

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

Hello, and welcome to the City Works portion of this edition of the Rouss Review. I'm still Dan Hoffman and Amy Simmons is still here. Thanks for sticking around for the second part. So today we're gonna talk to Kerri Mellott and Patrick Elwell from the City Manager's Office. So some familiar faces. They're a little nervous.

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

Little is an understatement. <Laughs>

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

Yeah. Yeah. I think Kerri's been dreading this ever since we told her she was gonna do it. But I think you'll hear that she is just fine and her concerns are completely unfounded.

Amy Simmons ([00:35](#)):

It's our little office family.

Dan Hoffman ([00:37](#)):

Exactly. So let's go ahead and get 'em in here and get started.

Dan Hoffman ([00:48](#)):

Welcome Kerri and Patrick. I'm sure no one listening to this knows that the four people in the room currently are all suite mates Amy, Communications Director, Kerri, our clerk, technically Deputy Clerk, but we'll get that in a minute. And Patrick Elwell, Program Manager, jack of all trades. And, you know, if he did have a job description that was accurate, it would be other duties as assigned. Period. Patrick is currently the Interim Director of Development Services. For those of you who have listened to this before, Shawn has taken a job in the private sector. So Patrick's filling in until we fill the position permanently. And we all sit in the same suite up on the fourth floor of City Hall. So these folks are no strangers to us. We are no strangers to each other. But they're probably strangers to all of you, the handful of people listening to this. Today, we're gonna talk about what a Clerk does. You've probably seen clerks in different forms, in different professions. You've probably seen the movie "Clerks." You've probably seen the Clerk of the Court. You guys don't know the movie clerks from the eighties? Oh my God. All right. Well, that's another...

Patrick Elwell ([02:09](#)):

That's entirely unrelated to government work.

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

Completely unrelated. They were cashier clerks at a store and it was one of those...What's his name? Oh, the guy that did...

Patrick Elwell ([02:22](#)):

Jay and Silent Bob.

Dan Hoffman ([02:23](#)):

Jay and silent Bob. Yeah. What was his name? I can't remember.

Patrick Elwell ([02:31](#)):

Kevin Smith.

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

Yes! Something like that. Anyways. <Laughs> It's a different clerk in the sense it's probably different than a lot of the different context you've seen. Yes. Do a little research real quick, Patrick.

Patrick Elwell ([02:46](#)):

Yeah, it's Kevin Smith.

Dan Hoffman ([02:48](#)):

Kevin Smith. There you go. So yes, you guys will probably hate that movie and I would bet it doesn't hold up very well either. But yes, it's not like the movie "Clerks" by in any way, shape or form. So today we're gonna talk about what a clerk for a city does, and how an idea becomes an ordinance or a resolution. How do things end up on a City Council agenda? So let's get started with Clerk. Kerri, you are the Deputy Clerk only because technically in City Code, I'm the Clerk of Council, but in reality, Kerri is the Clerk of Council. Kerri, what does a clerk do?

Kerri Mellott ([03:31](#)):

The clerk does agendas, minutes. Make sure that those are posted out onto what our agenda and minute system, iCompass.

Dan Hoffman ([03:42](#)):

So that's our website. iCompass is basically...you don't go to...Well, I guess they do kind of go to iCompass, but iCompass is just part of our website. Right?

Kerri Mellott ([03:50](#)):

Yeah, it is. It is.

Dan Hoffman ([03:52](#)):

It's a software system.

Kerri Mellott ([03:52](#)):

Yeah. It's a software system linked to our website that publishes all the agendas and minutes for all the boards and commissions that we currently have.

Dan Hoffman ([04:02](#)):

So what are minutes?

Kerri Mellott ([04:03](#)):

Minutes are just a summary of what happened in that meeting of Council or a committee meeting.

Dan Hoffman ([04:12](#)):

What kind of stuff can people find in the minutes? There's a little summary of the meeting, but what other stuff?

Kerri Mellott ([04:17](#)):

So really what you can find is what actions were taken. Mainly if a resolution or an ordinance passes, you can find that information where if somebody was appointed to a board.

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

Yep. And the best way to actually get a sense of what happened in the meeting is to...

Kerri Mellott ([04:35](#)):

Watch the video.

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

Watch the video. What is our process for that? Cause we record pretty much every meeting.

Kerri Mellott ([04:42](#)):

Almost every meeting for the City, like the Planning Commission meeting, BZA, BAR, Council committees, and council meetings are recorded and published out there. They're easily accessible. They are as well published onto the iCompass system, right beside the agenda.

Dan Hoffman ([05:04](#)):

What does State Code...They require us to do certain things. Are we required to record video tape meetings?

Kerri Mellott ([05:11](#)):

We are not required to record or video tape. So it's not a requirement to have an audio or video.

Dan Hoffman ([05:17](#)):

We just do that for transparency.

Kerri Mellott ([05:20](#)):

Yes, sir.

Dan Hoffman ([05:21](#)):

You don't have to call me, sir. You never call me, sir at all, except for right now. Kerri sits right outside of my office. This is the most formal way she has ever addressed me in the past year and a half.

Kerri Mellott ([05:37](#)):

<Laugh> You are probably right.

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

So, ma'am yeah. Do you want to chair too?

Kerri Mellott ([05:43](#)):

No, thank you.

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

Kerri's working on little sleep, so <laugh> . We don't have to record meetings, but we do that because sometimes getting down to a meeting's a bit of a pain in the butt. And you know, sometimes they're in the evening for a variety of reasons. It's a great way to keep on top of all the stuff that we talk about on this podcast on a regular basis. What kind of other stuff does a clerk do for Council, and how is it consistent across different jurisdictions in Virginia?

Kerri Mellott ([06:21](#)):

Every county, every city has a clerk. What I do for Council, a lot of things comes across the desk that needs to go to Council, needs to be noticed for Council cuz they have different events that they attend. So, I notice those.

Dan Hoffman ([06:43](#)):

When you notice something it's not like, 'Hey, I noticed that.' No. What does it mean to notice something?

Kerri Mellott ([06:48](#)):

To notice something is to actually post it on our boards.

Dan Hoffman ([06:51](#)):

Here at City Hall.

Kerri Mellott ([06:51](#)):

Yes. So that the public knows that Council has been invited to an event. Maybe it's a graduation, maybe it's an Apple Blossom event. We just try and get those out there. So people that come into City Hall can see what events that Council may be attending that week or in the future.

Dan Hoffman ([07:13](#)):

Because Council can't meet without it being noticed or publicized in some way, shape or form if there's more than two.

Kerri Mellott ([07:20](#)):

You are correct. We cannot have a meeting that hasn't been noticed.

Dan Hoffman ([07:24](#)):

Yep. And it's more three or more is a meeting. If you see two of your City Councilors walking down the street, chatting with each other, that's fine. That's not a meeting. But three or more, three or more you could, but it gets into some real dicey territory. Three of them could just chat about the weather. That's fine. It's when they actually start discussing anything related to the City. So we always play it safe and

whenever there's gonna be a gathering, we make sure we notice it. Now, let's go back to the agenda. Tell me what goes into the agenda.

Kerri Mellott ([08:01](#)):

So the agenda actually, a lot of our agenda is built from different committees and different boards. Say something is going through Planning Commission, like a rezoning or a conditional use permit. Those will hit the Planning Commission first. The Planning Commission will then review that and give recommendations to Council in regards to that application. And then from there it builds up into Council. Something like a rezoning will go to our Planning and Economic Development [PED] committee, which consists of three of our Councilors. And if that item is approved by that committee, it will be forwarded onto Council for a final vote. Something like a rezoning is an ordinance. So it actually requires two more readings after that Planning and Economic Development committee meeting.

Dan Hoffman ([09:00](#)):

Gotcha. And the person who sets the agenda for these meetings is?

Kerri Mellott ([09:06](#)):

Technically you.

Dan Hoffman ([09:08](#)):

Exactly.

Dan Hoffman ([09:10](#)):

I set the agendas, but of course, I'm tracking what goes through this process. Sometimes things just kind of skip committee in an emergency setting or if there's some time sensitivity to it. Or if there's some special consideration, we'll just pop it right onto a regular meeting agenda. We mentioned first and second reading, there's also resolutions a variety of different kinds of things. Patrick, although you're the Interim Director of Development Services right now, you've also been the interim zoning administrator, and you're also the person that I task with: 'Hey, we need an ordinance around massage parlors' or, 'Hey, we need something related to blight that might need a text amendment or whatever.' You're often the person that I throw that at. When you realize that we need an ordinance and this needs to go through the process, walk me through the process of getting an ordinance passed.

Patrick Elwell ([10:13](#)):

Sure. It depends on the stage that it gets to me. If it just comes as an idea, like, 'Hey, we need to update our ordinance regarding massage parlors.' Then, I'll speak with you, the Police Chief, and anyone else who might be involved to get an idea of what we want or what we would like the ordinance to say. I'll look at some other localities, see how other jurisdictions around our size in Virginia do it. We don't wanna reinvent the wheel if it's already working. But we also wanna look to see if we can improve on what's out there. So, I'll take that and go through a couple drafts, run it by the key stakeholders, flesh it out a little bit more. Once we're at a point where we're comfortable with it, then I'll create an item in iCompass, our system that Kerri just talked about, and schedule it for a committee. Whichever committee would be most relevant.

Dan Hoffman ([11:15](#)):

You say, create an item. What goes into creating an item? It's not just, 'Hey, I created a word document and I saved it.' What goes into it. We call it a CAM, which just stands for Council Action Memo. Sometimes, we'll just throw something in as a discussion item, but what kinds of information do you put in that? Cause that's what the public sees on an agenda. Right?

Patrick Elwell ([11:34](#)):

Right. Every item on an agenda has, or most items on the agenda, has a CAM, a Council Action Memo. And that outlines the details of where the items coming from, the title, what the purpose of it is, how it's tied to the strategic plan, or the City's overarching goals, background information. Why did this come up? How do we develop the ordinance that we're proposing any kind of budgetary impacts? It's always a big thing to know if it's gonna cost anything down the road or if there's gonna be an upfront expense, or if we're gonna generate some new revenue out of it. Then, there's always an option for us to kind of explain staff's recommendation or staff's outlook for Council's consideration when they look at it. And it's followed by the actual language of the law. There's a specific format that resolutions and ordinances follow. It's a lot of fancy sounding language.

Dan Hoffman ([12:35](#)):

Whereas this and whereas that, and all that good stuff. Whereas, for those of you who have ever looked at one of these, whereases are opening statements that give some context and justification.

Patrick Elwell ([12:52](#)):

Explanations

Dan Hoffman ([12:53](#)):

Whereas the city needs more housing or whereas it's in the best interest of the businesses in the city that we do blah, blah, blah. Those are just some few reasons why we're doing what we're doing, but then it gets right into the actual language of the ordinance itself.

Patrick Elwell ([13:16](#)):

Right. And then, we get to the end where basically starts out: Now, therefore be it ordained or resolved that the Common Council, this being passed by Council, they're stating explicitly what the law is gonna be. So now therefore the City Code of Winchester is amended to state the following, and then we'll list a red line version of what the Code currently says. Red line to strike out things we wanna take out or add in underline with things that we want to add in, and it should come out to be exactly what we want it to say. And then we support all the CAMS with backup documents. So, if there's been research or PowerPoint presentations or anything that we put together. A lot of things that come out of Planning and Zoning will have a staff report. That's multiple pages long and goes through every little detail. That's all included in the Council Action Memo and included in the agenda packet.

Dan Hoffman ([14:20](#)):

Yeah. And if you wanna effectively engage with your City Council on an ordinance that's before them, just as a City Councilor does their homework, or should be doing their homework to research, they read the language, they read the staff reports, residents should be doing the same thing. A lot of times, we have residents come up and say, 'where did this come from?' Or why are we doing this? Or why are we rushing this? All of that's in the CAM, and in most cases it answers why are we doing this. It says in the

vast majority of cases, I'd say 99.9% of the time, it goes through the very lengthy process and history of it as well. So, if something's in front of Council for a first or second reading, there have been most likely at least several meetings. It's been in the works for, in some cases, months, if not years. So, it gets to first reading, what happens at first reading? It's on the agenda. It's normally gone through the committee that Kerri mentioned, and then it gets to the regular Council meeting for first reading. What happens at first reading?

Patrick Elwell ([15:30](#)):

Well, at first reading the committee chair whichever committee oversaw the item will give a brief explanation of what happened in committee, their discussions, or their vote. And then, whichever staff member is responsible for that particular item will give a presentation to the entire Council, outlining the item, any particular details that are pertinent for their decision making. Then, they can field questions from Council as they come. But after that, there's no action taken cuz it's giving them an opportunity to learn more about it, to think about it, think about some other questions that they may have in the next two weeks. And let it stew until they have to make a decision.

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

Now, when we go from first to second reading, that's when Kerri jumps back in and there's another step that Kerri has to take.

Kerri Mellott ([16:30](#)):

That is the public hearing ads.

Dan Hoffman ([16:32](#)):

Yes. The public hearing ads, which I'm sure very few people actually read, you have to get the newspaper to get 'em, or I guess they're on the online version too. Why do we do that?

Kerri Mellott ([16:47](#)):

To notify the public of what is going on in their neighborhood. And some of it is budget related. Some of it is City Code changes that are coming up. Just to notify the public so they can come out and speak on that matter at that meeting that that's gonna be held on.

Dan Hoffman ([17:05](#)):

Yeah. And it's still required that we publish them in the paper even though fewer and fewer people are actually getting the print edition or reading the paper. So the real reason we do it, we do it obviously to make sure everybody has access to it, but it's required by State law. How much do we spend every year on public hearing notices?

Kerri Mellott ([17:29](#)):

I am not certain. It really just depends on how many public hearings we have.

Dan Hoffman ([17:35](#)):

Ballpark.

Dan Hoffman ([17:38](#)):

\$20,000? Million?

Kerri Mellott ([17:38](#)):

No, no, no. I wanna say it it's closer to 20.

Dan Hoffman ([17:42](#)):

\$20,000. Not an insignificant amount. It doesn't break the budget, but at the same time, we spend a substantial amount of money running ads in the newspaper for bills. We don't have to do resolutions. Do we?

Kerri Mellott ([17:57](#)):

Not all resolutions require a public hearing, but there are a couple out there that will.

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

Gotcha. So, it's been published in the paper that we're doing it. We have to do it two weeks in advance of the public hearing. Now, we've occasionally talked about doing the public hearing at first reading. We're allowed to do that, right?

Kerri Mellott ([18:16](#)):

We are allowed to do that.

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

And we've done it a couple of times. We did it most recently for...oh, what was that? We did a public hearing during first reading for something. Anyways.

Kerri Mellott ([18:30](#)):

Was it the Comp Plan?

Dan Hoffman ([18:31](#)):

Oh, it was the Comp Plan.

Kerri Mellott ([18:33](#)):

I think it was the Comp Plan.

Dan Hoffman ([18:35](#)):

It might have been the Comp Plan, I think. Yeah, we've done it a couple times recently, where we actually held the public hearing during first reading. That makes some sense too because when something hits second reading, it should be done. There are not big major changes. At that point, it's the night that it's getting approved and becoming a law. Staff shouldn't be receiving a whole bunch of differing direction from the City Council. So, having a public hearing that same night might not be the most effective way to get feedback from the residents. We might see, for those of you at least who track Winchester stuff, you might see more public hearings during first reading. If we wanna make sure that the public's had a chance to speak, and there's been a couple of weeks for the Council to digest that feedback. But normally for the most part right now, we still do it during second reading.

Kerri Mellott ([19:28](#)):

Well, and citizens are allowed to come in and talk during public comments as well prior to the first reading,

Dan Hoffman ([19:35](#)):

That is true. You can show up at any meeting, speak your mind on any topic related the City. So, it's second reading. They have voted. It is now an ordinance for the city. What happens with it? Do we just make a copy of it and put it in the file cabinet somewhere? What happens?

Kerri Mellott ([19:53](#)):

No. What happens after an ordinance is passed, we do hold ordinance books in our office in the city manager's office.

Dan Hoffman ([20:02](#)):

We've got some old ones.

Kerri Mellott ([20:03](#)):

We really do. Back to Civil War days.

Dan Hoffman ([20:09](#)):

Pre the constitution, I think. I don't think we have any pre-1776 ones. Do we? I think 1790.

Kerri Mellott ([20:18](#)):

I think you're right. I think it's closer to 1800. So I think it's in 1790s.

Dan Hoffman ([20:23](#)):

Yeah, I think it's pre-constitution, during the old articles, the Confederation after we were independent. We've got those going way back in the office 'cause we're a pretty historic city.

Kerri Mellott ([20:35](#)):

<Laugh> A little bit. We do record those in our ordinance books, and then, we also upload those to another site that we have called Municode, which houses all of our resolutions and our ordinances for upcoming ordinance books.

Dan Hoffman ([20:54](#)):

And pretty much every city uses Municode. Right?

Kerri Mellott ([20:58](#)):

Not everyone. No. Even prior to us having Municode, it was all manual. Those code books and everything were manually done.

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

Huh. If somebody wanted to...obviously there was a time when it wasn't online, but there are still jurisdictions that don't publish their ordinances online.

Kerri Mellott ([21:24](#)):

There're ones that might not necessarily use an outside...

Dan Hoffman ([21:28](#)):

Municode.

Kerri Mellott ([21:28](#)):

Yes.

Dan Hoffman ([21:29](#)):

Okay. Got it.

Amy Simmons ([21:31](#)):

We used to just put 'em on the website as PDFs

Dan Hoffman ([21:33](#)):

Oh, okay. Well that's not very good.

Kerri Mellott ([21:36](#)):

And there's several jurisdictions that still do that.

Dan Hoffman ([21:38](#)):

Geez, those guys are outdated. Not meaning to shame another jurisdiction, but that's kind of old school in a bad way. So we publish it on municode, and then we implement it. Now, a resolution's a little different--it's a lot different actually. What's the difference between a resolution and an ordinance?

Kerri Mellott ([21:58](#)):

A resolution is more of a policy, a City policy, not a law.

Dan Hoffman ([22:05](#)):

Or just a recognition. We do resolutions all the time for organizations doing an event or is having a significant milestone for one of our...

Kerri Mellott ([22:20](#)):

Actually those would be proclamations.

Dan Hoffman ([22:21](#)):

Proclamations. Thank you very much! We do resolutions and proclamations. Resolutions require Council approval. Proclamations, that's just the Mayor, right?

Kerri Mellott ([22:30](#)):

That's the Mayor.

Dan Hoffman ([22:32](#)):

Okay. Yes. When we resolve to do something, what kind of stuff goes into it? And by the way, I know what goes into a resolution, but I want these guys to tell you what goes into a resolution.

Kerri Mellott ([22:48](#)):

You build your resolutions a lot like your ordinances. We still do a Council Action Memo for those, give the background information, give any budgetary impacts, and we also do, whereas on those as well. But they are more of an informal policy. As opposed to being written into City Code. We do resolutions for some bonds. Those can be done in a resolution or ordinance, depending on what it is. We can do resolutions for...

Patrick Elwell ([23:27](#)):

Joint agreements with other localities.

Kerri Mellott ([23:30](#)):

MOUs.

Dan Hoffman ([23:32](#)):

Resolutions are basically just the Council making a decision. They formalize their opinion on something, and this is their way of speaking as one voice. So, we've talked about resolutions, ordinances, proclamations. If you're a resident and you want to see how that process works, you can really watch the process. Pick an item, go to our website and, trace it back through. A good example might be one of our land use ones. Patrick, when someone gets a...if there's a text amendment to our Zoning Code that starts off with Planning Commission. You could trace an item back to its very first Planning Commission work session on our website. We record the Planning Commission work sessions. Right?

Patrick Elwell ([24:30](#)):

Right. Yep. Well,

Dan Hoffman ([24:31](#)):

Well anyways, they're looking into that. So Planning Commission work sessions. From there, it goes to the Planning Commission regular meeting. It might be a couple of stops, a couple of meetings there. Then, it goes to the Council committee, first reading, second reading. So you can, as a resident, watch every step of the process. And even for that stuff, that's not video recorded. You've got staff reports, you've got the presentations that might have come along with it. You can really go to our website and watch every step of this process to get a better sense of how it works. These things take time. So nothing's rushed per se. Because let's say it's at a Planning Commission work session. Let's say it starts off there. How long would something, even if it went smoothly through, what's the minimum amount of time roughly, Patrick?

Patrick Elwell ([25:25](#)):

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Well, it would take at least two meetings of the Planning Commission, work session and then their regular meeting.

Dan Hoffman ([25:33](#)):

That's a month.

Patrick Elwell ([25:35](#)):

Yeah. They have their meetings the first and third Tuesdays of every month typically. If they approve it at the regular meeting, it'll then have to go to the Planning and Economic Development Committee which is typically the fourth Thursday of every month?

Kerri Mellott ([25:50](#)):

Typically, the last Thursday that month.

Patrick Elwell ([25:54](#)):

So effectively, it'll be at least a month before it gets anywhere near the whole City Council. And then once it goes through, PED, it'll go to the next regular meeting of the City Council.

Dan Hoffman ([26:13](#)):

And then it's probably another week or two.

Patrick Elwell ([26:15](#)):

Yep. And then, another two weeks for the second reading and public hearing before there's a vote. That's assuming that it doesn't get tabled or continued along the way for further discussion.

Dan Hoffman ([26:27](#)):

Yeah. So at a minimum, you're looking at 60 days and that doesn't include all the staff work that went into that very first meeting. If you come to the City and you got an idea and let's say it's a great idea that should become a City ordinance, and input from the public obviously is a huge part of all this. You're more than welcome to bring your ideas for bills and ordinances and resolutions and proclamations to us. But particularly for ordinances, it is a lengthy process. These wheels turn slowly, but they turn slowly for a reason. And that is to allow everybody to participate in the process. We can't do that quickly and to allow for good discussion cause obviously there's multiple perspectives and different sides to every issue. So we wanna make sure we don't rush anything that's gonna affect the daily lives of our residents.

Patrick Elwell ([27:23](#)):

Yeah. And that's just sound policy-making too. All the background that goes into it from researching other localities to getting our City Attorney's input to make sure everything's legal and everything is as good as it can be before it even touches the code book.

Dan Hoffman ([27:41](#)):

Absolutely. That's a perfect note to end on. So thank you, Kerri and Patrick. I'll see you upstairs in a few minutes. Thank you for enlightening us on what a Clerk does, how a bill becomes a law kind of conversation. And if you ever want to see them in action you can hear Kerri almost every other week

when she calls a meeting to order. We didn't really get into what you do during the meeting actually. So the voice you hear when you're watching a meeting...you'll hear the gavel <knock, knock> and the Mayor will say: 'Call the such and such meeting of the Common Council to order. Kerri, will you please call the role?'

Kerri Mellott ([28:27](#)):

That's me.

Dan Hoffman ([28:27](#)):

That's you. What's your part then?

Kerri Mellott ([28:30](#)):

I take attendance for that.

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

No, do it like you're doing it.

Kerri Mellott ([28:33](#)):

Oh. <Laugh> Councilor Bell, Councilor Clark, Councilor Herbstritt, Councilor Hill, Councilor Milstead, Councilor Rodriguez, Councilor Sullivan, Councilor Veach, and Mayor Smith.

Dan Hoffman ([28:48](#)):

There you go. All nine. She did it. Yes, you can hear her every the second and fourth Tuesday of every month unless she's out. But that's not all she does. You also call every vote. So when it comes time for the vote to actually occur, let's say second reading, you'll hear the Mayor say: 'Kerri, will you please call the roll?' And then you do that same thing again.

Kerri Mellott ([29:16](#)):

That's me again. And not all require a roll call vote.

Dan Hoffman ([29:20](#)):

Not all require a roll call. Sometimes it's just a voice vote. And you also keep time. During public comment, everybody has three minutes. So, if you're interested in that, you can see Kerri every the second and fourth Tuesday of every month. And Patrick is always there as well. Next one is tomorrow night, June 14th. All right. Thank you guys very much. See you upstairs.

Patrick Elwell ([29:51](#)):

Thank you.

Dan Hoffman ([29:57](#)):

So see, Kerri did a perfectly fine job.

Amy Simmons ([29:59](#)):

She did fine.

Dan Hoffman ([30:00](#)):

She was so nervous and Patrick, although he won't let on. He gets a little nervous too.

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

He does, but he never sounds like it.

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

No, no. Cause he's very prepared. He prepares ahead of time. He does his research. He's a very thorough.

Amy Simmons ([30:14](#)):

Very. Yep.

Dan Hoffman ([30:15](#)):

They did just fine. And although this can be a very dry topic it's pretty important. I think one of the most common complaints we get is: 'Why is the City doing this? Why is the City considering this bill? Why is the City considering changing this thing?'

Amy Simmons ([30:36](#)):

Why didn't I know?

Dan Hoffman ([30:37](#)):

Why didn't I know about this? Well, if you didn't know about it, it's because you didn't take a few minutes to actually do a little bit of research. Cuz nothing that we do is not online for weeks at a time. And if you don't have a computer, which is some folks complaint, we publish stuff in the newspaper, and you can get to a computer pretty easily these days at any library. Or you can just show up at our meetings.

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

Call and ask. Email.

Dan Hoffman ([31:06](#)):

Show up at City Hall. I mean, there's a half a dozen different ways that you can stay informed. So those methods are at your disposal and you do have an ability to influence the process. Even one resident showing up and speaking thoughtfully with preparation can absolutely...

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

Makes a big difference.

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

Makes a big difference. If we have somebody show up at public comment and they use their three minutes in a clear, thoughtful, constructive manner, it absolutely impresses them and they take it in consideration. Getting up and just complaining for three minutes or you know, just to be frank, speaking without having done any kind of research or any kind of preparation, that also shows and like in life, it

hurts. Whatever you're trying to, if you're trying to persuade people, you need to do your homework. So, very important to understand the process, very important to understand how the inner workings work.

Amy Simmons ([32:21](#)):

Yeah. And we also put stuff in our newsletter. We do send that out every week, and then, we also have social media.

Dan Hoffman ([32:27](#)):

Absolutely. Yeah. Everybody has email at this point, right? Even if you don't like checking email, that's kind of the way of the world these days.

Amy Simmons ([32:34](#)):

I put every [Council] agenda in the newsletter.

Dan Hoffman ([32:37](#)):

Yeah. And I wouldn't rely on, this is not a statement about our local paper, but if you're only relying on the newspaper, you're only getting probably the things that they feel are important enough to cover cuz there's only so much print that they can print. And a lot of times it's after the fact. So make sure, if you want to be involved while it's in process, make sure you get our newsletter, make sure you go to the website. All right. That's it for this edition of the City Works portion of the Rouss Review. Thanks again. I'm your City Manager, Dan Hoffman. Communications Director, Amy Simmons. Thanks for hanging out with us and we'll see your City Hall.