

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

Hello, and welcome to another edition of the Rouss Review. I'm your City Manager, Dan Hoffman. And with me is Communications Director, Amy Simmons. She's back.

Amy Simmons ([00:13](#)):

Yay.

Dan Hoffman ([00:13](#)):

She wasn't around last time.

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

No.

Dan Hoffman ([00:14](#)):

It was very sad and very lonely in here.

Amy Simmons ([00:16](#)):

Well, only for the interview. I was here for the other part.

Dan Hoffman ([00:19](#)):

Oh, that's right.

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

Yeah. You forget already.

Dan Hoffman ([00:21](#)):

In case you guys haven't figured out, we record these things separately. <Laughs>. Alright. Last time we had a relatively quiet meeting. It was a record. It was seven minutes long. You know, the committees are doing their doing thing. So if you're wondering where all the work's happening, it's really happening at the committee level, which is what that's designed to do. But now we are...

Amy Simmons ([00:46](#)):

Making up for it?

Dan Hoffman ([00:47](#)):

Yeah. We're gonna have a pretty meaty, meeting coming up and a bunch of stuff, events, and things for Amy to talk about. So let's dive right in. The meeting tomorrow, you're gonna get handful of items. If you were expecting either the South Pleasant Valley application or the North Pleasant Valley application at the old radio station site, neither of those are on this agenda. For the South Pleasant Valley application, that one was forwarded to Council from committee. However, the applicant is making some changes, and it won't be ready in time for this meeting. So expect that at the next meeting. The North Pleasant Valley application, which was discussed in committee, that was continued. It's gonna stay in committee for probably one more meeting, and then it'll go to Council. So if you're looking for those two items they will not be on this agenda.

Dan Hoffman ([01:54](#)):

What we do have, we have one involving increased used vehicle values and the impact on personal property tax. So for all of you out there wondering what the heck that is, if you own a car and you live in the City of Winchester. You know because you stroke us a check a couple times a year, which we thank you for. That is very, very useful, and we try to be good stewards of those resources. However, as you also may know, inflation is really hitting used car values. Your used truck is probably worth a little more than you thought if you've taken it into a dealership lately. So, we're trying to figure out how to mitigate some of that impact because you pay a property tax based on the value of your used vehicle. If the value of your used vehicle has gone up, you're gonna pay more tax. The rate stays the same, but the market has indicated that vehicle is worth more. Thus, you're gonna pay more taxes on it. Now, if you have no intent of selling your vehicle, that might sound a little bit unfair because you're now paying taxes on something that you're not able to really tap into. But you know, that's how the market works. That's how inflation works. Unfortunately, this [Council] item is to try to find a way to mitigate some of that impact on the folks that need a little assistance. So, we'll be looking at a couple of different options to try to ease the blow of these increased used vehicle values.

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

Also coming up, we've got, and I know this is gonna generate some discussion, an item to create a definition for humanitarian shelters in our Zoning Code. If you're wondering what a humanitarian shelter is, think homeless shelter, basically, but it could be any kind of temporary shelter for people that need assistance. There was no definition before, but obviously we have some homeless shelters here in Winchester. There's the Winchester Rescue Mission, there's Watts, which is open seasonally. Currently, those places, those facilities can go almost anywhere with some restrictions, especially if they are part of a faith-based institution. The Rescue Mission in its current home is not a church, but it's grandfathered in, and Watts goes to different churches. It locates in different churches through a partnership it has with those faith-based institutions. This just gives some definition and process. If there were to be a homeless shelter that tried to open up in a different part of the city, we have some limitations in what we can and can't do with this. And a lot of it goes back to the faith-based aspect. We can't regulate this. All of you should know that we can't regulate the sincerely held beliefs of any particular faith-based institution. In many, many faiths, caring for others is part of their faith. So, if a church wants to open up a homeless shelter and there's no fire code issues, if there's no issues with not having enough bathrooms, basically building code issues, they can do it. And they can do it anywhere. We don't have control over that. I think it's important for everybody to recognize that we're not suddenly allowing homeless shelters to open up in places where they couldn't before. Previously, they could open up pretty much wherever they wanted. We're just putting a little more of a process in place, particularly for those shelters that are not associated with a faith-based institution. So, this discussion's been going on for probably six months now.

Amy Simmons ([06:00](#)):

Yeah. Long time.

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

It's like I told Council, when we started on this, we had very different ideas. We had a much stricter ordinance, but in conversations with our City Attorney and the Planning Commission, you know, it evolved over time. Am I thrilled with where it's at? Not particularly, but I don't always get what I want. So, show up if you have any issues or concerns regarding that proposal. Then there's a few other land

use issues. We are rezoning a stretch of North Cameron [Street] where the ZeroPak, not just including the ZeroPak, it's a number of properties along North Cameron, but the biggest single property there is ZeroPak. And we're looking forward to that redeveloping. Also, we are merging a couple of our City boards, the EDA and the OTAC, the Old Town Advancement Commission. It's really EDA absorbing OTAC. Some like functions there and...

Amy Simmons ([07:03](#)):

They work closely together.

Dan Hoffman ([07:05](#)):

They work closely together already. So this is really more of an efficiency maneuver on our part. And then, finally, on the regular agenda, we have the first reading of the ordinance amending our boundaries for the different wards. There's really not any significant changes guys. A street here and a street there might shift, but there's no big overhaul. And that's it for the Regular Meeting. We do have a Work Session. The only thing in the Work Session agenda is the discussion of the Comp Plan. I think we've talked about the Comp Plan on previous episodes. Comp Plan's pretty important.

Amy Simmons ([07:39](#)):

It's going to be the next topic on our podcast.

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

Oh, exactly. We're gonna talk about the Comp Plan. That's right. So this is the first discussion of the full Council about the Comp Plan. If you're wondering, 'oh, is this getting rushed' or, 'why is this happening so quickly?' No. The Planning Commission has been working on this for five years. The PED Committee then spent four months on it, three or four months on it, and now it's going to the full Council and they will need to take some action by March. So, this has been discussed at nauseum for a long time. Yes, it's a very important, so I'm glad we took our time with it. However, this is not being rushed through. We actually have a state timeline that we have to meet. Some of it's out of our control. So this is a first discussion by the full Council. If you're interested in the Comp Plan, what it means, what it does, feel free to show up or listen to the next podcast and we into more detail.

Amy Simmons ([08:41](#)):

Yeah. I think we did our first public input meetings on the updates back in like [20]18. It was a long time ago 18, 19.

Dan Hoffman ([08:49](#)):

Yeah. It's something that's updated every 10 years. So it's a big thing. It's required that we have it, and it plays an important role in kind of guiding the course of future developments in the city. All right. So those are our two meetings.

Amy Simmons ([09:02](#)):

Okay.

Dan Hoffman ([09:02](#)):

What do you got Amy?

Amy Simmons (09:03):

I got some announcements. Speaking of Old Town. We mentioned that a minute ago, they have now a 2022 events calendar. It's been two years. Thanks to COVID. Since we had a full list. So now they're gonna bring back some old favorites. Celtic Fest, I believe we've been able to continue most of...

Dan Hoffman (09:20):

Celtic Fest?

Amy Simmons (09:21):

Mmm. Yeah. It used to be St. Paddy's Day.

Dan Hoffman (09:22):

Don't we have a new store on Picadilly that sells like Celtic stuff and boots and things?

Amy Simmons (09:29):

I don't know. I haven't seen it yet.

Dan Hoffman (09:32):

I'll look into this and next time, I'll let you know. There is a store that sells like Irish stuff and Celtic stuff up on Piccadilly right next to the Piccadilly Grill and the donut place. Anyways. Proceed.

Amy Simmons (09:44):

Okay. Sorry. I don't know. Okay. Celtic Fest is coming back in March. KidzFest is coming back in May.

Dan Hoffman (09:49):

KidzFest?

Amy Simmons (09:50):

Yes. That's awesome. Awesome event. It's a huge event.

Dan Hoffman (09:52):

Really?

Amy Simmons (09:53):

Probably our biggest one.

Dan Hoffman (09:54):

Oh, wow! It's our biggest fest of all the fests.

Amy Simmons (09:56):

I think so. Yeah.

Dan Hoffman (09:57):

What about Apple Blossom Fest?

Amy Simmons ([09:59](#)):

Well, that's not ours.

Dan Hoffman ([10:00](#)):

Oh, that's true.

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

You know, that's not our event.

Dan Hoffman ([10:02](#)):

Technically, not ours.

Amy Simmons ([10:03](#)):

It's not ours. So KidzFest is just tons of the games and activities for kids. All free on the [Loudoun Street Mall]. I don't know what they're gonna do this year. Haven't seen the details yet, but that is coming in May.

Dan Hoffman ([10:14](#)):

What kind of age ranges are we looking at?

Amy Simmons ([10:16](#)):

All ages. Yeah. Mainly I would think elementary, middle school. But yeah, anybody.

Dan Hoffman ([10:21](#)):

Not a lot of 17-year-old kids probably coming down to KidzFest.

Amy Simmons ([10:23](#)):

Probably not. No, but they can come with their family and enjoy the little kids.

Dan Hoffman ([10:26](#)):

Of course.

Amy Simmons ([10:27](#)):

Yep. There's always entertainment and it's just a great time. The next biggest one is Rockin' Independence Eve.

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

Rockin' independence Eve.

Amy Simmons ([10:35](#)):

That is the day before the Independence Day holiday. So we always have our...

Dan Hoffman ([10:39](#)):

So it's July 3rd.

Amy Simmons ([10:40](#)):

Exactly. We have our celebration and our fireworks and our entertainment on July 3rd, since everybody else does it on the fourth.

Dan Hoffman ([10:47](#)):

Oh, okay.

Amy Simmons ([10:48](#)):

It's in Old Town, and we will have fireworks this year. They just confirmed. It took a long time to find a company. But we will have fireworks unless something crazy happens. And one thing that we haven't done for a very long time is the Old Town Tailgate. That is to celebrate football and tailgating.

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

What?

Amy Simmons ([11:05](#)):

That was way before your time.

Dan Hoffman ([11:06](#)):

Oh, but I'm looking forward to this. Tell me more.

Amy Simmons ([11:08](#)):

This one was a fun event. Yeah. You just get together and you tailgate in the Old Town.

Dan Hoffman ([11:12](#)):

How does that work? How do you tailgate?

Amy Simmons ([11:14](#)):

I don't know how they're gonna do it this year, but the last year, they just had activities set up on the Mall. And you pretend like you're tailgating, but you don't really have a car. So you would just bring a chair.

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

Oh, so there's no tailgate.

Amy Simmons ([11:24](#)):

You just hang out. You do activities like wing eating contests and all that kind of fun stuff. I don't know what they're doing this year. Don't quote me on the contest, but there's gonna be a lot of fun activities that you would normally do if you were tailgating at a football game.

Dan Hoffman ([11:36](#)):

I hope you get good weather. When is that again?

Amy Simmons ([11:38](#)):

That's in September. So there'll be entertainment there as well.

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

All right. Kick off to the football season.

Amy Simmons ([11:42](#)):

Yep. And so then, the usual holiday events, I did not see anything about a parade, so I don't know about that yet. Then, they're gonna have ongoing programs like the Old Town Vibe, which is gonna be weekends, March through December. I think that's just entertainment and activities on the Mall every weekend. And then Old Town Spirits with the DORA License, where you can roam with your drink.

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

Nice.

Amy Simmons ([12:03](#)):

Those are on First Fridays and selected events. So EnjoyOTW.com is where you can find information.

Dan Hoffman ([12:10](#)):

EnjoyOTW.com.

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

Details will be added throughout the year. They don't have all the details yet.

Dan Hoffman ([12:14](#)):

If you can't remember that? Just go to the City website.

Amy Simmons ([12:16](#)):

Exactly. We have some information there. Okay. So speaking of events, the last chance to register for the Winchester Parks and Recreation's We Love Volleyball Hat Tournament is February 11th at 9:00 AM. So don't miss out. The Lord Fairfax Health District is partnering with regional Dollar General stores. And they are offering walk-in COVID clinics, vaccination clinics. Not testing, just vaccination. So they're doing those in Stephens City, Middletown, Shenandoah, Virginia, Toms Brook, and Edinburg. We don't have any here. We may not have a Dollar General store. I don't know.

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

We do. Yeah, we do. It's over by Bonnie Blue.

Amy Simmons ([12:51](#)):

Okay. Well.

Dan Hoffman ([12:51](#)):

Is that not a Dollar General.

Amy Simmons ([12:53](#)):

Maybe. I don't know, but they don't have any Winchester ones scheduled. So if you wanna go to those as a walk in, you don't have to have a...

Dan Hoffman ([12:59](#)):

Well, I feel slighted by the Dollar General. Why do we get left out?

Amy Simmons ([13:03](#)):

I don't know. We'll have to figure that out. But these are usually held on Tuesdays and Saturdays in February. And you can just walk in, you don't have to have an appointment. We have the list on our latest news section on our website. Fire and Rescue is offering in-home life safety assessments this month. They're trying to help reduce fires and falls for seniors. So if you want them to come in and see your home, see the home of a loved one, they can help reduce those risks.

Dan Hoffman ([13:30](#)):

You might get somebody like who we're gonna talk to in a minute.

Amy Simmons ([13:32](#)):

That's right. And so just call the department, set up an assessment appointment. And they also do group presentations if a group wanted them to come in and talk about it. Just call their number. The Commissioner of the Revenue's Office is accepting real estate tax relief applications. Those are only for homeowners who are 65 and older or permanently disabled, and they must meet eligibility requirements. So those are due April 1st. And then last but not least, we're gonna be closed: offices, WinTran routes, courts, and the Rec Center are gonna be closed on February 21st for Presidents' Day. And then that Monday's recycling is moved to the 23rd.

Dan Hoffman ([14:10](#)):

Thank you very much.

Amy Simmons ([14:11](#)):

That is all I have.

Dan Hoffman ([14:12](#)):

All righty. So that wraps up part one of our updates. Coming up in part two, City Works portion of our podcast, we're gonna talk to Firefighter Brinegar.

Amy Simmons ([14:25](#)):

Paramedic.

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

Paramedic, sorry. Firefighter-paramedic.

Amy Simmons ([14:28](#)):

Yeah. Gotta give him credit for all that work.

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

Yeah. That's the entire reason we're talking to him. Get a little bit of the day in the life of a paramedic, what it means, how you get there, differences. So, it should be a good discussion for those of you particularly interested in what it means to be a firefighter-paramedic.

Amy Simmons ([14:46](#)):

Or EMT.

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

Day in the life. So give it a listen, if that is if that floats your boat. Alrighty. Everybody have a good one. You see your, see you...blah blah.

Amy Simmons ([14:56](#)):

<Laughs>.

Dan Hoffman ([14:56](#)):

Now, if you had done that, Caitlin would've edited it out.

Amy Simmons ([15:02](#)):

<Laughs> We're gonna redo it. You can do it.

Dan Hoffman ([15:03](#)):

Okay. I'm gonna redo it.

Amy Simmons ([15:04](#)):

Yeah.

Dan Hoffman ([15:05](#)):

Thanks everybody for listening. And we'll see you around City Hall.

Outro ([15:09](#)):

<Light music>