, not speaking ill of anybody that was

involved with what went on. There were a lot of concerns. Things like, I'm a new city manager, I'm stepping into this role and I'm trying to figure it out. I was so fortunate to have, I was pleasantly surprised to step in and have first off somebody like Chief Culp, Hadden Culp, who was here keeping things steady. Outside perspective. The Interim City Manager Mary Beth Price had snagged him out of retirement. And it was such an asset for me as I got started. Cause man, if I had had to make the decision on 'all right, who's the next chief?' on day one, I don't know if I would have made the right decision. Ultimately, I think I did because I had a fair amount of time to see the excellent internal talent that we had in Jon Henschel. So, with that Jon, the community is no stranger to you and you were no stranger to the community. You've been here for like a hundred years or something like that. Forever.

Jon Henschel ([09:48](#)):

Twenty-three years.

Dan Hoffman ([09:50](#)):

And you're not, despite the gray hair...

Amy Simmons ([09:57](#)):

Which we all have.

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

He's not...cause sometimes when you hear somebody say...I mean, you have hair, don't worry. Trust me, consider yourself lucky. When you hear, 'Oh, he's been with the City for 23 years and he's now the Chief,' sometimes you're like, well, he's probably, you know, late fifties, but you're a mid-career Chief. You've made your way through. You've gotten all the certifications. You've put in the time. But I think a lot of times when people hear that 23 years, they just assume, and this is, remember, this is a podcast, so no one can see you. They just assume that, but no, I would say a relatively young chief. We got somebody that's going to be with the department for what I hope is a very long time. We're getting somebody that's not in the final few years of his career. You've got the opportunity now to build the future of fire and rescue here in Winchester. Talk about that. You've been here for a while. You've got the old perspectives, but I know you got the new vision. Tell me a little bit about that.

Jon Henschel ([11:10](#)):

So we've got a great group of firefighters and EMS providers in the city. We're building our depth. We're enhancing what we're doing from a staffing perspective. That's been put out there in the community. They're aware. But we have a lot of things that we want to embark upon as far as change goes and looking at the fire service as a whole, there's a transition in place to really look at prevention and things we can do to engage the community, to identify their risks and their needs. I began to spin that out to our folks and they understand that. I'm getting a lot of good feedback thus far, and they know that we're going to embark upon a change that is going to set us up well for the future. To not only reduce risk for the community members that we're serving, but to enhance the services we can provide and to ultimately serve them in the best manner possible.

Dan Hoffman ([12:05](#)):

We didn't pick you just because he's the internal candidate, he knows the department, and he's been here for 23 years. One of the things that was impressive about your resume was all of the other

qualifications, the other things you do extracurricular to your normal job. You also have the mandatory fire chief mustache.

Amy Simmons ([12:33](#)):

[Laughs] Both of them have it.

Dan Hoffman ([12:33](#)):

Every chief I've ever worked with, my last chief in Gainesville, exact same mustache. We checked that box. All right, mustache, check. Understands the city, check. Good vision, check. But there's a bunch of different stuff that you've worked very hard to obtain that sometimes people forget about. Talk about your credentials a little bit.

Jon Henschel ([12:59](#)):

Okay. So to start off,

Dan Hoffman ([13:02](#)):

And what they mean too, cause a lot of people aren't going to know exactly. Well, he's a CFO, Chief Financial Officer? What is that? Tell us about what a Chief Fire Officer. Talk about what some of these things mean.

Jon Henschel ([13:13](#)):

Sure. Well, the fire service as a whole to me has been a passion of mine from a very young age. Started as a volunteer at age 15. Worked my way through the volunteer ranks in a couple of different departments south of here and really embraced what the fire service meant. As I grew in the fire service, I began to understand a little bit more about what that meant, as the transition occurred and I gained some experience, took some certifications. I understood it wasn't so much about me, it was about others. Whether that revolves around our people and our other supervisors, whether that role revolves around community members. So, I sought to enhance what I was doing for myself so I could better understand what was necessary to provide the service that is needed out here. That involved a myriad of things, starting with certifications, which a lot of those in the fire service are aware of. We go through various aspects of fire training, medical training, specialty training, which could be hazardous materials related or specialty rescue. I started taking as many classes I could, building my depth with certifications. And then I had opportunity to go to the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, which broadened my perspective even more. Seeing what it really took to be a fire service leader involved enhancing educational opportunities and reaching out to engage in other facets that would allow me to understand a greater need, thus a greater perspective. So, I embarked upon a journey to get my bachelor's degree, which did so in fire administration that progressed into a master's degree. And I really struggled with, do I want to go into an emergency management realm or do I want to be organizational leadership? And I couldn't choose, so I did both. Thus, I have two master's degrees and a lot of folks have asked, 'why did you do both?' I said, because both are very important to this role and you have to have both. I wanted to broaden my own perspective by doing so.

Dan Hoffman ([15:20](#)):

And glutton for punishment.

Jon Henschel ([15:21](#)):

And, I'm glutton for punishment.

Dan Hoffman ([15:23](#)):

And you must have an incredibly patient wife.

Jon Henschel ([15:26](#)):

Yes, she is actually very supportive and that's, if you don't have that at home, then you're not going to be successful.

Dan Hoffman ([15:33](#)):

I've never met a Fire Chief that got to where they were without a very supportive family. Some do end up divorced along the way, not going to lie cause it's tough. It's tough. And the ones that have a great work-life balance, the ones that can put it all in perspective. They've got a great supportive network and family around them. Same with Chief Culp.

Hadden Culp ([15:57](#)):

Absolutely.

Dan Hoffman ([15:58](#)):

So vision. Talk a little bit about vision of the future. So, you've got the skills and abilities. You've got the street cred. You know the city. What's next? What are we going to be working on for the next year?

Jon Henschel ([16:13](#)):

We're gonna work on a variety of things. Some will encompass continued corrections to what was noted in the ESCI study, as well as some things that I've had a vision for over the past several years. And we just haven't been able to gain ground on getting them implemented. Part of that is due to certainly fiscal constraints to some degree, as well as personnel constraints, but we're moving in the right direction to fix both of those things and enhance what we're able to do. One of my big overarching issues is that we're not out in the community enough. We need to engage the community more, assess what their needs are because we boast being a full service delivery, but we're only really focused on running emergency calls in essence and fixing things when they happen. And we know that's important and that's takes focus. And that is certainly something we need to do and be good at. But if we can look towards preventative things that can help us get ahead of someone having an emergency, I think that's ideal. You'll see that transition occurring across the fire service. It's just not one that we've wholly embraced here yet. I firmly believe that if we do that, we're going to see better community engagement. We're going to reap rewards from what we're offering our citizens, and that they can have a more robust life. They can prevent injuries. They can prevent fires alongside with us. I think it's a concerted effort that we'll make together.

Dan Hoffman ([17:50](#)):

Change is not something that comes easily with public safety and Chief Culp, you have a saying that I've always appreciated. You're going to have to remind me exactly how it goes. You know which one I'm talking about because I heard you use it a few times.

Hadden Culp ([18:06](#)):

It actually came from one of our Battalion Chief, Chief Baker, told it to me on my second day on the job here. There's two things firefighters hate: the way things are and change. And it always makes me chuckle because it's so true, but they always do rise to the occasion and embrace it. Once they figure out what the end result is going to be.

Dan Hoffman ([18:27](#)):

Yeah. And then you've got, I don't know what it is with change quotes and the fire department, but there's another one about the fire department is what 200 years of...

Hadden Culp ([18:38](#)):

Tradition unimpeded by progress.

Dan Hoffman ([18:41](#)):

There you go. That's another good one.

Hadden Culp ([18:43](#)):

We try to break that rule.

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

Well, you know, I think just part of the territory, whether it's police or fire, we're dealing with life safety. When you're doing the basics right, every time when you've got a process that you know saves lives, altering it on the hopes of saving more lives or the hopes of doing it more efficiently, that that's not without some degree of risk and we don't have the luxury of wholesale embracing risk in public safety. A lot of my other departments, you know, I say, 'Hey, listen, fail fast'. We accept good calculated risks, stretch goals, the whole deal, but, change in public safety, it's. It's different. There are standards. A lot of it's based on science and medicine and we can't just say, 'you know what, we're going to drive the firetruck different from now on'. We look at what's happening around the country because if we do something and we do it wrong, it could mean someone's life.

Amy Simmons ([19:50](#)):

You don't want them to have to hesitate either. Is it the right one? Or is it the current one? You don't want that hesitation.

Dan Hoffman ([19:54](#)):

Training is huge.

Hadden Culp ([19:56](#)):

The consequences are extreme. That's why we try to make sure everybody understands and we practice. We try to do test runs and make sure that it's going to have the results. One of the most awesome things that I try to say every time I get an opportunity like this, is that I was totally astounded by and am so proud to be a part of, and that is the survival rate for cardiac arrest events here in Winchester that is responsibility of all of our people. That is nearly twice the national average and that is really something to be extremely, extremely proud of.

Dan Hoffman ([20:36](#)):

Yeah. In fact, I was a little worried yesterday when I was driving down the street.

Amy Simmons ([20:40](#)):

Is this that funny story you want to tell?

Dan Hoffman ([20:42](#)):

Oh yeah. So, I look over and I'm driving by South End Fire Station and I'm showing a kind of dignitary that was in town looking to invest in our city. I'm driving by South End and I see Chief Culp sitting on a bench hooked up to oxygen to which I whipped into the parking lot and was like, 'oh, crud, what is happening?' I go up and I'm like, 'what's going on?' My eyes are big as saucers. One of the other firefighter/EMTs comes up and he's like, 'hang on, get back, get back'. And I'm like, 'nope'. I almost pulled...I didn't think they realized I didn't quite recognize, I think I'd met that person, but I don't know if they recognized me. And I never pull this line, but I was about to be like, 'um, do you know, I'm the city manager?' Cause you're not going to, I'm going to go right now.

Amy Simmons ([21:37](#)):

Gonna go check on him.

Dan Hoffman ([21:37](#)):

Going to go check on my Chief. And, he goes: 'training exercise, training exercise'. I'm like, 'Oh, Oh.' Then, I realized you were just...

Amy Simmons ([21:46](#)):

You don't have to pull it.

Dan Hoffman ([21:46](#)):

You were just a live dummy in that role.

Amy Simmons ([21:50](#)):

He's ok.

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

Well, we swore in 11 new firefighters last week. So, we were going through some training exercises with them and Chief Culp was just the patient so to speak. So yeah, you gave me a little bit of a scare there. You've been with us now, ooh, 10 months, right?

Hadden Culp ([22:12](#)):

Well, actually just shy of a year.

Dan Hoffman ([22:15](#)):

Just shy of a year.

Amy Simmons ([22:16](#)):

Beginning of COVID, wasn't it?

Hadden Culp ([22:17](#)):

Yeah. June 1 is when I started.

Dan Hoffman ([22:20](#)):

An interesting time to join as an interim chief. And you obviously have, like I said, we pulled you out of retirement, you've been around the block. You were over in Prince William and you were in Loudoun for awhile?

Hadden Culp ([22:35](#)):

Nope.

Dan Hoffman ([22:35](#)):

Nope. Not Loudoun. I'm getting confused, but you've been around. You've served in a variety of different roles. You came into this department, what were some of your observations? What have you learned about this department over the last year?

Hadden Culp ([22:51](#)):

Well, I'll tell you, when I got asked to come down and chat with the Interim City Manager Mary Beth Price, I was a little bit familiar with what was going on in Winchester because I just live a little bit away. Woodstock, you know, nearby and after I chatted with her and saw what the organization needed here, I felt as though I had a couple of tools in my toolbox to help out on an interim basis while they got going. I did have some apprehension about really what I was stepping into because I didn't have the full story, but I was familiar with the study and so forth. I quickly did an environmental scan of what was going on. I will say that the talent that's in our department quickly put me at ease that the emergency services that we were providing on a day-to-day basis was being handled by our superb incident commanders and by the emergency responders that are going out on every call. There's an awesome amount of talent here that we certainly don't take for granted. Following that we started looking at what was involved in the study, what some of the recommendations were and what could we do quickly and efficiently to meet some of the needs that were identified in that study. The next thing that happened was and it was never my intent to develop any long-term solutions, you know, strategies, but what could we do on the short term to address some of the immediate high-level concerns? And one of the things I noticed that there was an awesome foundation of skills and abilities and opportunities already established. My goal from the very first day was just to build more blocks on that wall that was already established so that whenever another chief came in here, they weren't going to say, no, we gotta tear that down and start that process over. Working with not only the City leadership team, all the other department heads here in City government, the City Council, our volunteer fire and rescue folks, and of course, the fire and rescue team members here in Winchester Department of Fire and Rescue made it easy to develop plans to move forward. I got to say, it certainly wasn't a heavy lift for me, but it has been for our people. They've all stepped up and really have been and will continue to be the answer. That was the other thing I just wanted to say was that after I did this scan, and I've said this to everybody along the way, all the answers are within the boundaries of this city perimeter. It's just pulling them all together at the right time or the right sequence. That has proven to be the case for the plans that we've come up with for emergency response and for the folks that we're promoting.

Dan Hoffman ([25:54](#)):

Speaking of the folks we've promoted, what advice do you have for a new Chief? And specifically this one?

Hadden Culp ([26:04](#)):

Yep, I think that the relationships building, establishing and maintaining good relationships, is probably the most critical thing. The folks are going to get the job done and you have to trust in them and I know that we can. You're kind of like having to be like a butterfly on a gigantic bush. You're having to go from flower to flower to maintain all those relationships at the right time and the right sequence to keep all of everything that we're trying to accomplish on the frontline.

Dan Hoffman ([26:39](#)):

Yeah. That's when I think of Chief Henschel. I think of a butterfly going from flower to flower.

Amy Simmons ([26:45](#)):

Aww. Such a pretty butterfly.

Hadden Culp ([26:45](#)):

[Laughing]

Dan Hoffman ([26:45](#)):

I think it's going to be his call sign from now on.

Amy Simmons ([26:49](#)):

I like it. What color should he be?

Dan Hoffman ([26:52](#)):

Where's Battalion Chief Butterfly?

Amy Simmons ([26:55](#)):

Jon, what's your favorite color?

Hadden Culp ([26:56](#)):

[Laughing]

Amy Simmons ([26:56](#)):

Nah? Not going to tell me? [Laughing].

Jon Henschel ([27:02](#)):

[Laughing]

Dan Hoffman ([27:02](#)):

Final thoughts, Chief Henschel, and I would specifically want to hear...so first time in the big chair. Now, granted we train-I think a lot of people don't realize, whether you're Assistant Chief, Deputy Chief, Battalion Chief, we train you to actually be the Chief cause at any given time, you are the Chief of that scene. You are making decisions that are life and death. So, you've kind of been in the chair before, but now it's yours permanently. How does it feel to be a first time chief?

Jon Henschel ([27:41](#)):

It's exciting. I'm proud to be given this opportunity to serve in this great community and the people that we have to work with. I know Chief Culp just mentioned that, but, I couldn't ask for a better team, from a leadership team, Chief Orndorff has been exceptional. We've been working seamlessly to address the issues that we face and to enhance what we're providing to the citizens. Our battalion chiefs have years and years of experience. They do an exceptional job out there. Although it filters all the way down, we have folks engaged at the lowest levels and want to continue to do so and working towards the best interest of what we can provide to everyone. It's exciting. There's a lot of responsibility at hand. There are a lot of things I know that we need to address and accomplish, but it's going to take some time. I understand the patient's part of it, and that's going to be key as well. But we'll identify priorities and we'll tackle them as we can and we're going to do great things in this community.

Dan Hoffman ([28:44](#)):

Absolutely. You nervous?

Jon Henschel ([28:47](#)):

Am I nervous? I can't say that I'm really nervous. It's just, I think it's a mix of excitement and, you know, I'm the type I came in and it's funny because I actually told my wife, I said, 'am I supposed to feel more excited about this?' Because I just came in and I, and everyone that knows me knows my work ethic, and I just I'm ready to go to work. I see all these things and there's times when I've got to pull myself back, because change takes time. You can't do it in a vacuum. I've expressed that to our folks. I've made it a point to go out and I've started to meet one-on-one with our people just so they can have some face time. I think that's important. You don't see that in large organizations, they may not see their Fire Chief. They may not understand how important their role is. And certainly our dynamic here in Winchester is vastly different from a larger organization. As Chief can attest to, we know our folks, one-on-one. We know them on a first name basis. We are more a family-oriented fire department than what you're going to get in a large service. We embrace that and I think that's going to be a great draw for us in the future. I see us trending back towards what I felt we had when I first came here as being that high performing organization and a destination department where outside organizations are going to struggle to keep up with us in the future. And that's one of my goals.

Dan Hoffman ([30:04](#)):

Mine too.

Amy Simmons ([30:05](#)):

It sounds like a recruitment ad to me.

Dan Hoffman ([30:07](#)):

Exactly. We are going to be, and on that note, I should put in a plug. Keep checking the City website because in this budget, yet to be approved, but right now I'm fairly confident that we will have at least three new positions in our budget. But we're also going after a SAFER Grant. That's a government acronym. Long story short, it means we're going to get seven new firefighters on top of the other three. If we are successful in achieving that grant in the next year, we'll be adding 10 more positions, not just filling 10 vacancies, but we'll be adding 10 total to our force. There will be opportunities. There will be, folks, if you're thinking about being a firefighter, if you ever thought about it, you know, check out. Or if you are a firefighter at another location, and you want a great place to work, check out Winchester.

Amy Simmons ([31:02](#)):

Yeah. The good thing is, if I can jump in, you guys just recently started training from the ground up. We don't have to come with any kind of certifications, right?

Jon Henschel ([31:10](#)):

That's correct.

Amy Simmons ([31:11](#)):

If you just want to serve your community, come join the fire department, they'll teach you everything you need to know.

Jon Henschel ([31:17](#)):

And I'll be perfectly honest. My outlook in that regard is that we're going to hire for attitude and we can teach skills. So, we're looking for the best in people, those that are passionate about serving others.

Dan Hoffman ([31:27](#)):

Yeop. Be kind. Be brave. Don't be a jerk. Congratulations, Chief Henschel and thank you, Chief Culp. It has been such a pleasure getting to know you. I know you're not going to be a stranger. You're going to be around and your insights and everything that you've done for the last year will definitely live on. Thank you very much, Chief Culp. Thank you, Chief Henschel. We'll see you around. All right. That was a nice, uh...

Amy Simmons ([32:00](#)):

Story time with Chief Culp and Henschel.

Dan Hoffman ([32:01](#)):

Story time with Chief Culp and it was interesting to have both of them in here because you could really kind of see the, not just the kind of the new incoming leader with our kind of outgoing steward, so to speak, of the fire department. The similarities between them both, I mean, it definitely gave me some confidence because it's my first fire chief pick. Still relatively new on the job. A little bit of nervousness in that pick, in making that pick, not in the person themselves. Because seeing that, to be a good fire chief, you do gotta be cut from a certain cloth. And, there's the similarities I see between Chief Henschel and Chief Culp, it gives me some, you know, they're different people, but there's similarities in the way, their demeanor and the way they handle things that makes me very optimistic and very proud of our new chief.

Amy Simmons ([33:03](#)):

Yeah. And you can see the respect between them, too. It was really nice.

Dan Hoffman ([33:06](#)):

Absolutely. And Chief Culp will be sticking around for a little while to help us with some strategic planning. Speaking of strategic planning, we obviously have the meeting tomorrow, the Council meeting tomorrow, but later this week on Friday, you might notice that we're also having a Council retreat to talk about the strategic plan. We talked about this in a previous podcast, so this Friday is the Strategic Plan Retreat. I will say it is open to the public. It is at Jim Barnett Park.

Amy Simmons ([33:37](#)):

Nine o'clock.

Dan Hoffman ([33:38](#)):

Nine o'clock, however folks should realize that this is a special meeting. It's not a normal meeting of Council. So Councilors will be at tables, working with staff, working, developing stuff.

Amy Simmons ([33:58](#)):

Small group discussions.

Dan Hoffman ([33:58](#)):

Small group discussions. All is going to help us build a strategic plan.

Dan Hoffman ([34:03](#)):

This is not one of the opportunities for public comment. There have been many opportunities for public comment. The survey, every single normal Council meeting, emails, phone calls. There's plenty of ways for you to give us feedback and a lot of that is going to be reflected in what we discuss this Friday. But this is an opportunity really for Council to work with staff, to take a lot of that input we got from the public and distill it into something that's appropriate for the plan. So you can come and sit and observe, but I don't want to be anyone to be under the expectation that this is a participation opportunity. But please come see us, see us at work.

Amy Simmons ([34:46](#)):

I don't know, are we recording it?

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

Well, I know the media will be there and I believe we are making attempts to record it, but again, it's going to be one of those things that it's all day. If you really want to sit through eight hours of a camera recording a room of people discussing things, it's not good.

Amy Simmons ([35:06](#)):

I've done it before. It's not good.

Dan Hoffman ([35:07](#)):

But we are setting up a safe seating area for distance for folks to come and observe and see us in action. Cause obviously, we are a very open and transparent government. Even for things like this, we are happy to have the public there. All right, Amy, what do we have going on?

Amy Simmons ([35:27](#)):

Okay. Well, last podcast, we talked about being clueless about composting. There's another workshop coming up on May 20th at 7:00 PM. It's virtual, of course. It's May 20th. They'll cover how to build a composter in your backyard. It's free. Go to eventbrite.com and search for DIY Composter Building for the Clueless, of course. And, I'll do a little plug on the last Wednesday in May, we're going to talk to Michael Recycle about composting on our publiCITY News Show. Winchester Parks and Recreation, Jim Barnett Park and Abrams Creek Wetlands Preserve, all things that we are responsible for, were nominated by local residents for the 2021 Winchester Star Award for Best Park and Recreation Facility. So, we really appreciate that.

Dan Hoffman ([36:15](#)):

Go vote.

Amy Simmons ([36:18](#)):

It's a great that people are seeing and recognizing these great facilities and actually enjoying them and using them. Speaking of parks and rec, this summer Winchester Parks and Recreation is offering two youth athletic camps. It's a lot less than usual due to normal, COVID of course. Tennis and golf are the only things we're offering this year. And, they'll be later in the summer, but register early cause they fill up fast. Also, a friend of the park, Jim Smith with the Northern Shenandoah Valley Audubon Society will offer a bird and nature walk at the Abram's Creek Wetlands Preserve on June 3rd at 8:30 AM. It was open to anyone 16 and up and you register by May 27th. If you go to Winchester Parks and Recreation's webpage, you can sign up there. Again, last podcast, I mentioned our four museums.

Dan Hoffman ([37:13](#)):

Yes.

Amy Simmons ([37:13](#)):

You remember that?

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

I do. They are from the George Washington one. The Abram's Delight. There's the one right next to Abram's Delight.

Amy Simmons ([37:25](#)):

Hollingsworth Mill.

Dan Hoffman ([37:26](#)):

Hollingsworth Mill. And then there's um, hold on. It's on the tip of my tongue. The...

Amy Simmons ([37:35](#)):

Stonewall...

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

Oh, Stonewall Jackson, right.

Amy Simmons ([37:38](#)):

I was giving you the gun, like Civil War.

Dan Hoffman ([37:43](#)):

I know. You were giving me the fun fingers and I was like, 'we have a gun museum?'

Amy Simmons ([37:45](#)):

[Laughing] I guess that wasn't a very good hint.

Dan Hoffman ([37:47](#)):

[Laughing] Yes. You could've also just said Stonewall Jackson and Caitlin could have edited out that part. And then I could have looked super smart and be like, 'Oh right. Stonewall Jackson'.

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

Yes, but it's more fun this way, and make you guess.

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

Great. But I will, you know what, they haven't been open, but they are opening soon.

Amy Simmons ([38:05](#)):

As of today, they opened.

Dan Hoffman ([38:07](#)):

Awesome.

Dan Hoffman ([38:09](#)):

I've got my in-laws in town. Maybe I'll have to show them some George Washington, museum. Not just museum...his office.

Amy Simmons ([38:16](#)):

His office. Yes. And everybody loves the Stonewall Jackson's tour because there's some wonderful docents over there. So, there'll be open Monday through Saturday now, as of today, from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM and Sundays from noon to 4:00 PM. So, you need to take your in-laws over there.

Dan Hoffman ([38:33](#)):

I will do that.

Amy Simmons ([38:34](#)):

The Old Town Advancement Commission, they're holding their spring stakeholder meeting on May 25th at 5:30 PM. And they are currently collecting feedback from the community to help guide that conversation during the meeting. They want to know what questions people have about downtown and what topics should be discussed at that meeting. You can add your comments on their Facebook post about that meeting, or send an email to OTW@winchesterva.gov. And then Valley Health, they're ready to open their COVID vaccination clinic in the Apple Blossom Mall this week on Wednesday, May 12th. The clinic will be open Mondays through Wednesdays from 11:00 AM to 8:00 PM and Saturdays from 10 AM to 9:00 PM.

Dan Hoffman ([39:13](#)):

So not over at Shenandoah anymore, people. Do not show up at the Athletics Center at SU. It is over at the Apple Blossom Mall.

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

Yep. I don't know which wing that is, but it's near Lens Crafters and Victoria Secret and I think that's the old Sears wing.

Dan Hoffman ([39:31](#)):

Yeah. It's in one of the big empty spaces, that's all I know.

Amy Simmons ([39:32](#)):

Yeah. Okay. Last but not least our next podcast, we have a topic for our next podcast already.

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

We do?

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

Yes.

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

[Laughs] Normally we make it up a few days in advance.

Amy Simmons ([39:41](#)):

Yeah, well, May 24th, we'll be going on a road trip again. I know you know you like your road trips.

Dan Hoffman ([39:47](#)):

I do. I like being out and about.

Amy Simmons ([39:49](#)):

Yes. So, we're going to go on the road and visit some Winchester businesses for Small Business Month. I'm looking forward to getting to know some of our owners, business owners.

Dan Hoffman ([39:58](#)):

Do we know who?

Amy Simmons ([39:58](#)):

We are working on that. We have a few. Don't want to spoil it.

Dan Hoffman ([40:02](#)):

All right. It's a surprise.

Amy Simmons ([40:02](#)):

Yes, but we have a few lined up and we're working on some others.

Dan Hoffman ([40:05](#)):

So we at least know generally what we're doing.

Amy Simmons ([40:07](#)):

Yes.

Dan Hoffman ([40:07](#)):

Well, that's an improvement.

Amy Simmons ([40:08](#)):

Yes. Well in advance. That's awesome.

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

Well in advance. [Laughing] Great. So, one last thing that I have before we wrap up, we had a very special ceremony over at Jim Barnett Park. It was the awards and kind of promotion ceremony for Winchester Police Department. A couple of really special ones. One for Officer O'Connor who was involved in the officer-involved shooting last fall. Officer O'Connor got the gold medal, which we had not given out in like 20 years.

Amy Simmons ([40:44](#)):

He deserved it.

Dan Hoffman ([40:44](#)):

Yeah, that was a pretty dramatic and courageous scene there.

Amy Simmons ([40:51](#)):

And he was promoted, too.

Dan Hoffman ([40:52](#)):

Yep. He got promoted and got that in the same day. So, congratulations to Officer O'Connor. Also very notable, Amanda Behan was promoted to Deputy Chief. She is the second female in the Department's history to be...

Amy Simmons ([41:11](#)):

After Kelly Rice.

Dan Hoffman ([41:11](#)):

After Kelly Rice, who's still with us, to be made Deputy Chief. Right now, we've got two female Deputy Chiefs. Now, pretty soon we'll be back down to one for the time being, because Deputy Rice is retiring later this year. But she was also given an impromptu award for her years of service and to recognize what her contributions as not just a police officer, but the first female Deputy Chief.

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

And all she's done all these years.

Dan Hoffman ([41:46](#)):

Exactly. And who knows, maybe one day, years from now, we'll have our first female chief. You never know. So, congratulations to those folks and everybody that got promoted or recognized. It was a very, very nice, and powerful in many ways, ceremony. This promotion, and all of the promotions we we heard about yesterday were really just testaments to the strength of the Department and the depth of bench that Chief Piper has built there. And we're always looking for new police officers too. Keep an eye on it. I think we're getting ready for a new recruit class, but always keep an eye on our website if you're interested in becoming a police officer. All right. And with that, thank you for listening to another edition of the Rouss Review. I'm Dan Hoffman, your City Manager, and thank you, Amy Simmons, Communications Director as always, and we'll see you around City Hall.

Outro ([43:08](#)):

[Light music]