

May, 2015

Volume 9, Issue 3

Gem Lake News

Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Newsletter Editor

Special Interest Articles:

- *Timeline for Water Project*
- *Butterfly Friendly Gardens*
- *City News Page 4*
- *Welcome New Residents*

Upcoming Recycling Dates:

- *May 13*
- *May 27*
- *June 10*

Tip: put out your bin the night before for 7 a.m. pick-up.

First Neighborhood Meeting on Water Project: Potential Timeline Discussed

There will be a Neighborhood Meeting on May 14 at 7:00 p.m. to discuss the possibility of bringing municipal water to the Gem Lake Business District. The meeting will be held at Heritage Hall in Gem Lake and will be intended to inform citizens of Gem Lake of the project, and to seek input on the improvements.

At this meeting a detailed potential time line will be laid out, summarizing the many steps involved in this municipal water project, which could conclude as early as late fall of this year, or as late as Spring of 2016, depending upon several factors.

The process began when property owners in the business district expressed an interest in having municipal water on their property.

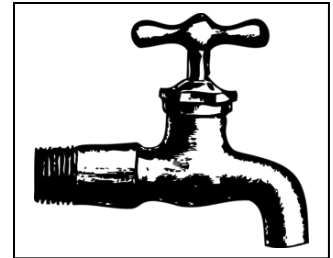
(Continued on page 2)

Good Samaritan Cleans Up Gem Lake

Last month, Gem Lake resident Deanna Tangwell took it upon herself to do a city wide clean-up of local streets.

A dedicated jogger, Deanna, who lives in the Hillary Farm development, jogs all the way around the city, including long stretches of LaBore and Goose Lake Roads.

In the absence of a city sponsored clean-up day, she decided to do it herself, collecting more than six large bags of trash. Her help was greatly appreciated and helped to make Gem Lake even more beautiful. Thanks Deanna!



Gem Lake Water Project: Time Line Discussed

(continued from page 1)

The next step was to authorize a feasibility study of the whole idea. Supplying municipal water to the Gem Lake business district turned out to be not only feasible, it is necessary to the area's long-term growth and public safety, according to the recent feasibility study completed by Short Elliott Hendrickson (SEH) for the City of Gem Lake. The study was authorized by the city council on November 18 of last year, and was meant to be a first step in the process of deciding if, and how, a municipal water project would get off the ground.

Most municipalities contemplating an expansion of municipal services, such as water, begin the process with a feasibility study. SEH began by looking at Gem Lake's previous Water Study, which was done in 2006. This earlier study identified three options for where water would be piped in from the City of White Bear, but recommended the best site as County Road E, at the railroad crossing.

The County Road E option was the recommended option in the 2006 study due to its proximity to the initial anticipated service area, Hoffman's Corner and the city's desire to use White Bear's city water, due to its chemistry and make up.

Another recommendation in the current feasibility study is to create an additional emergency connection to the Gem Lake water system. This is due to the fact that the initial system would be a dead end main, supplying a limited area, rather than a more conventional "looped" system. The connection of water on County Road E presents challenges in engineering, due primarily to the railroad bed that would have to be crossed.

The cost of the connection would be approximately \$274,000. (This is much less than originally estimated.) The drop in price happened because of the railroad has agreed to consider a less expensive way for the work to be done. This would involve temporarily suspending rail traffic while the tracks are taken up, the pipe is laid and the tracks put back in place.

The estimated cost of the emergency loop would be about \$160,000, bringing the total project cost to about \$434,000.

Timeline Explained at Meeting on May 14

At the neighborhood meeting on May 14, a more detailed time-line for the project will be handed out and explained. Many of the steps involve frequent opportunities for public input and comment.

For instance, it will be proposed that an Improvement Hearing is held in mid-June, so interested persons can voice questions and concerns about proposed assessments that would be made of property owners in the affected area.

In June or July the council could ask that formal plans and specifications for the project are drawn up. Following this, another neighborhood meeting would probably be held to present final detailed plans and final projected costs.

If all goes as planned, the council would approve the project plans and advertise for bids for the construction project.

It is thought that the bids would be accepted and late August, then an assessment hearing would be held, probably in September. Assessment amounts would take into account the percentage of the serviced area that each property owner has and independent appraisals done by a third party as to how much the improvement would add to the value of that property.

If all is still a go, construction would take place in the October and November and would possibly go into next Spring. There are many steps involved in bringing additional municipal services to property owner, and a number of these steps are required by state law. Your input will be vital.

White Bear Lake Library Reopens to Much Hoopla

Saturday, April 11 dawned bright and clear. It was a special day for the White Bear Lake branch of the Ramsey County Libraries, for this morning was the end of the wait for the library to re-open after ten months of construction.

Well over 100 eager patrons attended the opening ceremony and ribbon-cutting. Partnerships between the City of White Bear Lake, Ramsey County, the Ramsey County Library Board, and the Friends of the Library all made the \$3.5 million dollar project possible.

Gone are the dark exterior fascias and the crowded interior spaces. In their places are new, modern stone exterior walls and open, easily-accessed bookshelves and reading areas. Natural lighting filters in through large windows and a high ceiling compliments the library's sense of openness. New personal study rooms and two new board rooms are also part of the new features.



Ramsey County Commissioner Victoria Reinhardt spoke of how the county board saw this project as a vision towards the future. "You will bring your children here," Reinhardt told the crowd as how she described the project to her young grandson. With nearly two million visitors annually, the White Bear Lake library circulated well over 350,000 items to patrons in 2013. On average, approximately 158 items are checked out every hour.

With this kind of usage, along with increased demands for technology and meeting space, it was clear the old library could no longer meet the needs of the community. The original library dates to 1914, when steel magnate Andrew Carnegie built a number of libraries

across the country to make knowledge and information available to all.

The current building was built in 1973 and served the community well, but technology changes and increased patronage created the demands for a new design. The architectural firm Bentz, Thompson, and Rietow was selected to create a modern, efficient library. Knutson Construction won the bid and the new 16,500 square foot project was underway.

Throughout the fall and winter work continued and today all the planning, fund-raising, and construction culminated to the joy and appreciation of all those in attendance. As the library begins its second century of serving the community, it is well positioned to continue being a destination for those who want to learn and share their knowledge.

Written by Council Member Jim Lindner



City News Page

Add This to Your Spring To-Do List: Create a Butterfly Garden

You've probably already heard that pollinators, particularly Monarch butterflies, are in trouble. More than one third of all plants or plant products consumed by humans are directly or indirectly dependent on insects for pollination. The decline of pollinators affects us all – but we have the power to make small changes that will positively affect pollinators!

Here are three simple steps to support pollinators in your backyard:

1. Are you working on any NEW landscaping projects this year? Choose plants that pollinators love and that are suited for your site conditions (soil type, light, planting space, etc.). Some ideas for plants include: wild geraniums, coreopsis, purple coneflower, anise hyssop, beebalm, and of course swamp milkweed. Consider choosing plants that haven't been treated with systemic insecticides (they can move into pollen and nectar). Ask for help from a local garden center or nursery for suggestions.
2. IMPROVE on existing landscapes. Leave pollinator friendly plants such as dandelions and clover in lawns for early season nectar. Mow to a height of 3 inches, and consider adjusting the frequency and timing of mowing.
3. Be SMART when using pesticides. Use them only when necessary, and choose pesticides with a low toxicity to bees. To learn which insecticides to avoid, look for the bee hazard icon. Follow the label exactly, **THE LABEL IS THE LAW.**

A more comprehensive list of plants and pesticide toxicity to bees is available at <http://tinyurl.com/PollinatorFriendlyYards>.

If you decide to make a change to support Pollinators you can take the Pollinator Hero Pledge at

<http://tinyurl.com/PollinatorHeroPledge>.

If you are interested in learning more about pollinator friendly native plants and landscaping, visit www.bluethumb.org

Dog Licenses are Due for Renewal

It's time to make your dog an official member of the Gem Lake community. Dog licenses in our fair city run from June 1-May 31. If you currently have a licensed dog, you will be mailed a new application form in two to three weeks. The application should be returned with a \$10 fee and a copy of your dog's rabies certificate. The certificate will be returned to you.

If you need more information or another copy of the application form, call Karen Edson at 651-747-2755.

Gardening Permit Approved

A public hearing was held on April 21 regarding the renewal of the public gardening permit for the property owned by Tom Hansen on County Road E. Hansen was asked to post No Hunting signs on his property, due to several complaints of gun shots. The permit was approved.

Bonds to be Re-financed

With interest rates at historic lows, the Gem Lake City Council has voted to refinance the 2007 General Obligation CIP Bonds that were used to finance the building of Heritage Hall. The public finance firm of Ehlers assisted the city to analyze options and implications of refinancing the bonds. Their analysis showed that Gem Lake could save approximately \$57,000 over the life of the 20 year bond.

Newtrax finds New Home in Gem Lake

A vacant building on a car dealership lot in Gem Lake is getting a wonderful new purpose, starting later this summer. Work is nearing completion on the remodeling of the secondary facility on the north end of the Barnett KIA. It will now provide a much needed space to a local non-profit organization.

When finished, the building will be the new home for the fleet of vehicles owned by Newtrax, which provides transportation services to adults with disabilities.

Vehicles that are used to get clients of Merrick, Inc. and PAI, Inc. will be housed and serviced at the building, under the terms of a Conditional Use Permit, granted several months ago by the Gem Lake City Council.

Because the facility will do no retail work, will perform only minor maintenance and repairs on their own vehicles and will provide no services to the general public, it fits into the permitted uses category of the ordinance pertaining to the Gem Lake business district.

According to Jack Mayeron, Manager of the Barnett Properties, the Newtrax plan was a win-win for all involved. "The building had been vacant since 2010" and was increasingly in need of a facelift. "We are a customer of Merrick and are familiar with what they do. I know they will be a good neighbor and will do a good job on the renovations."

The building will be the corporate headquarters for Newtrax, Inc., which is a 501c3 tax exempt organization formed in 2011 through two local day training and habilitation agencies. (Merrick and PAI, Inc.) "We exist to coordinate critical transportation services for both member organization, who provide vocational and social support to adults with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities," according to Newtrax Executive Director Mike Greenbaum.

"Our mission is to increase the potential of each member organization to advance their charitable mission more effectively and with greater efficiency. Our core service is transportation. We aim to increase the availability of dependable, safe and accessible

transportation for people with disabilities. We serve approximately 650 people annually, resulting in approximately 1,300 one-way rides per day, of which about 30% require the use of a lift on the vehicle."

The new facility in Gem Lake will be an enormous advantage over their current set up. "The new place provides more parking space, additional work space to have light mechanical work done on site, and additional office space to expand our services and increase our member organizations."

"This allows us to serve more people with disabilities, create new jobs through growth, and allows us to expand our collaborative. The new location is also geographically centered between the six sites that Newtrax serves, with excellent freeway access."



Mike adds that "We currently operate out of Merrick's facility on LaBore Road in Vadnais Heights. Parking for vehicles and drivers is very tight. Our drivers will have a lounge of their own to be able to be comfortable during their mid-day time period, and it will provide us with the space we need to do driver training and have meetings in our own space."

"The location is really ideal for us. We are already in and very involved in the local communities, so it was important for us to stay within the area. Additionally, Barnett has been a good partner and supporter of the services we provide. We feel very confident that this will be a long-term partnership that will work well for all involved."

Renovations are expected to be completed around the end of June. Welcome Newtrax!

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We're on the Web!

See us at:
www.gemlakemn.org

Meetings: May and June 2015

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

May 5, 2015

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

May 11, 2015

Workshop is CANCELLED

May 12, 2015

Special City Council Meeting: Conditional Use Permit Request

May 14, 2015

Special Neighborhood Meeting to Discuss Municipal Water at Hoffman's Corner. All welcome. (7:00 p.m.)

May 19, 2015

City Council Meeting at

7:00 p.m.

June 2, 2015

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

June 8, 2015

City Council Workshop at 7:00 p.m.

June 16, 2015

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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