

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. Hello, Amy.

Amy Simmons ([00:11](#)):

Hello, Dan.

Dan Hoffman ([00:12](#)):

All right. In the second half of the show, we are gonna talk about taxes. Stick around. Especially if you live in the State of Virginia, there's gonna be some useful information in there. Or if you're just kind of new to the tax paying world. As we have the conversation, I'm gonna try to ask a lot of questions that maybe if you are getting your first job or you're new to the city, or that you might you might find it interesting. Or, if you've been paying taxes forever, and you're just a little curious about how it all works and how the money flows give it a try. Give it a listen.

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

Yeah, join us.

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

Okay. So tomorrow night, City Council meeting. I'm gonna walk through it real quick. I don't wanna jinx us, but I think we've got a pretty reasonable agenda. Second reading on a solar energy system text amendment. That's gonna make it easier for folks to put solar power systems on their on their property.

Amy Simmons ([01:13](#)):

About time.

Dan Hoffman ([01:14](#)):

About time. I think it's been very well received from Planning Commission to the City Council. So, that's gonna get a second reading. The biggest land use issue on the agenda tomorrow night is the North Pleasant Valley application. For those of you who are unfamiliar, this is at 520 North Pleasant Valley. It's the site of the old WINC radio station.

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

Right across from Virginia Avenue Elementary School.

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

Exactly. There is a proposal to put townhouses on that property. That will come forward for...that is also a second reading. And then there's some financial things, some issuing some bonds. We've got an ordinance, second reading, for the massage salon and health club regulations. And let's see what else we got. Oh, and finally, we'll have the second reading of the redistricting for our voting awards.

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

Right. It was so tiny, the change.

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

Yeah. It's such a tiny change, everybody. The odds of you being personally affected by it are pretty slim. I think it's only two or three streets in the entire city that are affected. But if you're curious hop online, check out the new maps. Then, other than that, that's kind of our agenda. There is no Work Session. So we'll have plenty of time to get into the weeds on all of that. Just as a reminder, everybody, we are in the middle of budget season. At our different committees, you know, last week we met with the public health and safety committee and walked through the detailed proposed budgets for the various public health and safety departments-- police, fire, social services, Commonwealth Attorney, Sheriff, and all those guys. This week at the Planning and Economic Development Committee, we will talk about the budgets for Public Services and Development Services. Planning and Inspections and all those folks. We'll have another podcast between now and then I believe, but in April, we'll get into a lot of the other department budgets. April's when you're really gonna start to see the full budget is taking shape and getting finalized. Plenty of opportunities for public input between now and then, and if you're interested in doing that, just come to our website or a meeting,

Amy Simmons ([03:40](#)):

Do you know, off the top of your head when they choose which option they want?

Dan Hoffman ([03:43](#)):

We got some guidance at the last finance committee. So, we're now kind of consolidating the two options. One of them did include a half percent increase in the meals tax. We we will be consolidating that into one option based on the guidance we got from Finance Committee. Like I said, the budget will start taking shape. So the next time we talk to Finance Committee or the really the full Council, we will start working on one budget scenario and narrowing it down.

Amy Simmons ([04:13](#)):

That's good. Usually there's four, five. <Laughs>

Dan Hoffman ([04:16](#)):

Even within the one scenario, there's still, think of it as an ala carte menu. There's a couple of things: you get your main course, but you gotta pick your side. We're still very much in that phase where we've got the big ticket items employee raises, new staff, new vehicles, and then, you've got a lot of the other smaller programmatic things that still very much are in flux. So, over the next four to six weeks, it'll get more and more...

Amy Simmons ([04:49](#)):

Flushed.

Dan Hoffman ([04:49](#)):

Flushed out. There you go. All right. So what do you got for us, Amy?

Amy Simmons ([04:53](#)):

Okay. Announcements. Since we're going on this tax theme, I thought it'd start with the Commissioner of the Revenue's elderly and disabled real estate tax relief program. Deadline for those applications is April 1st. So just go to her website for the application and more information. So just another reminder

that the first community meeting hosted by Council Vice President Kim Herbstritt and Vice Mayor John Hill is March 26th at 10:00 AM at the Jim Barnett Rec Center. The topic of discussion for the first one is community policing. We just did a community policing-type of overview at INSIGHT Citizen's Academy last week. And it was amazing, but this is gonna be the back and forth two-way conversation with the community about what the Police Department does for community policing and how it works. The full schedule, though, for this year's community meetings is on our website. Just search for community meetings and it'll pop right up. Our last podcast, we explained the purpose of a Comp Plan and as you know, staff, Planning Commission, and the Council have been working on reviewing that. So, you wanna tell everybody what happened at the last Council meeting?

Dan Hoffman ([05:59](#)):

Yes.

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

After all these years.

Dan Hoffman ([06:01](#)):

After all these years. <Laughs>

Amy Simmons ([06:03](#)):

Let's celebrate.

Dan Hoffman ([06:04](#)):

It's funny. It almost happened unceremoniously.

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

Right.

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

So, the Comp Plan's done everybody.

Amy Simmons ([06:10](#)):

It was approved!

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

We've talked about it at least once on this podcast. It was the topic of much discussion in the Winchester Star and other places. And, of course, at Council multiple meetings. And without exaggeration, years in the making. This is a major revision. There were, of course, minor revisions along the way, but we do it every 10 years and...

Amy Simmons ([06:34](#)):

It's done.

Dan Hoffman ([06:35](#)):

It's done.

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

Just like that.

Dan Hoffman ([06:36](#)):

Just like that it got approved. And now we get to focus on other things. But just a reminder to everybody, Comp Plan's great. Check out the character map. It will give you a good idea of kinda the aspirational side of development within the city. But don't forget the Zoning Map is king. That is where if you really wanna understand what a developer can and can't do with a piece of property, check out the Zoning Map. That's is the first thing you should check.

Amy Simmons ([07:08](#)):

Yep. Comp Plan is just, 'this is what we might like to see here.'

Dan Hoffman ([07:11](#)):

It is aspirational. It's what we would like to see, but we have very little control of over...we cannot dictate to a developer what can go in any of those places.

Amy Simmons ([07:23](#)):

Or a property owner.

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

Or a property owner. Developer, property owner. You know, we can't just come in and say...

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

You're gonna put townhouses there. <Laughs>

Dan Hoffman ([07:31](#)):

You're gonna put townhouses there, or you're gonna put a park on your property. We have mechanisms for green space and all that good stuff. But we are prevented from dictating a lot of the things that I think residents would like us to be able to dictate because of personal property rights.

Amy Simmons ([07:49](#)):

Right. Okay. Well, most of the final chapters are on the website, if you wanna check 'em out. But we're still updating those last final touches. So, they'll be up there in our next few weeks. Mark your calendars, it's not until May, but May's right around the corner. The Winchester Police Department's car show in celebration of the 200th anniversary.

Dan Hoffman ([08:05](#)):

Yes. We had a very nice luncheon last week.

Amy Simmons ([08:07](#)):

Yes, it was awesome. But they are doing several things to celebrate the 200th anniversary. And that's just the first thing coming up that the community can get involved in. That's May 28th. So more information coming. Winchester Parks and Recreation is offering four different Easter events in April. Now, get ready for these names.

Dan Hoffman ([08:27](#)):

Okay.

Amy Simmons ([08:28](#)):

There's the Eggcessible.

Dan Hoffman ([08:30](#)):

Eggcessible.

Amy Simmons ([08:32](#)):

Yep. That is an Easter egg hunt for children with special needs.

Dan Hoffman ([08:36](#)):

Oh, that's cool.

Amy Simmons ([08:36](#)):

They retrofit the eggs so that they can easily pick them up with sticks or whatever they need to pick 'em up. Sometimes they have magnets in them or ways for them to easily pick it up if they have mobility issues. So, that's free. And then we have the traditional Easter Egg Hunt for kids. They separate the kids into three different age groups and send them out to search for those eggs.

Dan Hoffman ([08:58](#)):

Nice. Yeah. You don't want the big kids getting all the eggs.

Amy Simmons ([09:01](#)):

Right. They're all separated out. And then, we have Egg Splash.

Dan Hoffman ([09:06](#)):

Egg Splash.

Amy Simmons ([09:07](#)):

You can go Easter egg hunting in the pool.

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

Oh. <Laughs>

Amy Simmons ([09:10](#)):

The indoor pool. So, certain age groups get to go at certain times. I think you can turn the eggs in for prizes or something like that. And also, if you get the golden egg or the special egg, then you get a free swim lesson or something like that.

Dan Hoffman ([09:24](#)):

Hmm.

Amy Simmons ([09:25](#)):

That's also free, but you do have to sign up because there are different age groups and we have to make sure we don't have too many people.

Dan Hoffman ([09:30](#)):

Yeah.

Amy Simmons ([09:31](#)):

It's very popular.

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

That sounds cool. Sounds like fun. I wish I could compete in that. Is there a grown-up category?

Amy Simmons ([09:39](#)):

There is not. Some adults have to participate with certain age children, of course.

New Speaker ([09:44](#)):

Oh, yeah. <Laughs> You don't want your kids drowning trying to get the egg at the bottom.

Amy Simmons ([09:47](#)):

Throw the three year old in. And then there is an age group for siblings. If they're too old, then they can participate at a certain time. So check out the website for that. And then the last one is the Easter Bunny Eggivities.

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

Eggivities. We're really leaning into the egg theme.

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

<Laughs> But this one is similar to the Cookies with Santa or the Thanksgiving-themed craft program they have where you just come and you just craft until your heart's content. And then, we'll clean up after you. So we'll provide different tables or different crafts and you just come and have fun.

Dan Hoffman ([10:17](#)):

I did the cookies one over the holidays with my boys. It was actually a lot of fun. And they're older, you know. I was not expecting them to be real into it cuz they're a little old for that. But they fully got into it and had fun.

Amy Simmons ([10:30](#)):

It's a cute event.

Dan Hoffman ([10:31](#)):

Isn't it is very cute.

Amy Simmons ([10:31](#)):

So this is the same. It's just focused around Easter and the Easter Bunny will be at, I believe, every one of these, if not a majority of them., I know he'll be at the Egccessible, the egg hunt and the Eggtivities. I'm not sure about the Egg Splash.

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

Well, he's very busy.

Amy Simmons ([10:45](#)):

He is very busy.

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

And he doesn't swim.

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

It would be very hard. <Laughs>

Dan Hoffman ([10:49](#)):

<Laughs> You don't see a lot of rabbits taking a swim in the lake. They're not aquatic creatures.

Amy Simmons ([10:54](#)):

So true. Okay. So all of these are free except for Eggtivities. It's \$10 per person, but registration is required for Egg Splash and Eggtivities. Otherwise, you just show up and have fun. So check out their special events webpage or the Activities Guide for more information, but register soon because they fill up very quickly. They're very popular. Okay. And last but not least, we are offering new signing bonus for some jobs that we have available. We encourage those seeking new opportunity to join our awesome team. As we explain every podcast, we have a very awesome team. If you need more convincing, though, if signing bonus isn't enough for you to come join us, we also have free employee only health coverage.

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

Yes. That's a big thing. If you work for the City, we cover a hundred percent of your health insurance for you. Now, if you wanna add your family to it, that's additional. But especially if you are single or just starting out, I mean, that's a pretty huge benefit.

Amy Simmons ([11:56](#)):

Yeah. I mean that's medical, vision, dental. And that's just all free. So, that should be enough to convince you right there. Apply today. We have lots of openings. That's all I have.

This Rouss Review transcript was exported on Mar 18, 2022 - view latest version [here](#).

Dan Hoffman ([12:09](#)):

Alrighty. Well, thanks everybody for listening to Part I. Stick around for Part II. We're gonna talk about life and taxes. Otherwise, we'll check you out next time. See you around City Hall.