



PHILADELPHIA PARKS & RECREATION

Lori Hayes finds the perfect tree for City Hall

It's October 20, 2015 and Operations District Manager Lori Hayes is in Telford, PA, up in Bucks County, searching among the evergreens. She's on a mission to find the perfect Christmas tree that will stand in the middle of the Philadelphia City Hall courtyard. For years, Arborist Mike Helsen had the honor, but he retired so Hayes took the tedious job of getting the best tree for the City.

"There was some grumbling that last year's tree wasn't big enough," said Hayes. "So I knew I had to find a tree that was big enough."

Hayes meets with Chris Palmer and her tree crew in the rotunda of City Hall's courtyard to scope out the area. "We were concerned about getting a big tree through the portals of City Hall," noted Hayes. She also did research on other big city holiday trees and looked at what Chicago had in their town center. "I knew we couldn't copy what Washington D.C. does or New York City, but we could hold our own."

Among the trees in Telford that day, she doesn't find exactly what she wants and needs, and goes back to the drawing board.

Getting warmer... it's October 27, 2015, and Hayes is in Northeast Philadelphia on a private property. A Philadelphia resident has a huge evergreen in their yard and wants to donate it to the City, but a PPR crew has to cut it down and transport it. "We're getting warmer!" Hayes reports on her Facebook page as she comments on the tree search. The tree, a Colorado Blue Spruce, is beautiful but just not big enough, and Hayes leaves NE Philly treeless.

"We're going to get a tree TODAY." That's what Hayes predicts on November 2, 2015 as she gets on the Pennsylvania Turnpike at the Norristown, PA interchange at 8:41 a.m. and heads southwest all the way out to Biglersville, PA in a town called Ortanna.

At this tree farm, the owner and his dog accompany the lady from Philly to their inventory, and then she spots it. A 45-foot Cannan Fir that was planted in 1975. "The tree farmer told me it's a 40-year-old tree!"

Later that day, Hayes posts, "The deal is sealed!" After six site visits and crisscrossing all over the state, Hayes gets her tree!

Success is celebrated on Tuesday, November 24, 2015 at 11:07 am as Hayes and her tree crew (with a big thanks to Bob Sautter and his crane!), consisting of James Moffett, Dave Rodriguez, Mark DeLoach, Oswald Lugo, Bernie Donnelly, Dan Dolan, Malik Hudson and Deverick Dorsey, erect the Philadelphia City Hall Christmas tree in the courtyard just in time for Mayor Nutter to light it up for the last time of his tenure on December 3, 2015.

Who needs a search engine like Google when PPR has Lori Hayes?



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From L to R: James Moffett, David Rodriguez, Mark DeLoach, Osvaldo Lugo, Bernie Donnelly, Dan Dolan Gonnell Hudson, Lori Hayes, Deverick Dorsey

