



NEWS RELEASE

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Contact: Karla Slate, Community Relations Coordinator
City of Covington
(253) 677-2877
kslate@CovingtonWA.gov

GRINCH TRIES TO STEAL HOLIDAY SPIRIT BY SAWING COVINGTON COMMUNITY TREE

Covington, WA – Dec. 1, 2012 – The City of Covington is proceeding with plans to hold its annual Community Tree Lighting Event this evening in spite of extensive damage the tree sustained when an unidentified vandal attempted to saw it down this morning. The 35 foot tall Spruce is located in the Don Henning Roundabout on 168th Place between Fred Meyer and Pier I Imports.

Covington police responded to a call at around 5:30 a.m. that someone was sawing down the community tree. When police arrived on scene the suspect was gone, leaving behind a metal wedge and sign. “We’re going to try to do everything we can to recover evidence from the items,” stated Covington police officer Kyle Riches.

“The cut that was made was done with a hand saw through 80 percent of the tree trunk,” stated City of Covington Arborist and Maintenance Crew Member Bill Fealy. “That damage is a death sentence for the tree.”

The city’s public works crew has safely secured the tree so the city’s tree lighting event can still occur, but the tree will need to come down after the event. The tree’s value is estimated at about \$10,000 and other costs are already mounting including time and labor for crews to secure and manage the tree, taking down the tree after the event, planting a new tree and restringing the lights.

When asked about the incident, Covington’s Mayor Margaret Harto choked up and said, “It is sad that someone would be responsible for such a selfish act in a season that’s all about giving. I know this community won’t let it dampen their spirit.” Mayor Harto will provide opening remarks for the tree lighting event this evening beginning at 5 p.m.

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The city expects they will have to replace the 3,000 Christmas lights on the tree as well as the purple lights that are used for Purple Light Nights, an awareness event that occurs during Domestic Violence Awareness Month every October. Those lights have all been secured through donation and could be devastating to the event if they cannot raise the money or donations to replace them.

The city hopes that someone in the community knows something about this crime, which is a felony, and will come forward. The tree lighting event will begin at 5 p.m. and includes welcoming remarks by the mayor, introduction of the citizen and honorary citizen of the year, a solo singing performance, community caroling, kids crafts, Santa riding in on a fire truck and a performance by the Emerald City Ringers bell choir.

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