

Gem Lake News

Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Newsletter Editor

Special Interest Articles:

- Rush Line BRT update
- Water Gremlin update
- City News Page 4
- City Appointments

Upcoming Recycling Dates:

- February 26
- March 11
- March 25
- *Tip: put out your bin the night before for 7 a.m. pick-up.*

Water Gremlin Operations Update

By Len Cacioppo, City Council Member

On January 17, MPCA Commissioner Bishop issued an administrative order allowing for the phased restart of VoC coating operations at the Water Gremlin facility in White Bear Township. The administrative order is the result of significant process updates and reforms, as well as numerous surprise inspections going smoothly. VOC coating lines were down for 148 days. This phased restart will have seven separate groups of coaters come online, one at a time at 12-hour intervals. Air sampling will occur in both the air and land, specifically looking for TCE and tDCE.



The detection of TCE or tDCE during this restart will result in the immediate halting of that group of coaters until the cause can be identified and corrected. I asked why they're looking for TCE if it is already banned on the site and was told by the MPCA spokesperson it was out of an abundance of caution. Air sampling both on and off-site—Birch Lake School—will remain in effect for the foreseeable future, with samples being taken in three-day intervals.

(Continued on page 3)

Save the Environment for Free

Spring is a great time to learn about the local watershed, explore options for your own property and learn more about the environment around you. Here are **three** great learning options from the Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization (VLAWMO).

1. Check out VLAWMO's cost-share program for new landscaping ideas that support water quality. This program can help make property improvements, restore problem areas and solve drainage issues. VLAWMO staff provides a free on-site visit to assess property needs and opportunities, as well as explain the cost-share grant process. Contact 651-204-6071 for more information, or to request an on-site visit.



(continued on page 2)

Rush Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Update

The Rush Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) met on Thursday, January 23. While no official votes took place, the PAC was brought up to date by Ramsey County staff and the consultants working on planning measures for the proposed bus route. Most notably, the PAC heard progress reports involving project infrastructure and details on the on-going environmental assessment. Infrastructure challenges include adding additional sidewalks, station design at several locations, and placement of the bus route in conjunction with the existing Bruce Vento Trail. One issue concerning Gem Lake is the lane width over the Highway 61 bridge above the railroad tracks near Nelson Marine. County staff will coordinate with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MNDOT) as route planning continues.

The environmental assessment includes historic preservation relating to the old Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad, an early rail connection between St. Paul and Duluth. For those who traverse the Bruce Vento Trail old rail tracks, structures, and other related items are still present along the route. BRT staff wish to retain these items as important historical records linking the past transportation with the present and future transit objectives.

The meeting concluded with schedule goals and future opportunities for public engagement. As always Rush Line meetings are open to the public where the public can comment on proceedings and other relevant topics. The next Rush Line BRT meeting is set for Thursday, March 26 at 2:30PM at the Maplewood Community Center located at 2100 White Bear Avenue. Additional project work can be found at <https://www.ramseycounty.us/residents/roads-transit/transit-corridors-studies/rush-line-brt-project>.

By Jim Lindner, Gem Lake City Council Member

Save the Environment for Free

(continued from page 1)

2. Attend an upcoming workshop. On March 25th, 2020, Gem Lake Heritage Hall will host a talk on aquatic invasives. This education program will be led by both VLAWMO and Ramsey County. Attend

Just to learn about aquatic invasives, or to become a trained volunteer that helps monitor local infestations. RSVP to <http://www.vlawmo.org/events/aquatic-invasive-species-training/>

A variety of workshops are scheduled on topics of drainage, ground covers, pollinators, native plants, and resilient yards. Learn more and register at: www.vlawmo.org/events.

3. Brush up on water friendly yard care before spring hits. Tips, tricks and resources area available at VLAWMO.org/residents.

Donation Made to Willow Lane Elementary School

A donation of \$2,000 was approved by the Gem Lake City Council Meeting on January 21 for the Willow Lane Elementary School in White Bear. The donation was made from receipts resulting from charitable gambling within city limits. (Pull tab sales.) The donation was requested by the school to fund scholarships for their annual environmental field trip for 5th graders. This three-day/two-night trip brings children to Camp Icaghowan in Amery, Wisconsin from May 27-29, 2020. The camp offers students the opportunity for participation in a variety of outdoor activities that focus on ecology, science, human culture and history. Gem Lake's contribution helped to fund the trip for 20 children.



Water Gremlin Operations Update (continued from page 1)

The 90-ton rolling 365-day emissions limit is still in place, and Water Gremlin is not permitted to emit more VoC than that. Other restrictions still in place is Water Gremlin is required changes to how it manages toxic waste on the facility. OSHA is still continuing its investigation to the findings of lead in the homes and toxic levels in their children. These findings resulted in court orders requiring changes in processes and procedures as well as installing showers for the employees to use before leaving the facility.

Water Gremlin is expected to have its new permit application submitted at the end of January. The new draft permit should be available for public comment by early summer 2020.



Gem Lake Scholarship Application Deadline Approaches

The application deadline is fast approaching for the Gem Lake Scholarship Program, which is open to city residents who are graduating high school seniors. The Scholarship Program was started in 2010 to provide funds to graduating high school seniors for their post-secondary education. In its nine-year existence, the program has awarded \$500-1000 to a variety of students, and in a couple of years, multiple candidates received the award. The funds can be used for any type of post-secondary education, such as college or technical school. This year's deadline is April 6.

Last year three Gem Lake residents who were high school seniors were awarded \$1,000 each for their post-secondary education costs. The total amount awarded is based on the funds available from charitable gambling receipts. In the program's ten-year history there have been a number of years when multiple awards were made, but in that event, the total amount available is divided equally among the scholarship winners. The application form is available on the Gem Lake web-site, under the news and updates tab. It is also available at the high school.

Snowman Survives Despite Obstacle

During one of the January snowfalls, my 4-year-old granddaughter and I built a snowman in the circle at the end of Big Fox Road. I told her that the snowplow would likely push in into the snowbank while plowing. Much to our surprise, the plow operator clearly plowed around Frosty on several occasions. What fun for our granddaughter to see it still standing! Thanks to the operator!

Tim Heil, Big Fox Road



City News Page

There are Rules About Where Your Snow Can Get Dumped

It is not permissible in Minnesota to plow your snow onto your neighbor's side of the street or into the roadway or ditches in general. This was the subject of several complaints last winter. Due to the heavy snowfall that occurred in 2018-2019, there were complaints of what we will call "unfair snow rearrangement." Last winter, some snow plowing ended up blocking several culverts. This prevented proper drainage and may have caused some flooding in yards and basements.

Intentionally plowing or blowing snow onto a public roadway or culvert which results in any dangerous condition is a violation of Minnesota Statute #169.42 and Gem Lake Ordinance 86.

Impressive Total Recycling Numbers for 2019

A total of 91.375% of Gem Lake households participated in city wide recycling in 2019. This is a significant percentage of the 290 possible pick up sites within the city, all remembering to put out their recycling containers every two weeks.

The results of our recycling efforts were impressive, according to a recent report by Waste Management. A total of 31.6 tons of materials were collected between January and December, 2019. This broke down into the following categories:

- *18.6 tons of newspaper
- *4.1 tons of glass
- *1.3 tons of aluminum and steel cans
- *4.5 tons of cardboard and mixed paper
- *1.1 tons of plastic
- *0.3 tons of scrap steel
- *1.9 tons of residue

Residue refers to material that was put in the recycling container, but was not able to be recycled. (Remember, plastic bags don't belong in the recycling container and can cause a real problem at the recycling facility.) Watch your newsletter or the Gem Lake website for recycling dates.

City Appointments Made for Various Positions

As required by state statute, the City of Gem Lake formally appointed individuals and organizations to various city positions for 2020 at the January 21st City Council Meeting. This included things like appointing a back-up mayor, so meetings could be conducted in the mayor's absence. Some appointments are required by law, such as the city clerk, the city treasurer, the back-up mayor, and believe or not, a weed inspector.

Other positions or appointments are usual and customary to assign to someone once a year in January. This would include things like naming an auditor, a sewer inspector, a building inspector, etc. With the exception of services the City contracts for, such as fire, law enforcement, zoning administration, animal control, city clerk, etc. most positions are what you call honorary, meaning there is no pay what so ever... Some highlights of the appointments include the following:

Back-Up Mayor: Gretchen Artig-Swomley

Acting City Clerk: Gloria Tessier

City Treasurer: Thomas Kelly of White Bear Township

City Engineers: Short Elliot Henderson (SEH)

City Attorney: Kelly & Lemmons, P.A.

Zoning Administrator: Robert Uzpen

City Code Enforcement Officer: Michael Johnson of White Bear Township

City Emergency Services Director: Jim Lindner

Ramsey County League of Local Government Representative: Faith Kuny

Law Enforcement Contractor: White Bear Lake Police Department

Animal Control Contractor: White Bear Lake Police Department

Fire, Fire Marshall and Paramedic Contractor: City of White Bear Lake Fire Department

Official City Publication for Public Notices: White Bear Press

A complete list of city appointments can be obtained at Heritage Hall.

Sewer and Water Rates Set by City

Sewer and water rates in the City of Gem Lake have remained essentially unchanged in the past ten years. Recent analysis presented to the City Council at the February 17 meeting, demonstrated that some rate increases were necessary to create a break-even situation.

With this in mind, the council approved a new rate structure for city sewer and water services, effective April 1 of this year. The following are some highlights of changes:

The city sewer fund lost \$33,930 in 2018. In 2019, the unaudited loss is \$9,938.89. The recommended increase for the annual commercial and industrial sewer access charge (SAC) goes from \$172 to \$200. Likewise, the annual residential SAC charge goes from \$172 to \$200. In all cases, this is an increase of \$7 per quarter.



For the delivery of water in the city, particularly for the Gem Lake Villas project, the system is new and has no history at full build-out. The City of Vadnais Heights, which contracts for the water used in this part of town, charges Gem Lake a flat rate of \$2,862.50 per quarter. When divided by 31 units (30 homes and 1 irrigation system) equals \$92.34 per quarter, per unit. The base water charge, set during the build out, was \$35 per unit. This base rate has been changed to \$90 per unit. Volume rates will remain essentially unchanged.

For instance, the current charge for 1-12,000 gallon is now \$2.70. This rate structure would change to designate 1-15,000 gallons and would go to \$2.50. The current charge for 12,001-25,000 gallons is currently \$4.47, which would change to 15,001-25,000 for \$4.50.

The State of Minnesota has increased the Water Surcharge Fee from \$1.59 per account per quarter to \$2.43 per account per quarter. This would be simply a pass through that would be reflected on water bills.

A complete list of all sewer and water rates is available at Heritage Hall, or by calling City Clerk Gloria Tessier at the number listed on page 6.

Donation Made for School Lunch Program

A donation of \$1500 from charitable gambling funds was approved by the Gem Lake City Council at the February 18 meeting.

The donation will go to the White Bear Lake Area Emergency Food Shelf to fund their summer lunch program. This program provides children in need with a consistent source for lunches throughout the summer months. Charitable gambling funds result from pull-tab sales within city limits.



The City of Gem Lake

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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: March and April, 2020

The following Gem Lake Meetings will be held at Heritage Hall in March and April of 2020.

Workshop at 7:00 p.m. is
CANCELED

April 13, 2020

City Council Workshop at 7:00 p.m.

March 17, 2020

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

April 21, 2020

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

March 3, 2020

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

April 7, 2020

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

March 9, 2020

City Council

Your Gem Lake City Council

Bob Uzpen-Mayor

Phone: 651-492-5083

Jim Lindner

Phone: 651-429-7597

"Documents" and "News and Updates" section.

City Council Members:

Gretchen Artig-Swomley

Phone: 651-260-9742

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

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

Len Cacioppo

Phone: 651-796-3222

Each Gem Lake Newsletter is also posted on the web-site under the

Faith Kuny

Phone: 612-718-4316

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