

City hosts 5th Annual Simpsonville Tree Lighting Ceremony

Ceremony takes place for final time on Main Street, to move to new municipal complex in 2024

“We’ve got a good crowd here tonight, and I’m very pleased to see that,” Simpsonville City Councilman Lou Hutchings said behind the podium outside City Hall. “One of the reasons why we wanted to do this in the beginning was to create a sense of community, bring everyone together and have something we could all unite behind and feel simply home in Simpsonville.”

Hutchings was introduced to the crowd by Mayor Paul Shewmaker, who emceed the 5th Annual Simpsonville Tree Lighting Ceremony. Held on Dec. 7 at

“The way this started, I sent a survey out back in 2019 and asked people what they thought about having a tree lighting in Simpsonville, which we hadn’t had one as far as I know or as long as I’ve been living here,” Hutchings said just feet from the Christmas Tree in front of a crowd of hundreds that stretched across the City Hall lawn and North East Main Street. “We got a tremendous response. We got over 500 responses back, and they were all positive and all good ideas about how to do that.”

At the business meeting in September 2019, Simpsonville City Council approved the purchase of an artificial tree to be the official City of Simpsonville Christmas Tree.

“The Council at the time and Mayor (Janice) Curtis and all the Council members were fully behind it, so we moved forward with that,” Hutchings said. “Our City Administrator (Dianna Gracely) found the money for it.”

The City of Simpsonville used hospitality and ac-



The 26.5-foot City of Simpsonville Christmas Tree was officially lit at the 5th Annual Simpsonville Tree Lighting Ceremony Dec. 7.

commodations tax funds “(Administrator Gracely’s) to purchase the decoration. always able to find funding when we need it that doesn’t



Simpsonville City Councilman Lou Hutchings speaks at the 5th Annual Simpsonville Tree Lighting Ceremony.

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Simpsonville City Hall, the Tree Lighting Ceremony featured the lighting of the 26.5-foot City of Simpsonville Christmas Tree, the attainment of which began with Hutchings and a Facebook post four years ago.



Local musician Stephen Eager led attendees of the 5th Annual Simpsonville Tree Lighting Ceremony in a Christmas carol sing-along.

affect your precious property tax dollars,” Hutchings said to the crowd with a bit of a laugh and wink.

The Annual Simpsonville Tree Lighting Ceremony has featured music since the first one in 2019, and local musician Steve Eager has been leading a Christmas carol medley sing-along since 2020. Eager said he “greatly look(s) forward to” each year.

“My wife grew up here, and we absolutely love the town and it’s people!” Eager said. “There’s so much enthusiasm that surrounds the ceremony, and it’s a real

privilege to be a part of an event that focuses on the true meaning of the season.”

Since the 1st Annual Simpsonville Tree Lighting Ceremony, the City has added four feet in height and ornaments for a better daytime effect to the City of Simpsonville Christmas Tree. The Simpsonville Public Works Department assembles the tree after Thanksgiving Day and disassemble it after New Year’s Day.

The Annual Simpsonville Tree Lighting Ceremony has continued to evolve over its life span of five years. In 2020 Council-

woman Sherry Roche joined the festivities by providing a “Letters to Santa” station, where kids could write letters to be delivered to Santa Claus. The Letters to Santa Claus station was made possible by Sherry Roche of Weichert Realtors, Shaun & Shari. Roche said the tree lighting ceremony is a “Hallmark movie moment” in the “blessed” City of Simpsonville.

“Seeing the families gathered around our City Hall tree, hot chocolate in hand, and singing

Christmas carols invokes a sense of unity and common joy that is such a blessing,” Roche said. “Reading the letters to Santa as I package them for the North Pole Express has been

a wonderful experience each year. Some children ask for toys or clothing, but some ask for deeper things like healing for a sick family member or for items for their moms and dads. I feel honored to provide the Santa table year after year and watch these children grow.”

The Tree Lighting Ceremony for 2023 was special in an additional way to it being the fifth tree lighting. Hutchings explained to the crowd both the future of the ceremony and City Hall.

“We’re going to move our

City Hall to the new municipal complex pretty soon, so this we’ll be the last year we’ll have the tree at this location,” Hutchings said, referring to the multi-million dollar project to construct a new municipal complex housing city hall, Council chambers and the Simpsonville Police Department on top of a reimagined Simpsonville City Park. “We’re going to have a living Christmas Tree on campus at the municipal complex, which we will be celebrating there from then on.”



Mayor Paul Shewmaker was the emcee for the 5th Annual Simpsonville Tree Lighting Ceremony.

Hutchings noted that the City planned to keep the current City of Simpsonville Christmas Tree at a to-be-determined location.

“This to me has always been like a Hallmark moment when we get everyone together like this,” Hutchings said in closing. “... The biggest thing to me about this is the turnout of the people and the good feelings and the holiday spirit that we get from this. This is exactly what we hoped to do, and we’re so proud of all of you for coming out every year.”



The 5th Annual Simpsonville Tree Lighting Ceremony featured the Letters to Santa Table by Sherry Roche of Weichert, Realtors.