

Gem Lake News

Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Newsletter Editor

Special Interest Articles:

- *Water Project Concludes*
- 2015 Audit Completed
- City News Page 4
- First "Trash to Treasure" Event a Success

Upcoming Recycling Dates:

- June 8
- June 22
- July 6

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

Municipal Water in Business District

The long-term project to bring municipal water to the Gem Lake Business District has been substantially completed. This, after water was brought from White Bear Lake through a pipe that was run under the railroad tracks on the city's eastern edge. Available city water will permit buildings to have automatic sprinkler fire suppression systems, which reduces insurance costs. City water has become a minimum standard for both development and public health. Gem Lake is contracting with the City of White Bear for its water and will begin its own water billing program.



Water bills will help cover the costs of operating and maintaining the piping network, and future city budgets will reflect the new enterprise revenue fund. The water project is funded 100% by assessment to affected property owners. Construction began several months ago.

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Annual Audit Completed—No Problems

Gem Lake's 2015 audit is now complete and the results are fairly standard. City Council Members were given a complete presentation of the results at the May 17th City Council Meeting.

The audit was conducted by CliftonLarsonAllen LLP, who also did the previous four 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."

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2015 Audit Completed—No Problems (continued from page 1)

In terms of financial results for 2015, Knopik, and manager Michelle Hoffman, had a number of observations.

The Minnesota Office of the State Auditor recommends that cities have no less than six months of operating revenues in reserve at any one time, to account for the long periods of time between county property tax payments to municipalities. At present, Gem Lake had approximately eight months, which is good, but is nearing the minimum amount needed. It also represents a decrease in reserves from 2014, which was done deliberately by the Gem Lake City Council, in order to bring down the amount of property taxes residents would have to pay that year. However, because of this, the auditors pointed out that spending decisions need to be made with reserves in mind.

Both revenues and expenditures increased in 2015. Revenues increases came primarily from property taxes. Expenditure increases came primarily from general government expenses, which went from 31% of the budget in 2014 to 32% of the budget in 2015, due to having an employee for the first time. Also public works expenses increased from 23% of the general fund budget in 2014 to 26% of the budget in 2015, due to a chip and crack sealing project on Gem Lake roads.

In terms of the Gem Lake Sewer Fund, there was an increase in revenues in 2015 over the year before, due to Metro SAC revenues and commercial hook-ups. Expenses remained similar, and the fund had a positive cash flow from operations.

Auditors pointed out one material weakness, which exists in Gem Lake and many other small cities in the State. We lack complete segregation of duties on financial reporting duties. This is due to the small size of the staff available to perform the necessary tasks. Other than that, everything looked good.

Trash to Treasure Day-A Big Success!

Gem Lake joined in in a popular area event on April 30. “Trash to Treasure” Day has been held annually by White Bear Township and several other cities. This fun event is the ultimate in recycling. Residents put out items on the curb that they were trying to pass on to someone else (also known as getting rid of), with a sign that says “free.” Then the fun begins, with people picking up treasures all day. Many folks wait for the annual treasure hunt and then have fun driving around with a trailer, looking for items they might want to own themselves.

In Gem Lake, residents put out everything from lawn sprinklers to outdoor furniture. One household got rid of a mosquito zapper, a shelving unit, garden hose, a set of skis and a box of telephone wire. Another household got rid of a small stove and a set of plastic chairs. The city council plans to hold the event again next year.



Flagpole Installed at Heritage Hall

After being on the city “Wish List” for several years, Gem Lake’s Heritage Hall finally has a flag pole! The city council voted several months ago to have a 30-foot-high pole installed in front of the building. The flag pole will be lighted at night and will fly the American Flag at all times. Twin Cities Flag Source completed the installation in late May. A flag-raising and dedication ceremony will happen this summer.



Gem Lake Water Project Update (cont. from page 1)

According to City Engineer, Justin Gese, the final pressure test passed on May 12 and the final paving was scheduled to be finished on May 12. The final steps in completing the water project were to flush the system, do the bacteria test and perform the conductivity test, all of which were done during the last week of May. There are now several fire hydrants in the business district!



Volunteers Sought for Planning Commission

One of the most significant leadership roles in our city is to be a part of the Gem Lake Planning Commission. The group of individuals play a crucial role in long term development of our city. Among its many duties, the group develops new ordinances, when needed, and updates older ordinances to bring them up to date with the city’s comprehensive plan.

It also acts on development application and zoning and rezoning request. The Planning Commission chairman is Ben Johnson, who has served on the committee for several years. Please contact Ben Johnson at 612-968-7583 if you are interested in serving.



City News Page

City Provides Donation to Willow Lane Elementary School

The Gem Lake City Council voted to provide a donation of \$2,500 to the Willow Lane Elementary School. The decision was made at the City Council meeting on May 17. The donation was made from proceeds from charitable gambling in Gem Lake. (pull-tab sales). In the past, Willow Lane has used the donation to fund things like literacy programs from elementary students.

New Billing Software

The City of Gem Lake updated its software program that is used for billing for sanitary sewer, fire inspections and septic inspections. The new program allows for emailing of invoices and automatic bank drafting.

If you would like to have your invoice emailed to you, please send an email to Gloria.tessier@Gemlakemn.org. Please include your sewer account number or address of your billing location. If you would like to have an automatic bank draft, please call Gloria Tessier at 651-747-2742 to set it up. Please note that bills now go to the City of Gem Lake at 4200 Otter Lake Road.

Gem Lake Renews Joint Powers Agreement

A Joint Powers Agreement between Vadnais Lakes Area Water Management Organization (VLAWMO) and the cities within its boundaries was renewed by Gem Lake's City Council on May 17. The agreement runs for a period of ten years and was entered into by Gem Lake, Lino Lakes, North Oaks, Vadnais Heights, White Bear Lake and White Bear Township.

VLAWMO was created to help member municipalities to meet the requirements of the Metropolitan Surface Water Management Statute, which is a state law. The organization works on watershed management issues, such as storm water run-off and pollution reduction.

New Rental Property Requirements

Effective January 1, 2016, the City of Gem Lake began licensing all rental property in the City. Persons with rental property are required to obtain a rental license for their rental units. Licenses will be for a two-year period. The licensing fee is \$100.00 for a single family unit and for a two family unit \$50.00 per unit. All units will be subject to an annual inspection. Contact Gloria Tessier at 651-747-2792.

National Police Week Gem Lake and its City Council recently took time to recognize, by proclamation, National Police Week, which ran from May 15-21.

Currently, approximately 900,000 law enforcement officers are serving communities across the United States, including the dedicated officers of the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office. Since the first recorded death of an officer in 1791, there have been almost 20,000 law enforcement personnel who have given their lives in the line of duty nationally. This year, 252 names of fallen heroes were added to the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington, D.C. This included 123 officers killed in 2015 and 129 officers killed in previous years.

Thank you to our law enforcement officials!

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 were 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 Gloria Tessier at 651-747-2792.

August City Council Meeting—New Date

The Gem Lake City Council meeting for August of 2016 has been changed to August 23, which is the fourth Tuesday of the month. Normally, council meetings are held on the third Tuesday. The change was made due to a scheduling conflict.

Update on the Bruce Vento Trail Extension

Ramsey County Parks is planning an extension of the Bruce Vento Trail along Gem Lake's eastern border. Currently, the Vento trail terminates at Buerkle Road in White Bear Lake. The plan calls for the trail to extend parallel to the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) train tracks north to Highway 96.

Landscape Architect Larry Wacker, a consultant on the project, stated that the trail extension plan has received "initial approval from BNSF and Xcel Energy," whose power lines also run inside the BNSF right-of-way.

Ramsey County Parks held an open house at the Vadnais Sports Center on May 25 where they asked for public input and suggestions on the trail plan. According to Parks staff at the open house, the project could take several years to complete, as they first need to approach the city councils of the affected cities, as well as some private property owners along the proposed route.

But the overall feedback from the public has been favorable, and knowing that the proposed trail extension will help cities implement portions of their municipal comprehensive plans makes the trail's future all the brighter, though the county will rely on federal funding for portions of this project.

Gem Lake will benefit from a trail crossing at Scheuneman Road which will allow users to head north towards White Bear Lake, or head south all the way into St. Paul's east side to the Mississippi River. The Bruce Vento trail also intersects with the Gateway Trail in Maplewood, which users can take to Oakdale, Mahtomedi, and rural Washington County. Gem Lake's comprehensive plan says that the city will explore bicycle trail options for providing access to regional trails. The Vento trail extension is well-suited for realizing this goal. The photo to the right shows where the trail would cross Scheuneman Road.



Among the more common comments was safety issues at the number of street crossings the trail will need to make as it extends north. Buerkle Road is one such concern, where there is a sharp "S" turn that may make drivers unaware of trail users and vice-versa. But consultant Larry Wacker said there are traffic control devices that can help keep trail users safe from oncoming traffic. Other issues facing county staff include possible right-of-way and property acquisition problems along the proposed route. Final approval is still several years out, so look for additional public information sessions in the coming months and years as this project becomes more fully developed. Additional project information may be found at:

<https://www.ramseycounty.us/residents/parks-recreation/parks-trails/parks-planning-projects>

This story written by City Council Member Jim Lindner, who also attended the meeting.

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This newsletter is also posted
on the city's web-site under the
"Documents" section.

We're on the Web!

See us at:
www.gemlakemn.org

Meetings: May and June 2016

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

June 7, 2016

Planning Commission
Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

June 13, 2016

City Council Workshop at
7:00 p.m.

June 21, 2016

City Council Meeting at
7:00 p.m.

July 5, 2016

Planning Commission
Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

July 11, 2016

City Council Workshop at
7:00 p.m.

July 19, 2016

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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