

Gem Lake News

Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Newsletter Editor

Special Interest Articles:

- 2018 In Review
- 2019 Final Budget Approved
- City News Page 4
- Site Prepared for Hy-Vee Project

Upcoming Recycling Dates:

- January 2
- January 16
- January 30
- *Tip: put out your bin the night before for 7 a.m. pick-up.*

2018 Accomplishments for Gem Lake

Infrastructure improvement and development were the key themes to projects undertaken in Gem Lake in 2018. There were many notable accomplishments that benefit Gem Lake in general.

Early in year, the City Council approved the Gem Lake Villas project, a thirty-home development designed for a large plot of land on County Road E, that was formerly owned by Tom Hansen. Ground breaking and excavation took place in the spring and home sales are underway, and going well to date. The project is being done by Landmark Development.



A major infrastructure project was completed this summer in the Gem Lake business district. This project included installing water to the north side of the business district and a major upgrade of Scheuneman Road, with curbs, gutters and new pavement.

(Continued on page 3)

2019 Final Budget Approved for Gem Lake

The Final 2019 Budget for the City of Gem Lake was approved at the November 20th City Council meeting, when the General Fund Budget and Property Tax Levy were both adopted.

The 2019 Budget was approved at \$464,873, which is a 9.83% increase over the 2018 Budget. Noteworthy changes over the year before are as follows:

- The 2019 Budget includes a contingency of \$10,000, compared to \$0 in 2018.
- The elections budget increased \$1,800 based on the city's contract with the Ramsey County Elections Board.
- The Planning and Zoning Budget decreased to \$50,000, due to the City's Comprehensive Plan being completed for the ten year cycle beginning in 2018.

(continued on page 2)



Final 2019 Budget Approved for Gem Lake

- The police budget was increased to \$73,400, compared to \$64,100 in 2018, based on the contract with the City of White Bear Lake. (Equipment and personnel costs have primarily led to the budget increase.)
- The City’s fire contract with the City of White Bear Lake was increased 28.01% to \$21,825. (Equipment costs have primarily led to the budget increase.)
- The building inspections line item was increased \$22,569, based on new property development activities and the addition of a part-time inspector, which adds \$14,569 in costs.
- Money was budgeted in the amount of \$30,250 to construct a sidewalk or path along County Road E, from LaBore Road to Big Fox.
- Money continues to be set aside to help fund future improvements. In the 2019 budget, this amount is \$20,000.
- Building permit revenues were increased to account for new development activities. The budget was increased \$5,000, for a total of \$15,000.
- The City’s fiscal disparities revenue is projected to increase 19.14% to \$11,858.

General Fund Levy \$373,230
 Fiscal Disparities. \$ 11,858

Total General Fund Levy \$385,088
 Debt Levy \$ 78,601

Total City Levy \$463,689

For questions about the 2019 Gem Lake budget, contact Gloria Tessier at Heritage Hall. See page 6 for contact information.

Election Results Certified

Results are in for the 2018 race for two open spots on the Gem Lake City Council. Len Cacioppo and Gretchen Artig-Swomley were re-elected to four year terms on the council on November 6. The results were officially certified by the city council on November 15. The exact vote totals were as follows:

Len Cacioppo—120 votes
 Laurel Haynes Amlee— 93 votes
 Gretchen Artig-Swomley—164 votes
 Write-In Candidates—11 votes (although it is not known who received the write-ins this year, typically Mickey Mouse gets at least one vote)



Based on the proposed 2019 expenditures and other revenues, to maintain a balanced budget, the 2019 property tax levy is proposed to increase 4.289% to \$385,088.

The City’s Debt Levy is based on the bond payments due in 2019. The Debt Levy is being decreased \$5,798 to \$78,601.

Based on the changes listed above, Gem Lake’s proposed 2019 property tax levy would be \$463,689, which consists of the following:



2019 Accomplishments for the City of Gem Lake

(continued from page 1)

The Gem Lake City Council also approved lining the sewer in the Hoffman's Corner area. This will extend the life of the existing lines for up to 20 years, without cost to the businesses in the vicinity. The costs are paid for by the revenues in the city's sewer fund.

This summer, the City Council created a new tree policy that covers trees as they grow and intrude into the right-of-way on city streets. The city is currently in the process of clearing diseased trees from the right-of-way and removing branches that interfere with snow plowing.



A large convenience store project was approved for the southeast corner of County Road E and Highway 61 this fall. The project is being undertaken by Hy-Vee and includes a "Fast and Fresh" market with a drive-through coffee shop, as well as a gas station with 7 pumps. Initial demolition began in mid-December. Construction will begin in Spring of 2019.

As mandated by State Law, cities in the metropolitan area must write and approve a Comprehensive Plan every ten years for the Met Council. This plan is due initially at the end of 2018. Gem Lake is in the final stages of completing its plan. It covers such things as residential and commercial development, infrastructure, delivery of utilities, stormwater planning, transportation, etc. The project consumes a significant amount of time and money and necessitates multiple levels of approval.

The Minnesota Legislature created new rules last year covering liquor sales. This resulted in Gem Lake having to rewrite its ordinance.

Lastly, the Honey Bear Meadery received city approval this fall to construct a new facility next to the Gun Shop on County Road E. The meadery

will make and serve their honey mead products to the public when it opens next year. The facility will include a tasting room.

Rush Line BRT Update

By Jim Lindner

The year ahead also promises to be a busy one, with final approval of the city's comprehensive plan, construction at Hoffman's Corner and at Gem Lake Villas and with the possibility of more development projects coming our way.

The Rush Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) met as scheduled on November 29. Discussion topics included an updated project overview that focused on where in the timeframe the project is currently at. Conversation centered on how the Rush Line may favorably connect with other transit projects currently being developed by county transit planners. A BRT line from Woodbury to St. Paul, known as the Gold Line, is in planning and may share stations with Rush Line, thereby saving on construction costs. Several recent public engagement events concentrating on non-transit projects like the Bruce Vento Trail extension and Rush Line-related items relating to the downtown White Bear Lake station placement were also reviewed.

Another important facet of Rush Line is how it may lead to the establishment of other connecting transit bus lines now under consideration. For instance, the Rush Line corridor, as well as many other similar corridors, are like spokes on a wheel leading to St. Paul. But what if a rider needs to traverse left or right of the defined corridor? Meeting this need may create other transit opportunities which may eventually be included as support lines for Rush Line. For example, one such cross-corridor route may connect Rush Line to Century College even though Century College is not on the main corridor route.

Another key component addresses public access to health care, which is largely concentrated along Beam Avenue near St. John's Hospital in Maplewood. Accessing health care is one need for those without access to personal vehicles, and is one contributing factor to why Rush Line is being considered. (continued page 4)

City News Page

Initial Demolition Work for Hy-Vee Begins

Work began on December 13 to clear the way for a new Hy-Vee complex at the corner of Highway 61 and County Road E. Please see the next page of this newsletter for more information on the history of this area. Here are some photos of the tear-down.



New Speed Limits Approved

New speed limits were approved for Gem Lake City Streets during the October 16 City Council Meeting. Speed limits for city streets such as Haven, Tessier, Scheuneman, etc. were established at 25 miles per hour. The speed limit for Goose Lake Road, which is a Ramsey County Road, remains unchanged at 40 miles per hour.

Liquor Licenses Renewed

Liquor licenses for several Gem Lake businesses were renewed during the City Council Meeting on December 20. The wine license for the Black Sea Restaurant was renewed. Also, the beer and liquor license for Gem Lake Hills Golf Course was renewed. Liquor licenses typically expire at the end of each year and go through an annual renewal process.

Rush Line BRT Update (continued from pg. 3)

The line also is intended to address gaps in population centers and economic disparities that tend to concentrate in certain areas. Giving people in these concentrated areas access to transit for health care or employment is part of Rush Line's project scope.

Public engagement at all levels is welcome. There is now an interactive map on the Rush Line website that shows the proposed BRT route. At each of the proposed stations people can make comments that Rush Line planners will review and compile into a master list of public input. Visit www.rushline.org for more details. Also planned for the coming months are more public forums where the public can meet in person with Rush Line staff. Refer to the project calendar on the website for more details.

The PAC is scheduled to meet again on January 30, 2019, at which time another project update will follow.

2019 Fee Schedule Approved

Each December, the Gem Lake City Council approves the following year's fee schedule, which covers such things as the cost of building permits and various licenses. The council approved the 2019 fee schedule on December 20. It was largely unchanged from the year before. A section was added to cover water and sewer fees for the Gem Lake Villas project. A complete copy of the fee schedule is available at Heritage Hall.

Historic Hoffman's Corner Prepares for Hy-Vee

Demolition and initial site preparation are now underway at Gem Lake's business district, historically referred to as "Hoffman's Corner" as the area makes way for a new Hy-Vee project. The project will involve a "Fast and Fresh" grocery/convenience store, a gas station and a drive-through Starbucks coffee shop. Construction will begin in the spring of 2019. (see photos page 4.)

The area has a colorful history as a commercial center, particularly during the height of White Bear Lake's resort era. Charles Hoffman acquired about 20 acres of land at the approximate site of the future Hoffman's Corner in the 1890's. He grew crops and sold fresh produce to residents of the bustling resort area that White Bear Lake was fast becoming. The train route from St. Paul went right past Hoffman's Corner and served residents of the surrounding cities, as well as the many tourists. It wasn't until the 1930's and '40's that the area became a mammoth commercial center, under the guidance of Charles Hoffman's son, Henry. Henry would later become the first mayor of Gem Lake, and was quite a businessman.

At peak, the Hoffman's Corner included a dance hall, a drive-in restaurant called "Bob's Diner," (see the round structure below) several taverns, a service station, a grocery store named Hoffman's Market, and other businesses. White Bear Floral was established in the midst of the Great

Depression when the Wohletz family started a greenhouse in the area in 1932. Without the help of Henry Hoffman, who provided the family with free rent for the first year, the business would never have survived. Still in existence today, Lorraine Birkeland, whose father Henry Wohletz established the business, said Henry Hoffman left a legacy of generosity that endures to present day.

Some of the buildings torn down in mid-December of this year, were those initially constructed in the area's heyday, such as a building that once housed Hoffman's Market. Highway 61 initially ran in front of White Bear Floral, rather than its route well to the west of the shop. Essentially the highway ran right through the center of Hoffman's Corner.

When the Highway route was changed in the early 1950's, other changes were already underway that led to the area's decline as a major business center. The most important change was the emergence of the supermarket. Scroll forward to present day, when the area's primary use will come full-circle with the construction of a Hy-Vee store. The area remains an ideal site for such a use due to very high daily traffic volumes.

The photo below shows Hoffman's Corner in the 1930's. The road in the lower area is Highway 61, the road to the upper right is County Road E.



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

We're on the Web!

See us at:
www.gemlakemn.org

Meetings: January and February, 2019

The following Gem Lake Meetings will be held at Heritage Hall in October, November and December 2018:

January 2, 2019

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

January 14, 2019

City Council Workshop at

7:00 p.m.

January 15, 2019

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m. The final 2019 City Budget will be discussed at this meeting.

February 5, 2019

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

February 11, 2019

City Council Workshop at 7:00 p.m.

February 19, 2019

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

Len Cacioppo

Phone: 651-796-3222

Faith Kuny

Phone: 612-718-4316

Jim Lindner

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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

"Documents" and "News and Updates" section.

Please email your ideas, comments and suggestions. See box at left for detailed contact information.

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