

Dear Gem Lake Resident:

My name is Gretchen Artig-Swomley. I have lived here for almost 20 years and have served on the city council for 11 years. I am on my third term, which will run through 2018. I have also published the city newsletter for the past 11 years.

As you may or may not know, this work is essentially all volunteer time, although we do receive a monthly stipend of \$100. Our mayor, Bob Uzpen, does receive a small salary, that does not even begin to compensate for the time he spends on city business. I have served with a fine group of people throughout my tenure and I can tell you that we all serve for the same reason-- we care about our community and want to contribute to a better future.

We have several important issues on our agenda in coming months and I hope you will read this newsletter, email us (city@gemlakemn.org) with your thoughts and come to some meetings if you can. Your feedback is important. As we strive to move in directions that benefit the most number of people possible, city council members sometimes feel that they are operating in a vacuum. Despite much time devoted to communication through our newsletter, web-site and email blasts, we rarely have more than one member of the public at our meetings, and we often have no one at published public hearings.

If you also feel like you are in the dark on issues, one easy thing you can do is to get on the city email list by contacting Gloria Tessier at 651-747-2792. This will insure that you get emailed with meeting notices and materials, including the minutes of meetings. You can regularly read this newsletter, you can email or call any of us with your thoughts and questions on particular issues, and you can come to any city council meeting that fits your schedule. You can also run for office as a city council member. Several spots will be open in the coming year. Although there may not be a book deal as a result, or highly paid speaking engagements, or even a lot of glory, you will receive the satisfaction of having served your community. Spots on the planning commission are also open.

It is your right to put up anonymous signs when you disagree with something we have done. However, I personally would have liked to hear what you had to say at one of the three meetings where the issue came up. At these meetings, presentations were made and issues were discussed in detail. Public feedback would have been most welcome, as these decisions are often hard to make and cannot be made only on the basis of economic impact.

Now we face another opportunity/issue as we contemplate the purchase of land that would be used partly for a public park and trail system and partly for resale to a developer for residential use. I have written in detail about this concept in the attached newsletter. I have received several helpful calls from Gem Lake residents that guided me in shaping this story. One resident on Big Fox Road helped me understand what details that was most important to provide in this story, so I am very grateful. Let me say that I believe this is a good deal for our community and has a reasonable price tag associated with it. I tried to give several examples of how it could impact your property taxes over a 15 year period. These figures came from our city treasurer, Tom Kelly. Tom provided us with ten other examples that we can provide at meetings in June or in conversations that we hope to have with you.

Please feel free to contact any of your council members about this or other concepts. Our contact information is on the back page of the newsletter. Thank you.