



NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – DEC. 4, 2012

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COMMUNITY SPIRIT RISES IN THE MIDST OF TREE VANDALISM

Covington, WA – Dec. 4, 2012 – As news of vandalism to the Covington community tree has spread, citizens and businesses from inside and outside of the city are stepping forward with offers to help. Since Saturday, the city has received numerous emails and phone calls from people wanting to donate trees, offer money for a reward to catch the vandal, and donate funds to cover costs of replacing the tree and lights.

The outpouring of support comes after city crews had to cut down the 35 foot tall tree because the damage was so severe. The fatal damage was caused when a vandal attempted to cut down the tree in the early morning hours of Saturday, Dec. 1. The tree was secured long enough to allow the community tree lighting event to take place that evening, but public works crews had to remove it at the end of the night due to extreme safety concerns. Rectifying the vandalism by removing the damaged tree, replacing and planting a new tree and purchasing and stringing new lights will cost an estimated \$10,000 or more. Unfortunately the tree was not insured as the city's insurance provider does not insure growing trees.

With mounting costs, the city was elated to find out the community is eager to help. In an email message to the city, two young citizens wrote, "We were wondering if we could start a fundraising campaign to purchase a new tree for the city...we could work through our schools, neighborhood and our churches to raise money." And in another email, a local business wrote, "We at Valley Orthopedic Associates would be willing to pay up to \$2,000 to assist with the replacement of the community's tree."

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The original tree was purchased using donations from Fred Meyer and Costco. The city is prepared to accept donations from the public toward the costs associated with replacing the tree. Donations will be accepted by mail or in-person at Covington City Hall, 16720 SE 271st St. #100, Covington, WA 98042. Donations to this cause are likely to be tax deductible, but please check with your tax professional before claiming them.

The City is also working with Crime Stoppers who will offer up to a \$1,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and prosecution of the vandal. To report tips anonymously, contact Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS (8477) or provide a web tip at www.crimestoppers.com.

The city's arborist is assessing the trees that have been offered as a donation for replacement. Costs to remove those trees, transport them and transplant them are being compared to costs of purchasing from a commercial vendor. The tree could be replaced as early as this weekend.

The public can direct any inquiries to the city via email to raisethetree@covingtonwa.gov or by calling Community Relations Coordinator Karla Slate at (253) 480-2402.

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