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Residents of New York community object to small Christmas tree next to towering menorah

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LONG BEACH, N.Y. — Residents didn't want to have themselves a merry little Christmas tree. They wanted a big one.

When city officials planted a 7-foot-tall Christmas tree next to a 20-foot-tall menorah in the plaza in front of City Hall, some residents barked. They telephoned City Hall, wrote letters and testified at a public hearing that the tiny tree in the shadow of the huge Hanukkah symbol was an insult to Christians.

"What's up with the giant menorah and the Charlie Brown Christmas tree?" resident Rick Hoffman asked.

City Manager Edwin Eaton said he had looked far and wide — all the way to Canada — for a bigger tree but couldn't find one.

"This year is going to be kind of a 'bah, humbug,' Christmas," Eaton had said.

But on Wednesday the city of about 35,000 residents 25 miles southeast of midtown Manhattan found a tree to match the 20-foot menorah: a 20-foot blue spruce.

The old tree, a Bacheri spruce, was pruned of its lights, dug up, and taken to a mall.

A lighting ceremony for the new tree is scheduled for Friday.

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