

# City of Alexandria, Virginia

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: MARCH 19, 2012

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: RASHAD M. YOUNG, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: BUDGET MEMO #16: OPTIONS FOR HOLIDAY TREE AT CITY HALL

---

This memorandum is in response to a request for information on options to address questions City staff has received regarding improving the donated Holiday Tree and associated lighting located in the Market Square Plaza during the holiday season. The questions have centered on the quality of tree and the standard presentation (lighting and ornaments).

Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Activities (RPCA) Natural Resources staff have compiled information along with cost estimates from several sources to provide options for upgrading the tree and presentation. Upon more specific direction, staff can refine the cost estimates and implement the desired option if a change to the current Holiday Tree procedure is desired.

The attached summary sheet describes several options for:

- Donated vs. purchased trees;
- Live vs. artificial trees; and
- Staff-decorated vs. professionally decorated trees, along with the associated estimated costs.

While there are many considerations to be taken into account, RPCA Natural Resources staff recommends Option E (artificial tree), based on the improved quality, standard presentation, and reasonable cost.

Additionally, for a longer-term solution, the City may also want to consider dedicating a location on public land to plant and maintain an evergreen tree that would be designated the City Holiday Tree, which could be decorated annually during the holiday season. The location would be visible to the public, and would be suitable to conduct the annual tree lighting ceremonies. Planting a tree would be environmentally friendly and would promote the City's effort to increase the City's tree canopy cover.

A planted tree would initially be approximately 10 to 15 feet tall, but it could be planted a number of years ahead of its first use as the City Holiday Tree, to allow for its growth. The tradition of the annual tree lighting would have to be moved from Market Square. This however is not unprecedented. An existing Leyland Cypress tree was decorated for one or two years during the repair of the Market Square parking garage.

ATTACHMENT #1: Options with Cost Estimates

ATTACHMENT #2: Sample Brochure

STAFF:        Laura Triggs, Acting Chief Financial Officer  
                 James Spengler, Director, RPCA  
                 Morgan Routt, Acting Budget Director  
                 Kendel Taylor, Assistant Budget Director  
                 Jack Browand, Acting Deputy Director, RPCA  
                 Robert Taylor, Division Chief, RPCA  
                 John Noelle, City Arborist, Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities

**ATTACHMENT #1**  
**HOLIDAY TREE AT MARKET SQUARE – COST OPTIONS**

Option A: Donated tree with City staff installation (*This is the current procedure the City uses*)

- Solicit tree donation from resident
- City staff set up tree and install lights
- Estimated cost - \$6,600/annually

Option B: Donated tree with City staff installation and consultant guidance

- Solicit tree donation from resident
- City staff set up tree and install lights
- Consultant to assist staff with lighting design and installation (range \$2,000-\$4,000)
- Estimated cost - \$8,600 - \$10,600/annually

Option C: Purchased live tree with City staff installation

- Purchase 35-40 foot live (cut) premium grade tree - \$6,200
- Transportation and installation at Market Square (range \$2,000-\$4,000)
- Purchase lights (and other ornaments if desired) (range \$1,000-\$3,000)
- City staff set up tree and install lights (range \$4,000-\$5,000)
- Estimated cost - \$13,200-\$18,200/annually

Option D: Purchased live tree with professional contractor installation

- Purchase 35-40 foot live (cut) premium grade tree - \$6,200
- Transportation and installation at Market Square (range \$2,000-\$4,000)
- Purchase lights (and other ornaments if desired) (range \$3,000-\$5,000)
- Contractor install lights (and other decorations if desired) (range \$15,000-\$18,000)
- Consultant to assist with lighting design and contractor coordination (range \$4,000-\$6,000)
- Estimated cost - \$30,200-\$39,200/annually

Option E: Purchased artificial tree with City staff installation (*Staff recommendation*)

- Purchase 35-foot artificial tree (“Giant Everest”) - \$27,000 + \$2,000 delivery
  - Artificial tree has 68,000 branch tips, 22,260 LED mini-lights integral to tree branches (with the benefit of reduced energy costs), and additional decorations could be added at an additional cost
- City staff set up tree - \$3,000
- No outside consultant or contractor would be required
- Tree can be stored at 133 South Quaker Lane
- Estimated life of tree is at least five years and up to ten years
- Estimated first-year costs - \$32,000 (artificial tree, delivery, City staff set up)
- Recurring annual costs - \$3,000 (City staff set up); spreading cost of the tree over five years, the annual cost for years two through five is \$8,400.

Cost estimates and descriptive information received from:

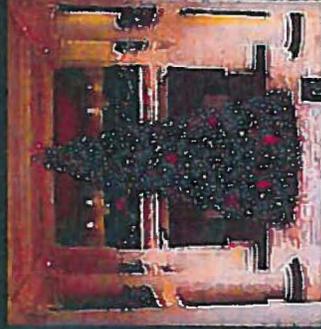
Hargrove, Inc. -- Hargrove has, for a number of years, decorated the National Christmas Tree on the Ellipse, in association with GE (provides the design and lights/ornaments) and the National Park Service.

Robin Goodman, Production Management Associates -- Robin currently does holiday decorations at Shirlington, Pentagon Row, and other local sites including shopping centers and malls. She formerly worked for Hargrove, Inc. as well as sources of real (live cut) and artificial trees for holiday use. Of particular interest is the brochure (Attachment 2) which provides descriptions and photographs of the artificial tree.

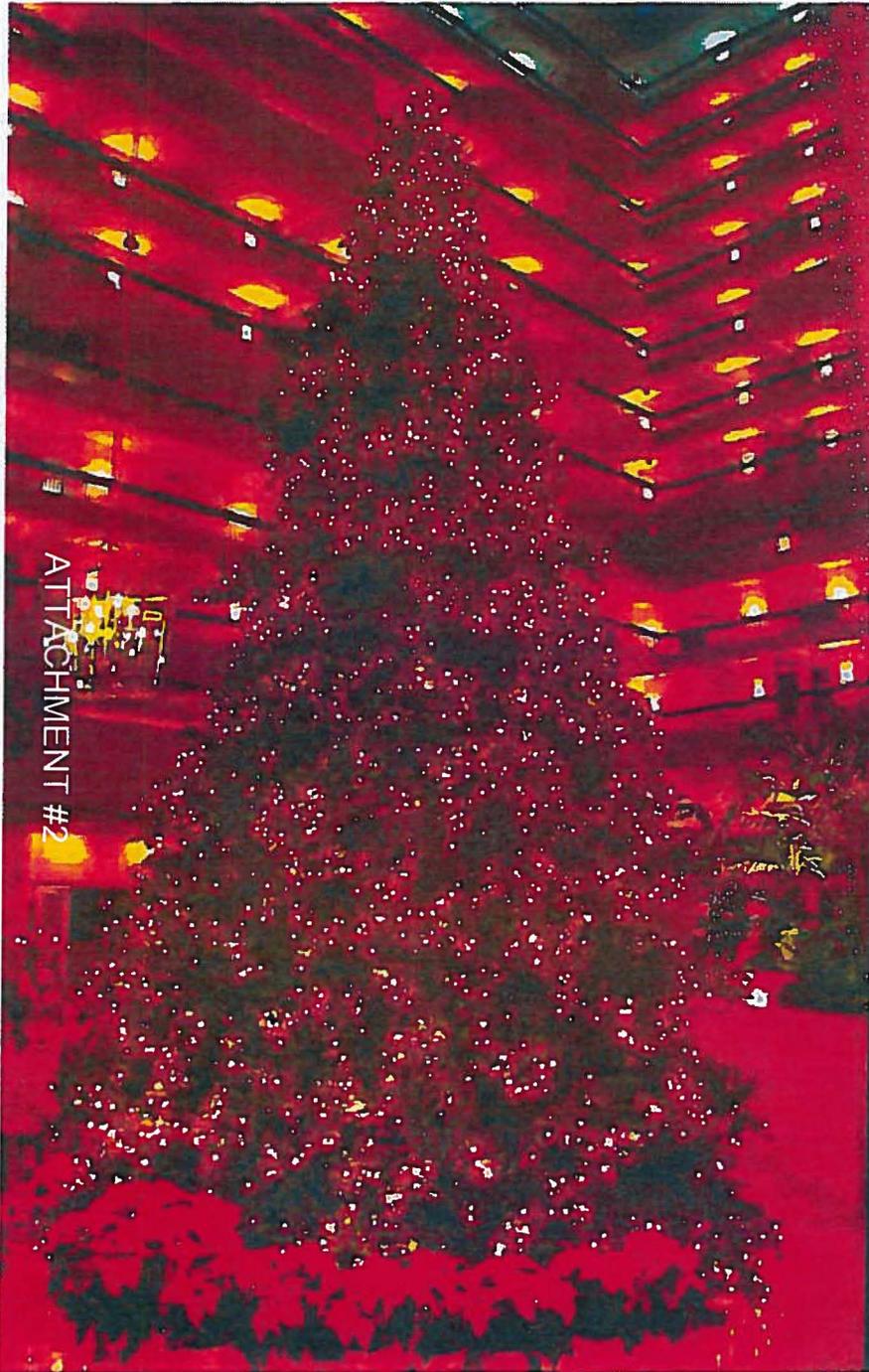


**Christmas**  
Lights Etc

# Giant Everest



Warm. Distinctive. Beautiful. Natural-looking Giant  
Everest Christmas Trees bring the spirit and tradition of  
the holidays to any environment.



Mini Lights



C7 Incandescent



C7 LED



G20 Round

## Lighting Options

Giant Everest Trees come Pre-Lit and ready to shine. Brighten up your space by selecting from several amazingly luminescent lighting options including:

- Clear Mini lights
- Single or Multi-color C7 Incandescent
- Single or Multi-color C7 LED ( Up to 90% Less Energy)
- Single or Multi-color G20 LED for C7 Sockets (Up to 90% Less Energy)

## Fill & Branches

Distinguishable from Panel and Conical shaped trees, Christmas Lights Etc. Giant Everest Artificial Christmas Trees are naturally shaped and life-like. Branch needles are made from a thick, high-grade, commercial PVC material. When bent or pressed, branch needles quickly snap back into place, maintaining the integrity of your tree season after season. In addition to their strength, the needles are also flame resistant and UV protected to resist fade.

When comparing commercial trees, the mark of quality is often found in the depth of its fill and foliage. While some trees are only thinly adorned, our trees offer higher, denser fills.

With an elegant Giant Everest Tree from Christmas Lights Etc., you'll take pride in displaying a full and inspiring, natural-looking Christmas tree.



## Construction & Affordability



Giant Everest Trees are designed to be budget conscious, simple to construct and sturdy enough to stand up to the rigors of the outdoors year after year.

The trees are constructed with 3-foot galvanized steel circular rings that are stacked one upon another at the base. Using 3-foot stacking rings means that customers can purchase a smaller, more affordable size tree today and add additional height later on as budget allows.



Channels of heavy gauge wiring run along the inside of the frame allowing for easy setup and connectivity. Once connected, simply plug the tree into a nearby socket.

## Versatility



You'll find our trees custom decorated and on display all throughout the country in locations such as:

- Town Center Squares
- Theme Parks
- Military Bases
- Parks & Zoos
- Business Centers & Office Buildings
- Churches
- Colleges
- Hospitals
- Banks and more...

## MENT #2 Set-up & Storage

Giant Everest Trees are sturdy enough to climb on during assembly and include hook branches that settle securely into slots within the frame.

Tree frames are marked with color coding and universally sized bolts connect the frame together. (Spare bolts included.)

For compact stowing, the frame's stacking rings easily fit inside one another so that storage space is minimized.



## Options & Specifications

### Giant Everest Pre-Lit Artificial Christmas Tree

#### HEIGHTS

14ft. - 50ft.

#### BASE

9 ft. - 27 ft.

#### CONSTRUCTION

Galvanized Steel

#### COMPONENTS

Eagle Electric Wiring

UL Listed Sockets

#### USAGE

Indoor / Outdoor

#### LIGHTS

Mini

Incandescent

LED (C7, G20)

#### LIGHT COUNT

624 - 46,340

#### COLOR OPTIONS

Clear White

Gold Red

Blue Green

Orange

#### TIPS

10,680 - 142,110

#### NEEDLES

0.2mm PVC

UV Protected

Fade Resistant

Flame Resistant

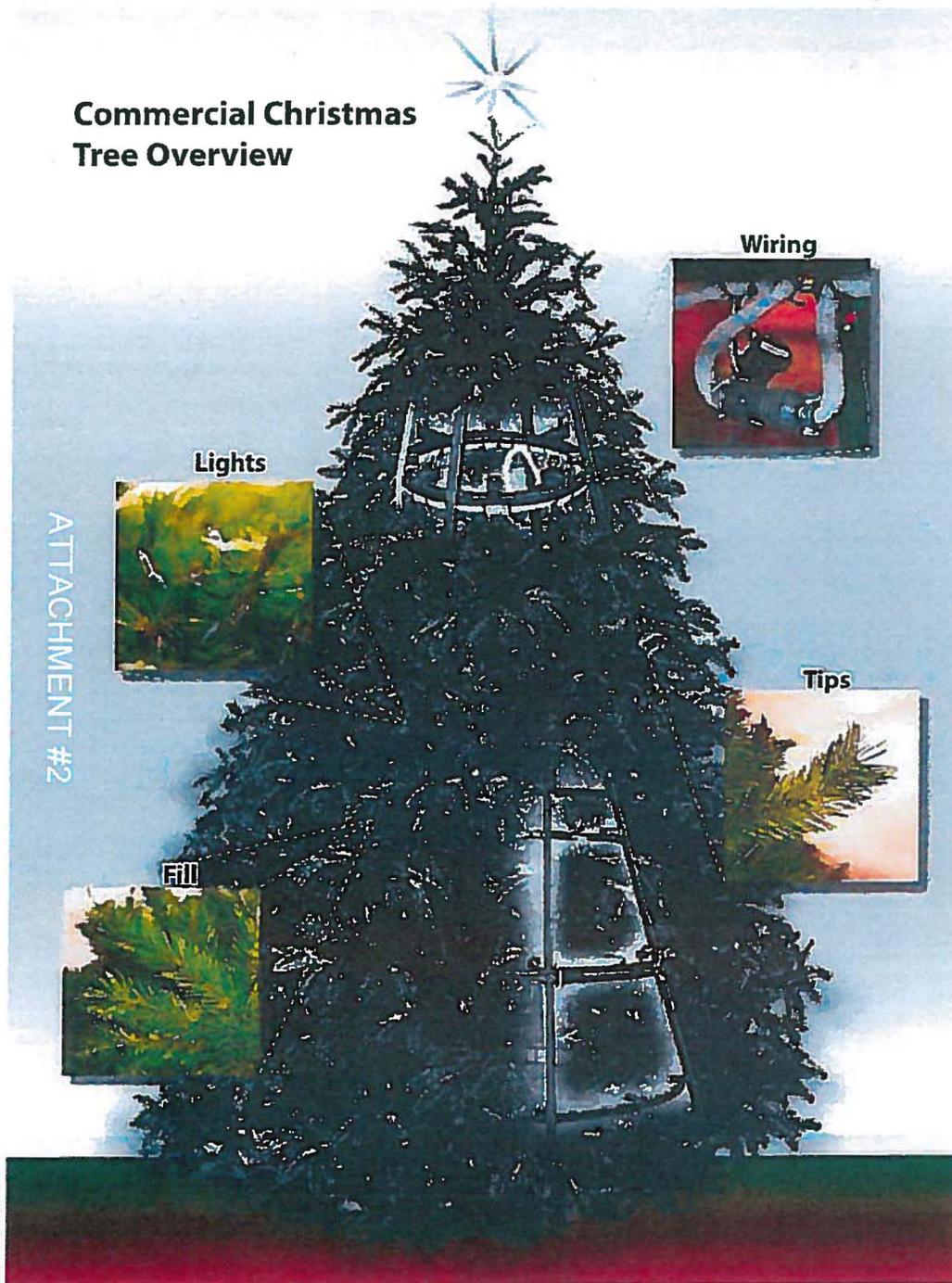
#### WARRANTY

5 Year Limited

#### AVAILABILITY

In-Stock & Ready to Ship

## Commercial Christmas Tree Overview



## Testimonials

*"We wanted to thank you for helping make Festival of Lights at the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden a huge success. The Giant 35' pre-lighted Christmas tree that we purchased from you last year looks so realistic, it has become an icon for the event. The 22,000 mini lights had a brilliant shine throughout the Zoo! High quality lighting is essential for a high quality event, like the Festival of Lights. We want to thank you again for your great customer service and look forward to doing business with you again next year."*

Chad Yelton  
Director of Media and Events  
Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Gardens

*"We couldn't be happier with the quality of the tree and performance of the LED lights. The LED light bulbs were even brighter than we had anticipated. We have received so many calls from Village residents expressing...how terrific the new tree looks. I also want to express my thanks to your sales representative Jane...Jane was great from initial information gathering to installation."*

Joe Caracci  
Public Works Director  
Village of Glen Ellyn

MORE AVAILABLE UPON REQUEST.



## About Christmas Lights Etc.

- Established in 2010
- 40,000 Sq. Ft. Central Fulfillment Facility in Alpharetta, GA
- U.S. Based Customer Service located in Alpharetta, GA
- 50+ Years of Combined Experience in the Industry
- Live Chat Support Available

## Christmas Lights Etc. Overview

Christmas Lights Etc. ([www.christmaslightsetc.com](http://www.christmaslightsetc.com)) provides premium quality Christmas trees, lights and decorations to customers who value convenience, excellent service and fast shipping. We work closely with our factories to design many of the holiday products we offer to our exact specifications and continually compare and test our product against our competitors to make sure we are delivering the highest quality products possible. At Christmas Lights Etc., we have the experience of having sold hundreds of giant commercial trees while our competitors have sold only a few. When you buy from Christmas Lights Etc., you have the confidence of knowing that you're buying from the best.

## Customers Include

Macy's  
Six Flags  
Sea World  
The Walt Disney Company  
Hard Rock Hotel & Casino  
Miami Dolphins  
US Air Force  
Eastman-Kodak  
New York Public Library  
University of Alabama  
And more...

## Featured By

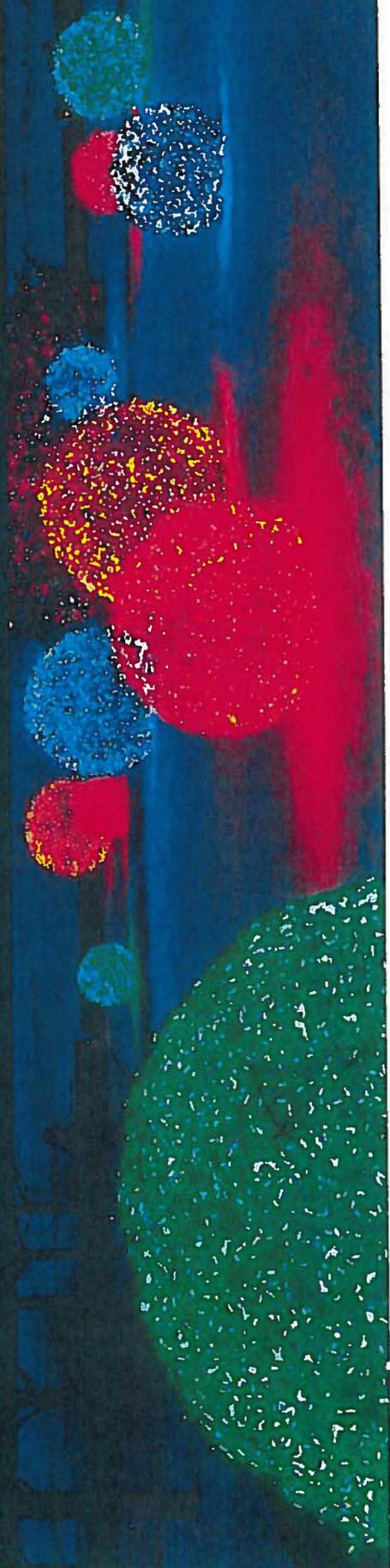
FOX News  
CNN  
HGTV  
CBS The Early Show  
Wall Street Journal  
USA Today  
And more...

## Key Accomplishments

INC. 500  
INC. 5000  
Entrepreneur Hot 500  
Brazzate Customer Certified  
BBB Reliability Program  
Energy Star Partner



CHRISTMAS LIGHTS ETC.  
205 Curie Drive, Alpharetta, GA 30005  
Tel: (866) 962-7382  
Fax: (866) 790-0953  
Email: [sales@christmaslightsetc.com](mailto:sales@christmaslightsetc.com)  
[www.christmaslightsetc.com](http://www.christmaslightsetc.com)





ATTACHMENT #2

© Photo Courtesy of American Heritage Federal Credit Union