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HOT

Search underway for Old Town Winchester's 2026 holiday tree

By BRIAN BREHM The Winchester Star
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New Year's Eve reveler Edna Pagan of Winchester is shown in front of Winchester's Christmas tree on the Loudoun Street Mall in downtown Winchester.

Jeff Taylor/The Winchester Star

Are you someone who believes the Christmas season starts too early? If so, you might want to skip this story.

Friends of Old Town, with assistance from the city of Winchester, has launched a search for the city's official 2026 Christmas tree, which will stand near the Shenandoah Valley Civil War Museum on the Loudoun Street Mall.

Brady Cloven, executive director of Friends of Old Town, said this will be the first year that his nonprofit has led the search, which was formerly overseen by Winchester Facilities Maintenance and Parking Division Manager Corey MacKnight.

The reason the tree hunt starts in late summer, MacKnight has said, is because it can take time to find the perfect evergreen that is 30 to 40 feet tall, in good health and without bare spots. The tree also has to be growing in a location accessible by a crane and flatbed truck because, once it's cut down, it will be moved to Old Town.

The donated tree will be removed from its current home about two weeks before Thanksgiving, which is on Nov. 26. It will then be erected on the Loudoun Street Mall and sprayed with a chemical to keep it green and vibrant throughout the holiday season. Once the chemical dries, contractors will spend about a day decorating it.

Cloven said Santa Claus himself will flip the switch to illuminate the tree following the Old Town Winchester Holiday Parade, and the family who donates this year's evergreen will be invited onstage to join the jolly ol' elf for the lighting ceremony. A date for the parade has not yet been announced but it typically is held in late November or early December.

If you have a suitable tree you'd like to donate for this year's holiday celebration in Winchester, email Cloven at mainstwin.bcloven@gmail.com or fill out the online contact form at friendsofoldtown.org.

— Contact Brian Brehm at bbrehm@winchesterstar.com

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