



Gem Lake News



July 2022 | Volume 16 | Issue 4

Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Newsletter Editor

Special Interest Articles:

- **New Arrangement for Public Works**
- **“Water Summit” in September**
- **City News, Page 4**

Scheduled Recycling Dates:

- **July 13**
- **July 27**
- **August 10**
- **August 24**

Check the Facebook page for updates on recycling pickup.

See page 3 for the Facebook page link.

Public Works Taken on by Township

Effective June 1, White Bear Township has taken on all public works duties for the City of Gem Lake, including snow plowing, road maintenance, lawn mowing, fire hydrant flushing, etc. This is an arrangement that has been worked out over the course of the last year through a Joint Powers Agreement between the City of Gem Lake and the Township. Prior to this arrangement, the City contracted out various tasks to a variety of companies for specialized services such as tree trimming and sewer flushing. At times this meant the city was paying more or was assigned a lower priority when it came to scheduling of services.

Working with the Township is expected to add a new level of coordination and professionalism to service delivery. “While it’s not expected to lower overall public works costs, it is expected to ensure better and more efficient service,” said Gem Lake Mayor Gretchen Artig-Swomley.

(Continued on page 2)



Life-Long Gem Lake Resident Passes Away

Kathleen (Kathy) Brown, a life-long resident of Gem Lake, passed away on May 10 at the age of 80. She was the daughter of Anyrine and Henry Hoffman, Gem Lake’s first Mayor. Her mother was born a Nadeau, and her sisters Shirley and LaVonne married into well-known local families. Shirley Hoffman married Dick Arcand and LaVonne married “Shorty” Urban. As a result, Kathy was related to about half the residents of the city as she was growing up. Kathy also had a brother named Chuck Hoffman.

When Kathy was born in 1942, Gem Lake was a sleepy hamlet, best known for the produce markets at Hoffman’s Corner, which was named after her father. Her childhood home was across from the present-day site of White Bear Floral. She married Gerald Brown in 1963 and moved into a rambler on Goose Lake Road, where she lived for the rest of her life. The couple divorced in the 1970’s and she was a single parent to three children, Todd, Jeff and Jackie.

(Continued on page 2)



Public Works Functions Will be Done by Township

(continued from page 1)

Procedures for dealing with emergencies remains the same. 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.



City Loses Life-Long Resident

(continued from page 1)

Kathy had a long and dedicated career as an RN and worked for many years at United and Miller Hospitals, particularly in the oncology unit at United.

She was known as an extremely compassionate person and volunteered religiously for organizations such as the Dorothy Day Center.

Kathy endured a great deal of heartache in her life. Tragically, all three of Kathy's children preceded her in death, two of them from heart failure in their 40's and 50's.

After she retired, she worked at maintaining her independence for as long as possible. In this she was aided by many loving nieces and nephews in the Hoffman and Arcand families, some of whom lived close by.

A fall and illness finally necessitated a move to assisted living, where she lived out the last year or so of her life. She was a wellspring of advice and information for the community and will be greatly missed by all.



Photo above: from left-Dick Arcand, his sister-in-law Kathy Brown, Kathy's sister, LaVonne "Vonnie" Hoffman Urban, Kathy's brother Chuck Hoffman.

Photo below: Kathy (center) and her sister's Shirley Hoffman Arcand at left, and Vonnie Urban at right.



Gem Lake Comprehensive Plan Approved by Met Council

The Metropolitan Council issued a letter in late May approving the Gem Lake Comprehensive Plan for 2020.

On June 21, 2022, the City Council was scheduled to officially approve the plan and put it into effect. The plan will shortly be posted on the Gem Lake website.

Each municipality in the seven-county Twin Cities 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.

The next step is to have the Planning Commission determine if any final edits should be made before final submission of the electronic file back to the Met Council.

Implementation of the plan will then be a joint effort between the Planning Commission and the City Council. It particularly comes into play when development requests are made within city boundaries.

Population Estimates Released for 2021

The Metropolitan Council recently released updated population estimates for 2021 for cities in the metro area.

As of April 1, 2021, the City of Gem Lake had 211 housing units, 202 households and 534 people, of whom 0 lived in group facilities. Household size averaged 2.644 persons per household.

To arrive at these new estimates, the Metropolitan Council starts with housing units measured by the 2020 Federal Census. Then, they break down the total number of housing units from the census into different housing types, using county parcel data and other sources. Next, they add units built between April 1, 2020 and April 1, 2021, based on permits reported to us by communities. The Met Council assumes that 85% of single-family detached units and 80% of town homes/duplexes, etc. were completed by April 1, 2021.

City Clean Up Day Celebrated!

A variety of Gem Lake residents participated in our second City Clean Up Day, which took place on May 21. The “Trash to Treasure” Event involved people placing items at the end of their driveway that they wished to get rid of. If you were driving around that day, you may have noticed the various things that were available to be re-homed. Bookshelves, a snow blower, an ottoman and some office equipment were among the things spotted.

A handful of individuals picked up trash on city streets, which was greatly appreciated. At noon, the city sponsored a small cook-out. Hot dogs and snacks were served. Thank you for participating.

Gem Lake Has Facebook Page

Acting City Clerk Melissa Lawrence has designed and published a Facebook page for the City of Gem Lake. The address is: www.facebook.com/CityofGemLakeMN

The Facebook pages focuses primarily on special announcements and news items, events, etc. It is intended to compliment rather than replace the city website. Please check it out and “like” and “follow” the page. We are also looking for a few appropriate Gem Lake photos. Your feedback is welcome!

Check this page for updated recycling pickup information.

Heritage Hall Holiday Closure

Heritage Hall will be closed July 4 for Independence Day.

All other hours remain the same. Have a safe holiday!



City News

Recycling by the Number

An impressive 91.66% of Gem Lake residents participated in curb-side recycling last year. A total of 28.3 tons of materials were picked up in 2021. This material broke down as follows:

- 16.7 tons of newspaper
- 3.6 tons of glass
- 1.1 tons of cans (aluminum and steel)
- 4.0 tons of OCC and mixed paper (cardboard)
- 1.0 tons of plastic
- .02 tons of scrap steel
- 1.7 tons of residue (items that cannot be recycled)

Your participation in Gem Lake's recycling is greatly appreciated. Of course, our numbers will continue to be good if our vendor actually picks up our recycling. Due to driver shortages, we have had major and ongoing problems. We are in daily contact with our vendor. You are going to be receiving a letter shortly or have already received a letter explaining the situation in more detail.

Charitable Gambling Donations Made

The Gem Lake City Council voted to donate \$1000 to the White Bear Lake Emergency Food Shelf to help fund their summer lunch program for kids. This donation was approved at the June 21 Council Meeting and was done as a result of charitable gambling receipts the city received.

License Required for Rental Properties in City

If you are renting out your property 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 the 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.

Two Positions Opening on the Gem Lake City Council

There will be two positions up for election on the Gem Lake City Council. The terms of Council Members Jim Lindner and Len Cacioppo will expire at the end of 2022. Council member terms run four years.

If you are interested in running for election, you must file with the County between August 2-16 and pay a fee of \$2. You can file either at Heritage Hall or at the county. You must be at least 21, be a current resident and be eligible to vote. For more information, see the Ramsey County website under the election section.

License Required for Dogs in City

Dog license tags issued in 2021 expired on May 31 of this year. Any dog over 6 months in age is required to be licensed by the City of Gem Lake. A reminder letter and application was sent out April 28 to all Gem Lake residents. If you have misplaced the application, it can be found on the Gem Lake website, under "Permits." The application has a space for information on up to three dogs. Proof of rabies vaccination must be supplied, along with the application. The fee per dog is \$10.

At a recent city council meeting, it was voted and approved to have dog licenses run on a calendar year schedule. With that change, all dog licenses issued for the 2022 cycle, will be good through December 31, 2023. The fee will remain the same for this one-time period. After that, all dog licenses will run January 1-December 31. The dog license tags you will get this year, were created before this change and will show an expiration of 5-31-2022. Don't worry, they will be good until the end of the 2023. Call 651-747-2790 with any questions.



Informational Meeting on Gem Lake Water Plan-9/12

Mark your calendar now. An important informational meeting will be held on September 12 at 7:00 p.m. to discuss the Gem Lake water plan, which was recently completed by SEH, which functions as Gem Lake's City Engineer.

Late last year, the City Council of Gem Lake began to look at options for dealing with the discovery of small amounts of pollution in 22 private wells in the city.

An Informational Meeting on September 12 is intended to look at the complex options that are available to the city, and to get feedback from the people who live here on what direction the city should take. These options could include installing a city-wide municipal water system, installing a smaller more targeted municipal water system in the area where wells have been affected, or doing nothing for now. Homeowners affected by the contamination could drill new wells or install sophisticated water filtration systems. Each of these options is potentially expensive and fraught with possible problems.

The process leading up to this informational meeting this September began with the commissioning of a comprehensive municipal water study. That study was meant to 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 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 was 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 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. These more targeted options could cost between \$367,021 and \$3,478,076, depending upon the number of households served, and where the water would be coming from.

Now that an extensive plan has been completed, the city can pursue possible grants and loan programs that might help finance the installation of any municipal water system. (Typically, grant applications require that a study be completed first.)

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.

No decisions have been made about what direction the city should go and public feedback is encouraged. We hope to see you on September 12 at 7:00 p.m.

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: July – August 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.

July 11, 2022

City Council Workshop is **CANCELED**

July 12, 2022

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00p.m.

July 19, 2022

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

August 8, 2022

City Council Workshop is **7:00 p.m.**

August 9, 2022

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00p.m.

August 16, 2022

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

See also the Gem Lake website 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