

Gem Lake News

Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Newsletter Editor

Preliminary Budget Approved for 2016

A preliminary 2016 General Fund Budget for Gem Lake of \$397,820 was presented to the Gem Lake City Council for initial consideration on August 18. This includes a General Tax Levy of \$352,655, and a Debt Tax Levy of \$70,000. This compares to draft budget numbers from a year ago, when the initial number for the general tax levy was \$369,819, with draft bond levy of \$120,000 and draft debt levy of \$49,500. Last year, the initial budget number of \$539,319 was later reduced to a final budget for 2015 of \$254,655.

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. It is common for preliminary budget numbers to vary considerably from final budget numbers. **(continued on pg. 2)**



Special Interest Articles:

- Preliminary Budget Approved for 2016
- Water Project Update
- City News Page 4
- Yeah! Road Construction!!

Upcoming Recycling Dates:

- September 16
- September 30
- October 14

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

Water Project Update for Hoffman's Corner Area

Progress continues on the city's efforts to explore bringing municipal water to the Hoffman's Corners Business District in Gem Lake.

On August 13, the City Council had a special meeting to direct the city engineer to draft final plans and specifications for a two part water project. Part One would bring water from White Bear under the railroad tracks near White Bear Floral and then across to the area of Waldoch Mfg. and the strip mall on Scheuneman Road. Part Two would bring the water across County Road E to the area near Vera Auto Sales and then up Scheuneman Road towards Barnett Chrysler.

The cost of these two parts would be about \$460,000. Part 1 could cost about \$290,000 and Part 2 could cost about \$171,000. Final costs will be determined when bids come in from potential contractors.

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Important Public Hearing Held on August 13 on Water Project for Business District

It is projected that roughly speaking the cost of the project would be assessed at around \$8,600 per acre for part one and around \$10,000 per acre for part two.

For Part 1, all parcels in the business district would be subject to the first assessment. For Part 2, only those businesses that would directly benefit by being able to hook up to water as a result of the extension would be subject to the second assessment. There are currently about six businesses that would be affected by the second assessment at this time.

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 the next few months, then an assessment hearing would be held, probably later in the year.

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 start and would probably happen next Spring. There are numerous steps involved in bringing additional municipal services to property owners, many of these steps are required by state law. Your input will be vital.



Initial 2016 Budget Presented

(Continued from page 1)

It is also not uncommon, especially in Gem Lake, for the final budget to be smaller than the preliminary one. (This happened both last year and the year before for the budget years of 2014 and 2015.)

The 2016 preliminary budget includes increases in the areas of planning and zoning, police and fire protection and other contingencies.

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. The budget will be discussed again throughout the fall as final numbers come in for public safety and other areas.

Important Visitors at September 15 Council Meeting

Two important visitors will be present at the Gem Lake City Council Meeting on September 15 and members of the public are urged to attend also. The meeting starts at 7:00 p.m. at Heritage Hall.

Rush Line Mass Transit Plan Discussion

Andy Gitzlaff of the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority will provide an update on plans to extend light rail in the Twin Cities to northern suburbs and beyond. The project is referred to as the Rush Line Corridor.

Although the project will probably not really begin until around 2020, plans are now underway to determine exact routes and modes of extending transportation options. The idea of the project is to provide all day and frequent rush line service that link various suburban downtown areas with things like shopping malls, and downtown St. Paul and Minneapolis, in order to reduce traffic congestion, wherever possible.

Mr. Gitzlaff is set to provide Gem Lake residents with an update on tentative plans, and seek input on routes and timelines. Early plans have often named the Bruce Vento Trail area as a possible route for some part of mass transit plans. The Bruce Vento Trail starts in St. Paul and runs in a northwestern direction, currently ending near Buerkle Road in Maplewood.

Plans are also underway to extend the trail towards the White Bear Township border, along the current Burlington Northern Santa Fe rail line. The trail is projected to be 13 miles in length, when completed, but only the first 7 miles of the rail line has been acquired for public use at present.

Your feedback on the Rush Line Corridor Plan will be welcomed on September 15.



Sheriff Bostrom to Provide Status Report

Ramsey County Sheriff Matt Bostrom will also be present at the September 15 City Council Meeting. He will do his annual review of law enforcement goals, programs and trends.

Since his election several years ago, Bostrom has been very involved in communication with the contract cities his office serves. Typically, Bostrom has been present for at least one Gem Lake Council Meetings each year.

Last year he discussed the training and recruitment efforts for new officers, the move towards black and white squad cars in the future, the alarming rise in heroin overdoses, and programs to get unneeded prescription drugs off the street.

City News Page

The Art of Filling Your Recycling Cart: Keep ‘em Loose”

You’ve perfected the art of rinsing out your cans, breaking down your boxes and getting your cart to the curb every other week before 7:00 a.m. But, have you perfected the art of filling your recycling cart?

Keep ‘Em Loose! These three words are the secret to ensuring your recycling efforts aren’t wasted. Keep your recyclables loose in your cart, not contained in plastic bags, and you will make sure they escape the fate of the landfill. The beauty of single sort (single stream) recycling is that all accepted material can be tossed in the cart together. Sure, they will be sorted later at the facility, but until then, the more mixed up the better! When plastic bags get into the cart, they wreak havoc at the recycling sorting facility.

Why Plastic Bags and the Sorting Facility Don’t Mix

Plastic bags, of any kind, are not recyclable in your curbside cart. When recycling facility employees spot a plastic bag, even if it’s full of recyclables, it is pulled from the line and sent on to the landfill. The reason? Bags get wrapped in the equipment at the recycling sorting facility and can cause damage, and even halt the processing line. Basically, bagged recyclables at the sorting facility are as good as trash.

Now that you know the secret to filling your cart, it is as easy as “keep ‘em loose. Consider a few of these other tips:\

*Conserve space by breaking down boxes and crushing milk jugs.

*Review what’s accepted to make sure you are filling your cart with the right items.

*If wind and blowing recyclable are an issue, try to place heavier recyclable toward the top of the cart to weigh down loose papers. Make sure your lid is completely closed, and set your cart out in the morning, rather than the night before.

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.

Community Solar Gardens—Interested??

Learn how to invest in Local, Clean Energy at a seminar entitled “Community Solar Gardens,” to be held Thursday, September 17 at 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. at the Wildwood Library. The library is located at 763 Stillwater Road in Mahtomedi. Interest in community solar is booming, as Xcel Energy works to fulfill its commitments to grow renewable energy in the state. Community solar gardens provide consumers a way to tap the sun’s energy, even if they don’t have enough sun—or funding—for their own array of collectors. Solar gardens help finance a centrally located system that then credits consumers’ electric bills for the amount of power produced.

Al Holcomb of the Mahtomedi Area Green Initiative will give a brief overview of what Community Solar Gardens are and how they differ from other more familiar ways of obtaining solar energy. Jeff Williams of Able Energy Company will present their community solar energy program. This program offers subscriptions to local solar energy gardens for Xcel customers.

This event is free and is being co-sponsored by the Izaak Walton League, Mahtomedi Area Green Initiative, Mahtomedi City Environmental Commission, League of Women Voters-- White Bear Lake Area, River Valley Action and the White Bear Unitarian.

Coyote Problems Not Unique to Gem Lake

They are nasty little devils who invade a neighborhood, have few natural predators and can put small pets at risk. Several small dogs in the metro area have recently been killed by roving coyotes. Coyotes have become an increasing problem in the Twin Cities area, with a rash of recent pet deaths in the Bloomington area.

You may heard the frightening wail of coyotes at night. Experts say coyotes can sound like a child or a woman crying or screeching at night.

Here is information from the Minnesota DNR Website about coyotes:

Coyotes are wild members of the dog family, intermediate in size between red foxes and wolves. In Minnesota, coyotes average 30 lbs., and stand about 18" high at the shoulders. However, they may appear much larger due to their heavy fur coat, especially in winter. They are gray/brown in color, and somewhat resemble a small German Shepherd dog in appearance.

Coyotes in Minnesota are loners, except when families are raising pups. Their primary foods are rabbits and mice, but they are very opportunistic, and will feed on other small mammals, deer, birds, carrion, and even melons. Although coyotes can be found anywhere in Minnesota, distribution and population size is variable. Currently, populations are establishing and increasing in the Twin Cities metro area.

Most coyotes avoid people and domestic animals, but occasionally they will kill sheep, turkeys, and calves. They may also raid garbage cans, and kill domestic cats and small dogs. Healthy wild coyotes avoid people, and no attacks have ever occurred in Minnesota.

However, attacks by urban coyotes have been reported in other states. Experts believe these attacks occur after a coyote has become accustomed to humans, or after being fed by humans. If you are concerned about the presence of coyotes where you live, consider the following do's and don'ts:

DO:

- secure all garbage containers, wildlife feeders, and other food sources to prevent coyote access
- confine small dogs and cats in kennels, or supervise them when outside
- vaccinate all pets for rabies, distemper, parvo, and other diseases, as recommended by a veterinarian
- consider installing coyote-proof fencing
- harass (by chasing, shouting, etc.) any coyotes that do not immediately run from people

DON'T:

- do **not** feed coyotes
- do not leave pet food outside
- do not allow cats and small dogs outside, unattended

New Residents in Gem Lake

Gem Lake has experienced a bit of a population explosion in the past few years, with the build out of the Hillary Farm Housing Development, and new and remodeled homes on and near Goose Lake Road.

From time to time, we have been able to profile new residents and welcome them to the community. Some folks would prefer not to be profiled and we respect that.

Two new folks moved into a home on Goose Lake Road. They include graphic artist Kit Artig, sister of yours truly, who moved back to Minnesota after living in the Bay area of California for more than 35 years. She missed the weather here. Another new resident to Gem Lake is Brad Naylor, father of teenage twins, who runs a recruiting company. Please let me know if I can do a short profile on you or your family if you are new to our community. 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

Meetings: September and October, 2015

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

September 14, 2015

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

September 15, 2015

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

October 6, 2015

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

October 12, 2015

City Council Workshop at 7:00 p.m.

October 20, 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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