

# Gem Lake News

*Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Newsletter Editor*

## Kiki Sonnen Retires from Gem Lake Position

Gem Lake's City Secretary, Kiki Sonnen, will retire on August 31. Kiki works half time for the city and the remainder of her time for the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office. She has worked for the Sheriff's Office for 15 years. Prior to this, Kiki worked as a St. Paul City Council Member, a community organizer, a director of a social service agency, and much more.



Kiki has served in the capacity of Gem Lake City Secretary for several years, maintaining a presence at Heritage Hall for both the city and the Sheriff's substation, which is also located in the same building.

She begins the next chapter of her life with many plans. Kiki would like to raise chickens, learn to skate, garden, study history and have many other adventures. Congratulations Kiki!!

### Special Interest Articles:

- *City Secretary Retires*
- *Bruce Vento Trail Extension Plans*
- *City News Page 4*
- *Well Capping Program*

### Upcoming Recycling Dates:

- *August 20*
- *September 3*
- *September 17*

## Planning Underway for Bruce Vento Trail Extension

Planning is now underway for the future extension of the Bruce Vento trail from Buerkle Road in Maplewood, to Highway 96 in White Bear Township.

This regional trail will be 13 miles long when completed and runs from the east side of downtown St. Paul, northwestward to the north County line in White Bear Township. The trail is located on the former right of way of the Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) Railroad.

The trail passes through the cities of St. Paul, Maplewood, Vadnais Heights, Gem Lake, White Bear Lake and White Bear Township. Although the designated trail extends the entire length of the railroad right of way, only the southern 7 miles have been acquired for public use.



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## Planning Underway for Bruce Vento Trail Extension: Route Borders Gem Lake

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The existing trail currently in use, ends at Buerkle Road in Maplewood. Future development north of Buerkle Road is dependent upon abandonment of the railroad right of way or sale of a portion of that right of way for trail use.

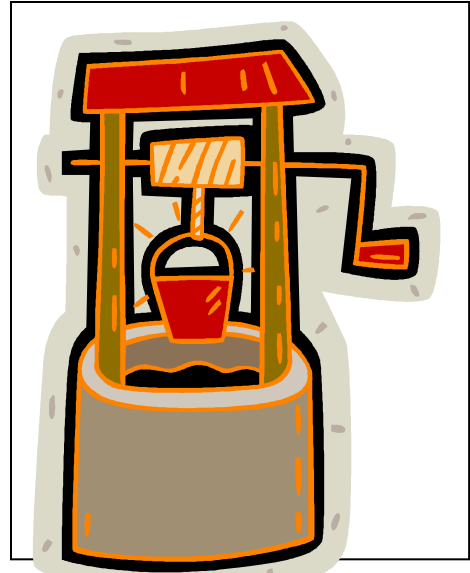
The BNSF Railroad right of way north of Buerkle Road is currently licensed to the Minnesota Commercial Railroad for operations and maintenance. Xcel Energy also holds a permit for an overhead transmission power line.

In 2013, Xcel Energy contacted Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department for future Bruce Vento Regional Trail extension plans. Xcel is planning a major transmission power line rebuild project that would extend through a section of the trail corridor area along the BNSF railway. Due to existing conditions in the area, the county expressed interest to Xcel for a trail to be located under the power lines.

The Ramsey County Parks and Recreation Department has developed a preferred alignment concept for the trail that identifies proposed alignment locations, trail access under existing bridge locations, potential at-grade trail crossing and trail nodes.

Earlier this year the county put out a request for proposal for professional architectural and civil engineering services for preparation of design development documents for the trail extension. It is expected that various design concepts for the trail extension will be produced and that a final report with recommendations will be produced sometime this year.

The trail extension would touch Gem Lake somewhere in the area of the railroad tracks on the City's east side, from the railroad bed along the business district and along the Hoffman Road area on north and west of Highway 61 that skirts Goose Lake.



### Seal Your Old Well

Do you have an unsealed, unused well on your property? Money is available to help seal it up. Unsealed wells can cause contamination of the groundwater supply, from which we all drink. Homeowners can have an unsealed well on their property and not even know about it! Unsealed wells can be found buried in the yard or in a small building on the property, in a small room in the basement or near a water pump.

Contact the Ramsey Conservation District if you are interested in cost share to seal your unsealed well. You can contact the appropriate personnel in the following ways:

Phone: 651-266-7270.

Website: [www.co.ramsey.mn.us/cd](http://www.co.ramsey.mn.us/cd)

Email: [Samantha.Kreibich@co.ramsey.mn.us](mailto:Samantha.Kreibich@co.ramsey.mn.us)

## New Family, New Life in Gem Lake: Meet Our New Neighbors

Over 10 new families have made Gem Lake their home this year, due to a building boom at the Hillary Farm development off of Schueuneman Road.

Only three of the original 28 lots now remain for sale at Hillary Farm. During the past 18 months, over a dozen homes have been built, or are currently under construction, in a variety of beautiful styles.



**Shirley Dingman** and her husband **Lowell Lundy** are one of Gem Lake's newest families. They built their home in one of the cul-de-sacs and have now been residents of Gem Lake for a little over a year. Not only are they new residents, they are also newlyweds.

Their story is unique and their pathway to our city was providential. Shirley and Lowell both were widowed after decades of marriage. They knew each other through their church and their children. Two years ago, they decided to get married. Since their children had known each other all of their lives, the creation of a whole new family had already begun.

As part of the process of beginning new lives together, both felt it was important to sell their previous houses and buy a new home together.

Shirley and Lowell had originally embraced the idea of "down-sizing." They looked at condos, apartments and houses around the area. (Both had lived for years in Falcon Heights.)

A realtor had suggested they consider buying one of the beautiful lots at Hillary Farm. The two fell in love with the area and plunged in happily to building their own dream home. They ended up loving their builder, (Kootenia Builders), who helped them throughout the project. Unlike many construction horror stories, this couple still speaks highly of the folks who built their home. "The quality of their work was amazing," says Shirley.

"We love it here!" says Shirley. "We fell in love with the green spaces, the openness, and the quiet."

"Our families thought we were crazy to build a home at this point, but we are really happy we did. We love the result."

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## City News Page

### Crime---Even in Gem Lake

Criminal damage to property occurred at the Gem Lake Golf Course around 1:00 a.m. on Friday, June 13. A group of three or four males broke a fence, pushed over benches, and dragged one bench to the middle of Goose Lake Road. Greens were damaged. Golf flags and cups were stolen from the course. A K-9 partner tracked the suspects down the near-by railroad tracks but the trail grew cold in the Wilbert Plastics parking lot. Damage was estimated at \$5,000.

Criminal damage to property occurred at the Barnett Kia dealership on June 13. A Barnett employee saw an employee of a neighboring business driving recklessly and “doing donuts” in that business’s parking lot. Gravel and dirt were kicked up and rocks flew into the air, hitting the Kia employee’s personal auto.

### Municipal Water Discussed for Gem Lake

Initial research is now being done regarding the idea of bringing municipal water to Gem Lake’s Business District. It is thought that the water would come from the City of White Bear, with the water hook up coming under the railroad tracks on the eastern edge of the business area.

The process would require several public hearings and input from the potentially affected parties. Stay tuned through your newsletter, the web-site or the city council meetings, as initial brainstorming progresses.

### Check Out the New Look at the City Web-site

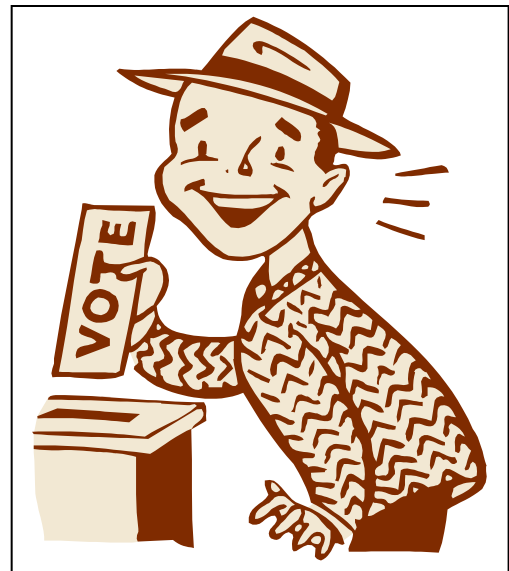
Revisions were recently completed to the city’s web-site to make it easier to navigate and easier to modify when information needs to be added or changed. Now changes can be made by someone with basic computer skills, rather than programmer expertise. Also, the new site just looks better, including more photographs of beautiful Gem Lake! Check it out at: [www.gemlakemn.org](http://www.gemlakemn.org)

### 2015 Gem Lake Budget Planning Begins

Planning has begun for the initial 2015 Gem Lake Budget. The August City Council Workshop on August 11 was devoted to brainstorming for the budgeting process. A first draft of the budget was presented for consideration. Members of the public are invited to attend and take part in the planning process. An initial budget must be submitted to Ramsey County in September so that proposed property tax statements can be prepared. A final budget is due later in the year. A revised budget will be discussed again at the September City Council Meeting on September 16.

### Two Positions on Council Up for Election

Two positions on the Gem Lake City Council will be up for election on November 4. The positions are currently held by Rick Bosak and Gretchen Artig-Swomley. Each has served two four year terms already and both have filed to run again as incumbents. Rick also served for several years on the Gem Lake Planning Commission



## New Family, New Life in Gem Lake: Meet Our New Neighbors

Shirley and Lowell moved into their home in October of 2013, on the day of their first anniversary. Since then, they have seen lots of wildlife in the neighborhood, including one day when they saw 18 deer on a hill on the golf course. They have also seen many turkey.

During last year's holiday season, they hosted Thanksgiving dinner for 16 family members and enjoyed the site of a herd of deer outside their window when the family sat down to eat. Although their relationship with the neighborhood deer was recently slightly strained when they ate some of the family's landscaping, things are still pretty wonderful here in Gem Lake.



## The City of Gem Lake

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Gem Lake, MN 55110

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Newsletter e-mail:  
[gretchenas@comcast.net](mailto:gretchenas@comcast.net)

Kiki Sonnen:  
651-747-2790, or  
Kiki.Sonnen@CO.RAMSEY.  
MN.US

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We're on the Web!

See us at:  
[www.gemlakemn.org](http://www.gemlakemn.org)

## Meetings: August, September and October 2014

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

### August 19, 2014

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

### September 2, 2014

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

### September 8, 2014

City Council Workshop at 7:00 p.m.

### September 16, 2014

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m. The Gem Lake Preliminary Budget will be voted on at this meeting. Please join in the discussion.

### October 7, 2014

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

### October 13, 2014

City Council Workshop at 7:00 p.m.

### October 21, 2014

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

#### Rick Bosak

651-426-9695

#### Faith Kuny

Phone: 612-718-4316

### Jim Lindner

Phone: 651-429-7597

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](http://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.

**CITY OF GEM LAKE**  
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55110

