

# Gem Lake News

*Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Newsletter Editor*

## Gem Lake Property on Artisan Home Tour

### Special Interest Articles:

- *Gem Lake Residence on Home Tour*
- Municipal Water Update
- City News Page 4
- Yeah! Road Construction!!

### Upcoming Recycling Dates:

- July 8
- July 22
- August 5

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

A beautiful new home in the Hillary Farm Development in Gem Lake was featured on the Artisan Home Tour, a new event sponsored by the Parade of Homes.

The event ran for three weekends in June and was designed to showcase "gracious and well-appointed homes that represent the vision and craftsmanship of respected builders in the metro area," according to the tour web-site.

The Gem Lake home was built by Michael Paul Homes and was advertised as an Arts and Crafts Rambler. The 5,500 square foot residence featured spectacular wood beams, a huge open format kitchen, a screened porch with fireplace, and best of all, a golf simulator room! Wow. This three bedroom, three bath home was really worth seeing.

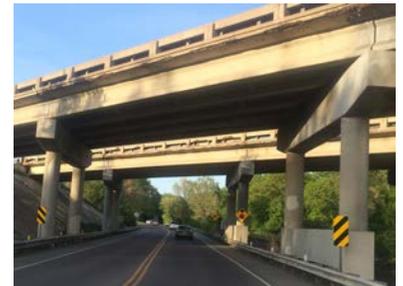


## Road Closure in Gem Lake Will Make Commuting Extra Fun This Summer

A portion of Goose Lake Road near Centerville Road will close for an extended period of time beginning this July. The closure is expected to last for over a year, extending into fall, 2016. The closure is needed as part of the Minnesota Department of Transportation's (MNDOT) plan to replace the two Interstate 35E bridges over Goose Lake Road near Macaluso's Roadhouse in Vadnais Heights.

MNDOT needs the space for staging construction materials as the bridges are located along steep slopes, which makes Goose Lake Road the only logical location. Besides, the demolition of the bridges would make travel beneath them too hazardous for motorists and bicyclists.

The bridge work is all part of MNDOT's plan to add a high occupancy vehicle lane from Forest Lake into downtown St. Paul. Similar work on **(continued on page 3)**



## Important Public Hearing Held on June 16 on Water Project for Business District

A public hearing was held on June 16 at Heritage Hall to discuss the feasibility of putting municipal water hook ups into the Hoffman's Corner business district area in Gem Lake. Any interested parties were invited to attend and express their questions and concerns about the project.

The Gem Lake City Council was very pleased that various members of the public were able to attend and provide input.

The subject of the hearing was basically a feasibility study that was conducted by Gem Lake's city engineers (Short Elliot and Hendrickson or SEH) as to whether the project could be done, and at what price.

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 study. 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 total project cost, including the emergency loop, is now estimated to be about \$490,000.

Members of the public at the meeting on June 16 expressed views both in favor and against the project. Those in favor felt the project would make the area more prepared for future development and would aid now in fire-fighting capabilities.

Some property owners were concerned about the assessments and payments as a possible impact on their businesses.

After the public hearing was closed, the city council voted to formally accept the feasibility study and authorize the engineering firm to prepare specifications and plans that would be needed to put the project out for bids.

Plans and specifications for the project will be discussed and voted on at the city council meeting on July 21.

If all goes as planned, the council would approve the project plans and advertise for bids to do the construction project. It is thought that the bids would be accepted in 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. At the assessment hearing, affected properties in the business district would know the projected assessment for their property, and be able to vocalize their opinion on the cost versus benefit equation as it pertains to their situation.

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 owners, many of these steps are required by state law. Your input will be vital.

## Audit of City Finances from 2014 Completed, all is well

Gem Lake's 2014 audit is now complete and the results are fairly standard. City Council Members were given a complete presentation of the results at the June 16th City Council Meeting.

The audit was conducted by CliftonLarsonAllen LLP, who also did the 2013 and 2012 audits. According to CliftonLarsonAllen, the result was what is called an unmodified report, which is good. Auditors found that the financial statements of Gem Lake presented fairly in all material respects the true financial position of the city.

Management judgments and accounting estimates were considered reasonable and supported. Disclosures were deemed to be clear and complete. According to Christopher Knopik, a Manager of CliftonLarsonAllen, no difficulties were encountered in performing the audit. "In fact, management was most cooperative and helpful. We found that personnel and records were available."



They also noted that city finances are in good shape, with a healthy general fund balance in reserve for city expenses. The Minnesota Office of the State Auditor recommends that cities have no less than six months of operating income in reserve. Gem Lake is more than on target here, having approximately 11 months of operating funds in the general fund. They also found that tax revenues were consistent with the budget. There was a decrease in license and permit revenue, but all other revenue categories were fairly consistent.

On the expense side, auditors noted a decrease in Public Safety and Public Works expenditures and an increase in Conservation and Development expenditures.

Financial statements and the required State Auditor Reporting forms will now be submitted to the applicable state agencies before the June 30 deadline.

## Road Construction Fun Coming to Gem Lake

(Continued from page 1)

the portion of I-35-E from Little Canada Road into St. Paul has been in progress for a couple of years and is scheduled to be complete by the end of this year.

Many people travel this portion of Goose Lake Road as a shortcut into Vadnais Heights and Shoreview, but alternate routes will be needed. Highway 96 and County Road E will be open as alternates, but remember these are already very heavily traveled routes. Patience and planning ahead will be key to coping with the Goose Lake Road closure. For updates on all MNDOT projects, please visit [www.dot.state.mn.us](http://www.dot.state.mn.us). The photos show the location of the Goose Lake Road closure (page one) and the current deterioration of the bridges. (see below)



## City News Page

### **City Makes Donation to Literacy Program at Willow Lake Elementary School**

Receipts from charitable gambling are routinely donated by the city to nonprofit organizations in the vicinity. At the June 16 City Council meeting, the city elected to donate \$3,000 to the Willow Lane Elementary School in White Bear Lake. The donation will be used to fund literacy programs for elementary school students.

### **Senior Housing Revenue Refunding Project Supported by Gem Lake**

The Gem Lake City Council voted to approve the issuance and sale of senior housing revenue refunding notes to support a building refinancing program at St. Andrew's Village in Mahtomedi. This approval happened at the June 16<sup>th</sup> City Council Meeting.

Before you scratch your head and wonder what the heck?, an explanation of the process might help. In simple terms, the State of Minnesota gives every city authority to do conduit bonding for multi-family, nursing homes and assisted living facilities. If they don't need to use this authority, it can be used by other cities. The sponsoring city doesn't have to take on any liability for repayment of the bond and it can get a fee for lending its bonding authority to another party. Gem Lake did this once before for a senior living facility that is located right off County Road E in White Bear Lake.

In this case, the \$10 Million Dollars in bonds will be issued in order to refinance the approximately 139 unit senior housing facility at 240 East Avenue in Mahtomedi. St. Andrew's Village includes assisted and independent living quarters, as well as a memory care unit. The refinancing project is too large for one city to sponsor, so often several cities use their conduit bonding authority, which is the case here.

In return for this service, Gem Lake will earn a one-time fee of about \$9,000, incurring no administrative duties, liabilities or repayment concerns for it.

### **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. 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.

Pictured below is Gem Lake Dog Number One. As a result of getting my application in while writing this story, I snagged the license tag that says dog #1!



## New Cell Phone Tower Approved for Area

The Vadnais Heights City Council approved the construction of a new Verizon Wireless cell phone tower in late May that will be installed on the property owned by Structural Wood Products on LaBore Road.

The tower will be 100 feet high and will also have a nine foot lighting rod on it. It is designed to alleviate the dead spot for cell phone coverage that exists in the area of I-35-E between roughly County Road E and Highway 96.

It will abut the freeway to the west, industrial properties to the east and north and some residential properties to the south. It was approved without objections from any of the affected property owners.

Verizon Wireless is going to lease about 8,000 square feet of space, which will include room for a 300 square foot equipment building. The tower is being designed so that in the future, other companies could add antennas to the structure. It is unknown at this point when construction will start.



## MS-4 Report Gets Public Hearing

A state mandated report on storm water management, called the MS-4 Report, has been completed for 2014 by 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 June 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. In past years, City Council Member Jim Lindner volunteered to do the leg work, walking around the city to document and inspect the storm water facilities. This year, SEH played the lead role, due to complexities in the new reporting requirements. 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.

During the hearing on June 16, SEH also highlighted the city's Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) and the status of its National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit. The City of Gem Lake is operating under its 2013 NPDES Permit for the purposes of this report on the 2014 year. The reports and documents presented at this public hearing can be viewed and inspected by the public at Heritage Hall. See page 6 for contact information.

## The City of Gem Lake

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We're on the Web!

See us at:  
[www.gemlakemn.org](http://www.gemlakemn.org)

## Meetings: July and August 2015

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

### July 7, 2015

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

### July 13, 2015

City Council Workshop at 7:00 p.m. **THIS MEETING IS CANCELLED.**

### July 21, 2015

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

### August 4, 2015

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

### August 10, 2015

City Council Workshop at 7:00 p.m.

### August 18, 2015

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

## Your Gem Lake City Council

### Bob Uzpen-Mayor

Phone: 651-492-5083

### City Council Members:

#### Gretchen Artig-Swomley

Phone: 651-260-9742

#### Rick Bosak

651-426-9695

#### Faith Kuny

Phone: 612-718-4316

### Jim Lindner

Phone: 651-429-7597

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](http://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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