



Gem Lake News



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Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Newsletter Editor

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Gem Lake Comprehensive Plan Presented

Are you curious about what Gem Lake might look like in 2040? There will be a joint meeting of the Gem Lake City Council and the Gem Lake Planning Commission on May 17 to present the final draft of the Gem Lake 2020 Comprehensive Plan.

Gem Lake submitted its draft plan on time, as required by the Metropolitan Council. Each municipality in the metro area must submit a plan every ten years to this agency that deals with long-term planning for areas such as housing and development, transportation, water sources, septic and sewer planning, demographic and employment trends, etc. The plan projects some items as far ahead as 2040. It is not unusual for plan approval to take several years. Please join us to learn more about the Gem Lake of the future. The meeting will start at 7:00 p.m. at Heritage Hall. See page 3 for some highlights of the current plan.



Upcoming Recycling Dates:

- June 1
- June 15
- June 29
- July 13
- July 27

City Clean Up Day is May 21

Meet your neighbors and help clean up the city! Gem Lake will once again sponsor a city clean-up day on Saturday May 21, starting at 9:00 a.m. The event will have two parts – a street clean-up and a “trash to treasure” exchange.

For the street clean-up, you can stop by Heritage Hall between 9:00 a.m.-Noon to pick up industrial strength trash bags. Then, you pick a street or block you want to clean up. Your filled bags can then be left in the Heritage Hall parking lot. At noon, hot dogs, chips and soft drinks will be available for your hungry crew.

The second part of the event is called “Trash to Treasure”. Put any useable items you are longing to give away at the end of your driveway in the morning. Put a sign on the item that clearly marks your items as “FREE”. You can also drive around and see what everyone else has put out—maybe you will see some treasure. You will be responsible for hauling your things back from the street at the end of the day in the unlikely event that nobody falls in love with them. This event will run from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.



Municipal Water Systems Being Studied by City

Late last year, the City Council of Gem Lake began to look at options for putting in a municipal water system, following the discovery of small amounts of pollution in 22 private wells in the city.

The process began with the commissioning of a comprehensive municipal water study that would evaluate what options are available for obtaining water from a neighboring city, should it become necessary and how the system might be implemented.

The first portion of the study was presented by the engineering firm Short Elliot and Hendrickson (SEH) at the January 2022 Council Meeting. The January report detailed two potential sources for obtaining municipal water, The City of White Bear Lake, and White Bear Township, both of which border Gem Lake. The study concluded that a viable system that could supply the entire city efficiently is possible, from an engineering perspective, from either of these neighbors.

SEH evaluated factors such as water pressure, water quality, water treatment standards, etc. to draw their conclusions. They did not reach out to either neighbor to explore whether they would be able or willing to supply Gem Lake's water needs at this point. The ballpark cost of a system from either White Bear Township or the City of White Bear Lake was estimated at between \$11-12 Million.

At the February City Council meeting, SEH was asked to develop Part Two of this water study. This second part evaluates options for phasing in a water system to the part of the city potentially most in need of municipal water.

It also looks at possibilities for municipal water that could involve working with the City of Vadnais Heights. This portion of the water study is scheduled for discussion at the May 17 City Council Meeting.

Because many residents of Gem Lake don't currently want a municipal water system, and the majority of wells have not been impacted by contamination at present, it was the duty of the council to evaluate options such as moving from private wells to municipal water in phases, on an as needed basis.

Therefore, Part Two of the Water Study explores additional potential options of providing safe, reliable sources of water within the City, with a goal of prioritizing those areas with known well water contamination and the areas with a higher likelihood for potential future well water issues. The area affected by well issues is generally in the Northwest part of the City.

The goal would be to feed these smaller, localized water service areas by the nearest surrounding community's distribution system, to limit project costs and complexities.

The Engineering Firm SEH mapped out three priority service areas and described prices and options for each of these areas

Priority Level 1 Service Area would provide water to either 40 or 48 houses, depending on which sub-option selected. Water could come from one of two surrounding cities. This option might cost somewhere between \$2,261,029 and \$3,478,076.

Priority Level 2 Service Area would provide water to either 70 or 72 households depending on which sub-option selected. Water could come from one of three bordering communities. The options might cost somewhere between \$2,487,613 and \$2,771,100.

Priority Level 3 Service Area would provide water to 2-4 households, depending on the sub-option selected. Water would come from one or two of the surrounding communities. The options might cost \$367,021 and \$478,820.

Many engineering factors would have to be considered while determining the best and most feasible options for Gem Lake. These factors include water quality, system efficiency, topography, and the ability to reach agreement with surrounding communities to supply the city with water.

This extensive Water Study will be discussed and evaluated over the course of the next few months. Your participation in this process would be welcomed.



Purple Line Route Changes are Under Consideration

Plans for the Metro Purple Line, a new Bus Rapid Transit line in Ramsey County are getting another look.

Project staff is looking at ending the now 15 mile line somewhere along County Road E, between Highway 61 and Interstate 35E in Vadnais Heights, or at the Maplewood Mall Transit Center.

Both options would include offering connecting bus service between the Maplewood Mall Transit Center and downtown White Bear Lake. Keeping the route as planned, with the northern end in downtown White Bear Lake, is also being evaluated.

The suggested modifications respond to a White Bear Lake City Council resolution that requests the Purple Line not enter the City of White Bear Lake.

The options were discussed at the Purple Line's Corridor Management Committee (CMC) on April 29. Presentation slides can be found on the project website. The committee includes elected and appointed officials from the project partner agencies, and was formed to advise the Metropolitan Council and Ramsey County on the Purple Line's design and construction.

At the meeting, committee members expressed support for the effort to consider alternative routes. The public will be invited to share feedback this summer. The current timeline calls for Purple Line construction to begin in 2024. Stay up-to-date on the METRO Purple Line project by reaching out to Liz Jones, Senior Community Outreach Coordinator, at 651-602-1977 or Elizabeth.jones@metrotransit.org.

Ramsey County Attorney John Choi Speaks to Council

Ramsey County Attorney John Choi was a featured speaker at the April 19 Gem Lake City Council meeting.

He discussed recent increases in crimes such as carjackings and auto thefts in Ramsey County and highlighted efforts to curb these trends.

Strategies included more coordination between law enforcement and community groups, keeping an eye on deterrents that have worked in the past, monitoring charging statistics, etc.

Choi also provided an analysis of crime trends during the pandemic and how some crimes increased, while others decreased. The Council expressed their gratitude at Choi's attendance.

Gem Lake of the Future: Highlights from the Comprehensive Plan

The population of Gem Lake has grown from 216 in 1970 to over 500 currently. (528 according to the 2020 Census.) Since 1990, the population is expected to grow about 27% by 2030. The growth trend is expected to continue, with populations approaching 600 in the years ahead. Employment within the city has grown from 230 jobs in 1970 to over 640 estimated for 2040.

The median age of a Gem Lake resident is 37.5, which is about two years older than the U.S. average of 35.3. This slightly higher average age is found in both the City of White Bear Lake and White Bear Township.

In terms of residential development, Gem Lake citizens are overwhelmingly housed in single-family owner-occupied homes. This makes up 89% of dwelling units. The adjoining communities range from 74 to 93 percent for the same factors.

Housing values are very similar in Gem Lake and White Bear Township. Gem Lake has a median home value of \$295,500 based on 2016 estimates. This compares to \$253,700 for White Bear Township. The median home value in the City of White Bear Lake was \$206,400, again based on 2016 estimates.

The 2020 Comprehensive Plan contains much more detail on trends, demographics and future plans. You are encouraged to attend the next Council Meeting on May 17 to find out more.

City News

Certain licenses to Transition to Calendar Year Renewals

Some of Gem Lake's licenses ran for the calendar year and others ran from mid-year to mid-year, which could cause confusion and processing inefficiency. The City Council recently voted to transition to calendar year licenses for everything.

Examples of mid-year renewals were dog, golf cart and contractor licenses. It was decided to bite the bullet this year and make a change. If you have a dog and recently received a renewal notice for your canine companion's dog tag, you noticed the change in the letter you received. (The dog tag was manufactured before the change was made). To make the transition, this year the types of licenses listed above are running from up to 18 months for the same price. In other words, you will renew your dog, golf cart or contractor licenses in the same mid-year time frame this year but it will not need to be renewed again until December of 2023 for January of 2024. The price charged this time for this longer renewal will be the same that you would have paid for a 12-month renewal.

License Required for Rental Properties in City

If you are renting out your house in Gem Lake, you need a rental license. If you own rental property but are not currently renting it, you still need to fill out a rental license application to keep the City updated. The application process is easy. Fill out our form located on our website, which can be found under "Permits" or contact Melissa Lawrence, City Clerk, pay a license fee (if you are actively renting), and go through a brief inspection of the property by our code enforcement officer. We check for things like smoke detectors. Call 651-747-2790 to find out more.

Free Notary Services

Residents of Gem Lake and White Bear Township can get notary services at Heritage Hall for no charge. The service is available only during normal business hours for our city hall—which is Monday to Thursday from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Non-residents can utilize this service for a fee of \$5.00 per document certified.

Charitable Gambling Donations Made

The Gem Lake City Council voted to donate \$500 to the White Bear Lake Emergency Food Shelf and \$500 to Newtrax for food delivery services to the needy. These donations were approved at the April 19 Council Meeting and were done as a result of charitable gambling receipts the city received. More donations are expected to be approved at the May Council Meeting.

After Hour Emergency Number for Public Works

In the event of a public works emergency after our normal business hours, there is a number you should call. Gem Lake's normal business hours are 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday. A public works emergency is defined as a threat to public safety or critical infrastructure. (Not a pothole, or something that can wait.) Examples of an emergency would be a water main break, (please don't call City of Vadnais Heights), a city sewer line back up or the collapse of a manhole. The phone number to call after business hours is 651-755-9828. The City of Gem Lake has a cooperative agreement with White Bear Township to handle these emergencies.

Tardy Recycling Pick Up—What to do?

In the beginning of 2022, many recycling pick-ups in Gem Lake have not happened on the day appointed by Waste Management as our city's pick-up day.

When we call our contractor, we are told the delay is due to "operational issues." This typically means driver shortages. Cities around us are having similar issues. That doesn't make it any less annoying.

What should you do? For now, we suggest holding tight if your recycling is not picked up for one extra day. After three days, email one of your city council members or call Heritage Hall. Typically, we know they are late because council members live all over the city and their bins are still full of cardboard. Try to leave the bin out for a few days so you don't get skipped when they get to us. The first pick-up date in March was up to five days late, depending on your part of town.



Draft Report on Water Gremlin Released by MDH

The following is an excerpt from the draft report by MDH concerning a public health assessment for the Water Gremlin facilities, which was recently released for comment.

In January 2019, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) discovered that the Water Gremlin Company, located on Otter Lake Road in White Bear Township, was emitting significantly more trichloroethylene (TCE) into the air than was allowed by their MPCA air permit. As a result, it was believed that some people living in the area and working nearby were exposed to airborne TCE concentrations above Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) health-based value for TCE inhalation. TCE use at the Water Gremlin facility stopped in January of 2019.

MPCA requested MDH assistance to evaluate health risks and collaborate on community involvement activities. This draft report is part of that effort and attempts to record and explain events and findings most relevant to understanding the potential implications of this site for the health of the community that lives, works and plays near the Water Gremlin facility.

Water Gremlin began manufacturing lead fishing sinkers from a garage on family property in 1949. The current facility was built in stages over the years, with major expansions in the 1970's and 1990's. Water Gremlin fabricates lead metal products from purchased, refined lead materials. Lead acid battery terminal posts are currently a primary product for the company. TCE was used as a coating for these posts, likely from 1992 up until January of 2019.

In March of 2019, MPCA and Water Gremlin signed a Stipulation Agreement that provided information on the facilities violations and description of the accepted penalties. It outlined a scenario that allowed the company to resume operations using an alternative to TCE. The Stipulation Agreement required Water Gremlin to conduct extensive environmental investigation by sampling groundwater, soil, soil vapor, sediment, surface water, and private and municipal wells in the area. The MDH summarized public health data from the Minnesota Cancer Reporting System, the Birth Defects Information System, and the Blood Lead Information System to respond to questions about health impacts in the surrounding community and the workings at the facility

By analyzing this data, it was discovered that some Water Gremlin workers were inadvertently exposing their families to take-home lead contamination from the workplace.

After much analysis of existing data and environmental testing in the area over the course of several years, MDH reached seven main conclusions:

1. Past TCE air emissions may have harmed some people's health.
2. Past or current t-DCE and lead air emissions are not expected to harm people's health.
3. Groundwater contamination is not expected to harm people's health.
4. Soil vapor contamination is not a risk at properties near Water Gremlin.
5. Soil, sediment and surface water contamination from Water Gremlin does not pose a health risk in the community.
6. Indoor air at the Water Gremlin facility may be harming or may have harmed worker's health.
7. Indoor air at the Water Gremlin facility may have harmed the health of Water Gremlin workers and their families.

For each conclusion, the MDH provided extensive information and possible next steps and recommendations. For instance, in the case of conclusion number 1, the MDH said it is possible that post exposure to TCE in air near the facility may have been sufficient to increase the risk of health effect in a small number of the most exposed individuals. However, TCE exposures may be too low to cause any observable health effects for most, if not all people who lived or were regularly near the Water Gremlin facility.

MDH staff does not expect to see meaningful changes in cancer patterns and trends in this community, especially over the short term. Nevertheless, due to the lag time between the time of the highest TCE exposure and possible occurrence of cancer, MDH would consider a reanalysis of Minnesota Cancer Reporting System data in the future, such as in 10 years, if the situation warrants.

People with questions about the report in its entirety are encouraged to contact the Minnesota Department of Health at 651-201-4897 or email to health.hazard@state.mn.us. Their website is www.health.state.mn.us.

The City of Gem Lake

Phone:
(651) 747-2790

Fax
(651)-747-2795

City Hall Address:
4200 Otter Lake Road
Gem Lake, MN 55110

General E-mail:
city@gemlakemn.org

Newsletter E-mail:
Gretchen.artig-swomley@gemlakemn.org

This newsletter is also posted on the city's website under the "Documents" section and the "News and Updates" section.
www.gemlakemn.org

**After Hours Public Works
Emergency Number:**
651-755-9828

(For water main breaks, main city sewer back up, collapse of manhole, etc. Or call 911)

Meetings: June and July 2022

The following Gem Lake meeting will be held in the months of April and May. All meetings are held at Heritage Hall unless otherwise indicated.

June 13, 2022

City Council Workshop is **CANCELED**

June 14, 2022

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

June 21, 2022

City Council meeting at 7:00 p.m.

July 11, 2022

City Council Workshop at 7:00 p.m.

July 12, 2022

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00p.m.

July 19, 2022

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

See also the Gem Lake web-site for more information.

Your Gem Lake City Council

Mayor:

Gretchen Artig-Swomley
Email: gretchen.artig-swomley@gemlakemn.org

City Council Members:

Laurel Amlee
Email: laurel.hynes-amlee@gemlakemn.org

Len Cacioppo

Email: len.cacioppo@gemlakemn.org

Ben Johnson

Email: ben.johnson@gemlakemn.org

Jim Lindner

Email: jim.lindner@gemlakemn.org

You can also reach each city council member by calling 651-747-2790. After hours you can follow the prompts for the city council directory.

CITY OF GEM LAKE
4200 Otter Lake Road
Gem Lake, MN 55110