

Gem Lake News

Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Newsletter Editor

Special Interest Articles:

- *2015 Budget Approved*
- *City Considers Water for Business District*
- *City News Page 4*
- *Profile: White Bear Montessori School*

Upcoming Recycling Dates:

- *October 1*
- *October 15*
- *October 29*
- *November 12*

2015 Preliminary Budget Approved for City

A preliminary 2015 General Fund Budget for Gem Lake of \$431,108 was approved by the Gem Lake City Council on September 16. This includes a General Tax Levy of \$369,819, a Tax Levy of \$120,000 for 2015 bonds and a Debt Tax Levy of \$49,500.

State law requires cities to submit preliminary budgets to their county well before the end of the year, so preliminary notices can be sent to residents, outlining what their property taxes might be for the year ahead. Because the final budgets cannot, by state law, go any higher than the preliminary budget submitted, most cities have to plan in a little "wobble room" as they finalize figures for the year ahead.

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Can City Bring Municipal Water to Hoffman's Corner?

The Gem Lake City Council recently began looking into the idea of bringing municipal water to the Hoffman's Corner Business District.

Initial steps have included asking our city engineer, Justin Gese of SEH, to look at where the water would come from (possibly from the City of White Bear), how it would get to the edge of the business district, (possibly under the railroad tracks), and how it would be paid for (possibly through a combination of assessments, grants and city funding).

Multiple steps would be involved in bringing water to the business district, many of them controlled by state laws. These steps include doing a feasibility study on whether the idea makes sense, and is practical, from an economic and logistical perspective.

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City Begins to Evaluate Process of Bringing Water to Hoffman's Corners (continued from page 1)

Other steps involve negotiating a formal agreement with a neighboring city to supply water to us. This agreement would cover things like types of charges, responsibilities for line maintenance, etc.

Property appraisals are also done for the city by an outside party, to determine the current value of affected property and how much the value of each property would increase by having the improvement (municipal water) done. By law, any assessment for the project cannot exceed the amount of the projected increase in the property value.

Then the city has to determine the total estimated cost of the project, as well as how much the city could raise through assessments. Any shortfall has to be funded by the city, perhaps in combination with grant and loan money that might be available from other government sources.

Existing contamination in the district that would be served by the water project, plays a role in any grant or loan money that might be available. That is why the city is also conducting an Environmental Site Assessment of the area. (See page 4 for more details).

State law also requires that several public hearings be conducted to lay out the details of any proposed projects and seek feedback from those affected. As a citizen of Gem Lake, your feedback and involvement in this project is very important. You can stay in touch with all the details on the website, through the newsletter, and by attending city council meetings. (See the information on page 6 or the website for a schedule of meetings.)



2015 City Budget

(Continued from page 1)

It is not uncommon, especially in Gem Lake, for the final budget to be smaller than the preliminary one. (This happened last November, when careful budgeting allowed for significant reductions between the preliminary and final budget, which was approved for 2014 in November of 2013.)

For sake of comparison, the final general fund budget for 2014, which covers the day to day operations of the city, was \$316,133, versus \$431,108 for the year ahead. The final 2014 general tax levy was \$224,825, versus the 2015 general tax levy, now proposed at \$369,819. The increases come primarily from costs associated with infrastructure for the city.

The Gem Lake tax levy will account for approximately one third of a typical property tax bill, the other two thirds coming from school and county taxes.

Sheriff Matt Bostrom Visit City Council Meeting for Update

Fostering communication between cities and law enforcement officials is very important to Ramsey County Sheriff Matt Bostrom. That is why he makes it a point to attend Gem Lake City Council Meetings several times a year.

One of those opportunities to communicate came at the September 16th City Council Meeting, at which Bostrom made a presentation on law enforcement activities and trends. Bostrom's presentation highlighted the following area:

Community Policing

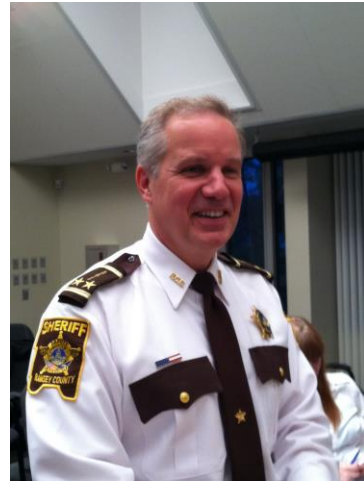
This year's "Night to Unite" Event on August 5 was a great example of citizen involvement in crime prevention efforts. According to Bostrom, there were over 160 neighborhood sponsored events in Ramsey County. Each represented a great opportunity for neighbors to meet each other. "It's a great partnership that we want to continue to foster. It continues to grow."

Heroin Epidemic

There is continued concern about the spike in heroin use in the Twin Cities area. This has led to a spike in emergency room visits for overdoses, as well as the potential for increases in theft and robbery crimes. Most of the Heroin seems to be coming from Mexico and is very pure, meaning it's more dangerous.

One way citizens can help is to properly dispose of their unused prescriptions, especially narcotics, such as pain killers prescribed after surgery. Often the problem begins when individuals get addicted to these types of drugs and progress to Heroin when they can no longer get the pain killers. Unused prescription drugs can be dropped off at the Sheriff's station in Arden Hills. (see the Ramsey County Website for more information.)

Last year, the Sheriff's Department collected approximately 6,000 pounds of unused prescription drugs.



Hiring and Training

The Sheriff's Department expects to hire between 20 and 30 people this year, partly due to the number of retirements that have happened recently. Approximately 18 men and women are currently in the deputy academy and will be candidates for positions as correction officers and deputies. When it comes to hiring and training, Bostrom says their emphasis is to select for character and train for competence. Four core values are key to him and the department. They are:

honor, respect, responsibility, and truth. "We emphasize the importance of character throughout department operations. We've had great success with this concept."

Fund Raising

The Sheriff's Department will once again sponsor the annual "Fright Farm" during weekends in October. The event is held at the Ramsey County Fairgrounds on White Bear Avenue and is a Halloween themed extravaganza designed to entertain the whole family. Proceeds are used to fund youth initiative undertaken by the department, as well as to buy additional safety equipment. (See the website for more information.)

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MS-4 Public Hearing

A state mandated report on storm water management, called the MS-4 Report, has been completed for 2014 by council member Jim Lindner and engineer Ron Leaf from SEH, the company that acts as Gem Lake's City Engineer. The report was the subject of a public hearing on September 16 during the city council meeting, as required by law.

The report details the city's efforts to educate citizens on the subject of storm water runoff. It also documents inflows and outflows of storm water in the city, as part of a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan. Jim Lindner volunteered to do the leg work, walking around the city to document and inspect the storm water facilities. The city also had to detail in the MS-4 report things like its post construction storm water management procedures, pollution prevention efforts, illicit discharge detection and elimination and efforts to involve the public in the process of storm water management.

Procedures for completing and filing the annual MS-4 report have become more complicated in the past year, necessitating the use of expert engineering services to get the job done. The report shows that the city has met its MS-4 requirements, including doing the inspections need and completing all suggested community education and outreach required on the subject of storm water management.

Detecting and Resolving Ground Contamination Issues

Is there soil contamination in the Gem Lake Business District, and if so, what can we do about it?

To answer these questions, the Gem Lake City Council asked the city engineers, SEH, to do an official Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) of the Hoffman's Corner area. This assessment is now underway.

Phase I of the project involved doing historical research of the area. This included looking at what kinds of businesses occupied the area and how these businesses operated. This led to an assessment of where ground contamination might be and what it might

consist of. The results of this research led SEH to determine where soil testing might need to be conducted.

Phase II of the project is now underway. This phase involves finalizing the plan as to where and how many soil borings should be done and then getting permission from business owners to do the testing.

Following the soil borings, analysis will be conducted to determine the extent and magnitude of contamination in soil, groundwater and soil vapor, if groundwater or soil contamination is present. For the purposes of planning, it was assumed that about 48 "Geoprobe" borings would be done, ideally at about 14 different parcels. It was assumed that approximately six of the borings would be to a maximum depth of 30 feet below ground surface, and the remaining 42, or so, would be to a maximum depth of 12 feet. It is hoped to collect about 54 soil samples, three groundwater samples and ten soil vapor samples.

All the samples will be analyzed for various volatile and semi-volatile organic compounds, as well as various metals.

The end result of the Phase II research will be a detailed report on what was found, along with recommendations on what to do about it. If contamination is found, SEH may be able to suggest and grant and loan programs that are potentially available to help clean things up, making the area more attractive for possible development or redevelopment. The process of completing the investigation, as well as grant applications, could run until Spring of 2015.

Celebrating 44 Years of Early Childhood Education in Gem Lake: White Bear Montessori School

For 44 years, the White Bear Lake Montessori School has been providing quality early childhood education to students in our area. This Gem Lake based organization was founded in 1970 and is now located at the Corner of County Road E and LaBore Road.

The school utilizes a curriculum designed by Italian Dr. Maria Montessori, which is based on children developing a love of learning in their early years, that they can carry forward through their lives.

The school moved to its current facility in 1998 and now serves four main groups of kids: toddlers, preschool students, kindergarteners, and elementary students, grades 1-3. There are approximately 80-100 students at the school at any one time, spread through five classrooms. "We have one room devoted to toddlers, three classrooms devoted to a mixture of preschool and kindergarten students and one classroom for the elementary school students, 1st through 3rd grade," according to Head of School Marnie McPherson. "We blend various ages in every room, so they can learn from each other too."

The Montessori concept has a philosophy of following the interests of the child in order to achieve academic success. "Children learn at their own pace and according to their own interests," said Marnie. "Yes, we expose them to letters and numbers, and things like that, but we try not to push areas of learning that the child may not be ready for, or has no interest in yet. All the learning is individualized to the child."

This means there are few group lessons. "When a child is interested in or developmentally ready for a certain academic area, they explode into learning and often progress very quickly. Our goal is to help each child develop a love of learning, and because they play such an active role in their learning, the children find a lot of joy in the process."



The Montessori philosophy was created in Italy by Dr. Maria Montessori in 1907 and has since spread to nearly all countries of the world.

The White Bear Montessori program is a full day or half day program and is privately funded. "Tuition is mid-range of other private schools in the area. We also do our best to support families in need by several state funded financial aid options or private grants," said Marnie.

The school is very proud of its academic record. There are over 200 Montessori schools in Minnesota, but only 12 of them are fully accredited by the AMI (Association of Montessori International). White Bear Montessori is one of them. For more information call 651-429-3710.



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We're on the Web!

See us at:
www.gemlakemn.org

Meetings: October and November 2014

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

October 7, 2014

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Please note that the October workshop that was scheduled for October 13 has been cancelled.

October 21, 2014

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

November 4, 2014

Planning Commission

Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

November 10, 2014

City Council Workshop at 7:00 p.m.

November 18, 2014

City Council Meeting 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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