

Gem Lake News

Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Newsletter Editor

Special Interest Articles:

- *New Planning
Commission Chair
Appointed*
- *Development
Moratorium*
- *City News Page 4*
- *Grant Writing
Activities*

Upcoming Recycling Dates:

- *February 5*
- *February 19*
- *March 5*

Development Moratorium Called for Land Use Study of Hoffman's Corner Area

The City Council approved a temporary moratorium on the issuance of building permits for development in part of Gem Lake's business district, while a land use study is undertaken.

The moratorium would suspend development for four months to allow time for a professional city planning firm to study land use dynamics, comparable properties, and other subjects that would help make Gem Lake a more attractive option for developers.

Marc Putman of Putman Planning and Design has been hired to conduct the study, which will focus on the area east of Highway 61 and north and south of County Road E.

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Huge Overnight Population Surge in Gem Lake!!

Gem Lake's population of 393 surged recently by nearly .50%! The event causing this overnight population explosion in our city is the birth of twin daughters to City Council member Faith Kuny on January 10th.

Katherine Scarlett and Beatrice Rose weighed in at 6 pounds and 6 pounds, 2 ounces respectively. Mom and babies are doing well. Congratulations to the Kuny family!



Development Moratorium Called for Land Use Study of Hoffman's Corner Area

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The overall goal of the study will be to enhance Gem Lake's ability to be more supportive of, and attractive to, investment, development, building and tenant-owner businesses.

According to Marc Putman, this will be accomplished through research of surrounding communities in similar situations, the production of supporting documentation and graphics, and new and refined potential ordinance language and strategies.

His research, amendments and added strategies for the city to consider, plus refined planning ideas will be based on input gathered from public input sessions, guidance from property owners, planning commission members and the city council. In addition, Marc plans to gather supplemental research data, which he says is essential to commercial developers and community advocates. This supplemental research will include current local and area competitive land value information, presented in a "realtor-developer-broker friendly" format.

"One important part of this approach," says Marc, "is organizing, itemizing and illustrating a table of what I call 'mutual exchange actions.' This will be a 'we do this, if you'll do that' diagram and narrative, involving mutual incentives in land use, site development, building, quality and finance. A detailed aspect of this diagram and supportive written content will focus on the use of incentive tools that are uniquely available to municipalities."

Another part will be to provide researched examples of what other cities, successful at attracting development, have employed. Contrasted with these, will be examples of other approaches and tactics that have proven to alienate property owners and similarly proven to drive away developers, investors, brokers and tenants.

The end result is to find ways to make the Gem Lake business area more competitively attractive, when compared to other sites and cities, competing for a much reduced level of commercial development.



The City Council voted on the concept of a four month moratorium at its December council meeting, giving Putman the go-ahead to come up with a proposal. That proposal was approved at the council meeting on January 21.

The study will be concluded in the next few months and will involve three major reports:

1. A policy, planning, infrastructure research report and executive study. This will involve stakeholder input, surveys, outreach and a comparison of newer municipal policies and actions that have been effective in attracting development.
2. A policy recommendation report. This will involve municipal incentive summary, recommended language changes to ordinances, zoning guidelines and comp plans and a presentation of findings to the council.
3. A set of market performance data collection summaries including commercial market and land sales data for the area. Also included would be residential detached, attached and senior and assisted living market information for the area, a relevant photo assembly and an executive summary. The report is expected to be completed in the next few months.

Mayor Reflects on 2013 Accomplishments

2013 was a very successful year. The city stayed within its expense budget and was even able to save a little bit to carry over into 2014.

The Accounting Firm of CliftonLarsonAllen, audited the financial condition of the city. The city received a satisfactory rating stating that the city is in a strong financial position with adequate reserves. We did increase the City's reserves through expense savings.

Receipts from charitable gambling in Gem Lake were down. Pull-tab income comes from sales at the Country Lounge and the city gets a percentage of this income to use for charitable and public safety purposes. Because income was down, the city was not able to fund grants to Willow Lane Elementary School and other organizations. We will hope for a better 2014.

Believe it or not, we finally received Metropolitan Council approval for the Gem Lake 2008 Comp Plan in 2013 and the City Council approved the final submission. We have a couple years before we will need to start over again on the 2018 Comprehensive Plan.

The City Council worked with the Ramsey County Sheriff's Department to improve and increase the patrols within the city. The improvement provides additional patrols in areas where it was felt patrols were lacking, and alternating times and days to avoid too much predictability in the routine.

The City Council has been working with SEH to help us obtain grant money for infrastructure improvements in the Hoffman Corner area. These improvements should help to bring in developers to the area and allow that part of the city to be modernized and basically improve the look of the area. This project will carry over to 2014 and beyond.

The City Council continues to work with VLAWMO (Vadnais Lakes Area Water Management Organization) in efforts to clean up the pollution in Gem Lake. This will affect the business district in the city, as studies show that this is where most of the pollution that reaches the water body of Gem Lake originates.

The City Council believes that 2014 will be more challenging than in years past due to the potential for rising costs. Although we have worked very hard to improve infrastructure, maintain and improve sewers and control costs, little more can be found to trim from the city's budget.

New Planning Commission Chair Appointed

Gem Lake resident Ben Johnson was recently appointed to the position of Chairman of the Planning Commission. The action was taken by the City Council at the January 21 meeting.



Ben and his wife Sherri recently moved to our city with their two year old daughter. He was born and raised in Minnesota and attended the University of Minnesota.

He enlisted in the United States Navy in 2002 and served six years on active duty, attaining the rank of Petty Officer First Class.

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City News Page

Ramsey County Traffic Initiatives Net Results

The Mounds View Police Department hosted a high-visibility DWI saturation project on December 14 from 8:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m. Officers focused on the area around County Road 10, State Highway 10 and 35W.

The DWI saturation yielded the following results:

- *143 traffic stops
- *8 people arrested and brought to jail
- *5 DWI arrests
- *9 drivers cited for Driving After Revocation or Suspension
- *6 vehicles towed

The St. Paul Police Department hosted another high-visibility DWI saturation project on Saturday January 18 from 8:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m. The event yielded the following results:

- *155 traffic stops
- *17 people arrested and brought to jail
- *12 DWI
- *18 drivers cited for Driving After Revocation or Suspension
- *12 vehicle towed

Winter Parking Rules in Effect in Gem Lake

On-street parking is not allowed in Gem Lake after a snowfall of two inches or more, until after streets have been plowed, according to City Ordinance Number 86. (Section 6.4.2)

Already, several snow events have occurred, to the degree that some plowing was needed.

Because several cars were parked on city streets, the plows had to make an extra trip back in the hopes that the cars would be gone.

"We want to be responsible with your money, so please get your car moved off the streets when we get a snowfall," says Mayor Bob Uzpen.

City Hires Firm to do MS-4 Reports

The City of Gem Lake is required to do a storm water management report every year for the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency that documents how we manage our storm water. In the past this report has been done by Council Member Jim Lindner on a volunteer basis. He has had to document in-flows and out-flows within city limits, discuss any efforts we have undertaken to treat storm water, such as rain gardens, and detail our efforts to education city residents on proper storm water management practices.

Due to new and more complex requirement for future MS-4 Reports, the council determined that it was time to hire real experts to fill out the paperwork. Therefore, SEH, the engineering firm that also acts as our city engineer, has been hired to do the job. The report is due annually on June 30 for the previous year's efforts.

SEH will also apply for our storm water permit, which runs out in 2015. Each city must get a permit every few years from the state that allows storm water to flow into waterways under certain circumstances. This year the state requirements for the report and the permit necessitate different mapping and ordinance documentation that are best left to the experts.

On the Naughty List

Someone is going to be put on Santa's naughty list shortly. They picked Christmas Day to smash in the front door of Affordable Appliances in Gem Lake's business district. Nothing was missing but it put a damper on someone's holiday.

Also on the naughty list are the folks that decided to swipe things out of cars in the Enterprise Rental Car lot during the first week of January.

Grant Writing Options Evaluated for the City

A grant writing expert at SEH, the firm that acts as our city engineer, is now looking into grant money that may be available for the city. Heidi Peper, a Principal and a Senior Community Development Specialist at SEH is now evaluating Gem Lake's options for tapping into grant money that would aid with any future contamination clean-up projects in the business district, as well as money that could aid in redevelopment. Both types of grants are available through the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development.

Contamination grants are provided when below ground problems are suspected. Her job will be to evaluate whether any potential contamination could exist anywhere and help the city write a grant to do further investigation or even the clean up itself. First steps involve talking to property owners and doing initial records searches. If potential issues are found, Applications for these types of grants are due on November 1.

Next, Ms. Peper is looking into grant money that may be available for redevelopment activities, such as the extension of drinking water distribution mains and connection to a municipal water system. Applications for these types of grants are due in February of 2015.

Black Sea Restaurant: Gem Lakes Newest Gem!

Stop in at our newest Gem Lake business! The Black Sea Restaurant is now open on County Road E near Enterprise Rental Car. The popular Turkish restaurant named the Black Sea recently open its second branch in our city. .

The restaurant serves authentic Turkish food such as falafel, kebabs, hummus and other Mediterranean fare. The Gem Lake restaurant is located at 1581 E. County Road E, next to Vera Auto Sales.



New Planning Commission Chair Appointed (continued from page 3)

While enlisted, Ben participated in multiple overseas deployments, serving as a security team leader, supervising operations onboard U.S. warships and Military Sealift Command ships in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Following his enlistment, Ben and his wife returned to Minnesota to pursue their careers and raise a family. He earned a law degree from William Mitchell College of Law in May, 2011. He is currently clerking with the employment law firm of Nichols Kaster, PLLP. His areas of focus include the EEOC Complaint process, the Family Medical Leave Act, Fair Labor Standards Act and a wide variety of employment law issues and class actions, including gender and age discrimination, hostile work environments, harassment and wrongful termination. When not at work, he likes to spend time with his wife and daughter. They also are enthusiastic about golf, fishing, hunting, camping and the Minnesota Twins.

Ben will chair the February Planning Commission Meeting.

The City of Gem Lake

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We're on the Web!

See us at:
www.gemlakemn.org

Meetings: February and March 2014

The following Gem Lake Meetings will be held at Heritage Hall for the next few months:

February 4, 2014

Planning Commission at 7:00 p.m.

February 10, 2014

City Council Workshop at 7:00 p.m.

February 18, 2014

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

March 4, 2014

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

March 10, 2014

City Council Workshop at 7:00 p.m.

March 18, 2014

City Council Workshop at 7:00 p.m.

Your Gem Lake City Council

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For more information on meetings, city ordinances, recent events, permit procedures, etc. please consult the Gem Lake web-site. The address is www.gemlakemn.org

Each Gem Lake Newsletter is also posted on the web-site under the

news section.

Please email your ideas, comments and suggestions. See box at left for detailed contact information.

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