

Gem Lake News

Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Newsletter Editor

Special Interest Articles:

- Rick Bosak Resigns
- Land Ordinance Nears Completion
- City News Page 4
- New Planning Commission Member

Upcoming Recycling Dates:

- September 27
- October 11
- October 25
- November 8
- *Tip: put out your bin the night before for 7 a.m. pick-up.*

Rick Bosak Leaves City Council

After nearly 20 years of service to his community, Gem Lake City Council member Rick Bosak resigned from his position in late June.

Rick spent 15 years on the Gem Lake Council, originally replacing Connie Kunin after her term was completed. Prior to this Rick had spent four years on the city's Planning Commission.

According to Rick, questions while building his house in Gem Lake is what initially got him interested in public service. He started attending Planning Commission meetings about 1982, when he had questions about how building height was defined in various parts of the building ordinances. "Judson Bemis was the chairman of the Planning Commission at the time, and was very helpful," said Rick. *(Continued on page 5)*



Gem Lake's New Consolidated Land Use Ordinance

Gem Lake's proposed Consolidated Land Use Ordinance will be reviewed and voted on at the City Council meeting on October 17 at 7:00 p.m. The project's focus has been to update Gem Lake's land related ordinances, not drastically alter them. It brings a consistent format that will provide a single source for all zoning questions, and position the city for the new 2018 Comprehensive Plan, required by the Metropolitan Council.

According to Ben Johnson, Chairman of the Planning Commission, the initial goal of the project was to put the city in a good position to develop the next 10-year Comprehensive Plan. The larger idea of consolidation grew out of a desire to address inconsistencies within Gem Lake land use ordinances, between those ordinances and the existing Comprehensive Plan, and hopefully, to simplify the manner in which residents and business owners pursue development opportunities in the City of Gem Lake. "It has been incredibly gratifying to team with a dedicated group of volunteers on this project. Over the course of two years, we worked diligently to engage with landowners, and others to review ordinances and identify concerns," said Ben.



Gem Lake 2018 Preliminary Budget gets First Review

Minnesota State Statutes require cities to certify their preliminary tax levy by September 29 each year, which means most also introduce a preliminary budget in September, or even earlier if possible. Once the preliminary budget is approved and certified, the city can lower the levy during the remaining budget process, but cannot exceed the certified preliminary levy. For this reason, most cities certify their preliminary levy using worst-case budget scenarios, which is the case with the Mayor's 2018 preliminary property tax levy and budget. This budget was reviewed at and approved at the City Council Meeting on September 19.

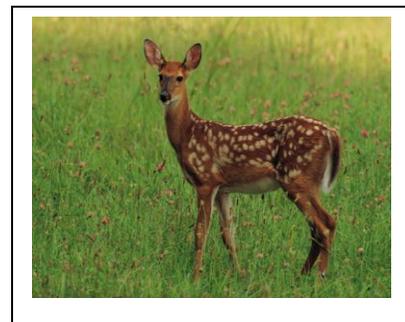
The 2018 Preliminary property tax levy is proposed at \$514,021, which is a 3.99% increase over the 2017 certified preliminary tax levy. The 2018 preliminary tax levy consists of debt levy of \$84,399 (an increase from the 2017 preliminary debt levy of \$75,987), and a general operating levy of \$429,622 (an increase of 2.71% over the 2017 preliminary tax levy).

These are some of the changes made from the 2017 adopted budget, as a basis for the 2018 preliminary property tax levy:

1. Based on the 2015 Refunding Bond schedule, the debt levy is set for \$84,399. In 2017, the debt levy was set at \$75,987, and \$70,000 for 2016. For 2018, there are no reserves available to reduce the levy at this time. This is an increase of \$8,412, or 11.07%
2. The 2018 Planning and Zoning budget includes \$50,000 for the 2018 Comprehensive Plan. Update and engineering services increased \$15,000, based on past expenditures.
3. Police budget was left at 2017 budget amounts, because the exact final figures are not yet in.
4. Based on budget numbers provided by the City of White Bear Lake, the cost of fire services could increase 3.35% to \$17,050.
5. Legal services increased \$20,500, to a total of \$42,500 to account for possible land development issues based on past expenditures.
6. Election services increased to \$8,850 from \$7,026, based on Ramsey County Election Department budget numbers.
7. The budget for Heritage Hall increased to \$25,850, from \$24,250, based on past expenditures.
8. The 2018 preliminary budget includes \$20,000 for future improvements.
9. Revenue and other expenditure line items are adjusted based on past history.

Using a preliminary tax levy of \$514,021 and the City's 2018 tax capacity (\$1,128,008) and a median valued home (\$262,850) for Gem Lake, that median valued home would pay \$1,099, compared to the 2017 preliminary levy of \$1061, an increase of \$38.26.

Again, as the City prepares its final 2018 budget, the property tax levy can be lowered from the initial preliminary levy amount, but cannot be increased. Over the last 5 years, the final budget has proved to be a lower total figure than the preliminary budget.



This deer has no relationship to our 2018 budget for the City of Gem Lake. But, statistically speaking, October is the most likely month for a deer/automobile encounter in the State of Minnesota. Heads up!

Planning Commission Changes—Welcome Len, Thank you Dan

The Gem Lake City Council is pleased to announce the addition of a new member to the city's planning commission.

Len Cacioppo moved to Gem Lake in February of 2015 and answered the call for volunteers that went out this summer to residents of our beautiful city. He moved to Minnesota from California, where among other things, he was a commercial real estate appraiser.

Len's wife was raised in Minnesota, although the couple met when she was briefly working in California. Len is an IT professional with more than 20 years of experience in engineering and deploying best in class telecommunications systems for companies world-wide. He is currently the vice president of operations for a company named VirtualPBX.com.

Len and his family spent a fair amount of time finding exactly the type of place they wanted to live in Minnesota. They drove through Gem Lake five or six times before deciding this was it. "I liked the look and feel of the place. I genuinely love it here!"

Why Gem Lake? Len looked at resources such as Google Earth and saw what he calls a 'Green Zone.' "Gem Lake is like an oasis, a bright green patch in an urban sprawl. I love the turkeys and the other wildlife."

Len has had numerous very impressive titles such as Network Operations Manager, Logistics Manager, and Technical Engineer, etc. in his impressive career. One role he hasn't had until now is Planning Commission member, or in fact city volunteer of any kind. "Serving on the Gem Lake Planning Commission is my very first experience in public service."

Len thinks he can bring his experience to the table with it comes to interpretation of city ordinances and codes, versus the needs of developers, land owners and other interested parties



"As a commercial appraiser, I had to establish the highest and best use of a property. I had a license on the line, and it depended a lot on how I interpreted parts of various zoning codes. I feel I am good at that kind of work." Len looks forward to playing a role in helping the city move forward as various parcels begin to be developed. He feels his past experiences will help him take a global view of how each project fits, or doesn't fit into the future Gem Lake.

Welcome to Len Cacioppo! Len is replacing long term volunteer Dan Marier, who served for years on the Planning Commission. Dan will be profiled in our next newsletter! Thanks also to Dan!

Deer Hunt Scheduled for October

Two residents of Gem Lake have applied for and obtained a permit to conduct a deer hunt on their property in October. Tony Scornavacco and Mike Garrett host a private deer hunt by licensed bow hunters on their property starting October 14 and concluding on October 30. The process for obtaining a permit is extensive, with a priority on safety. All neighbors surrounding a hunt must agree in writing to allow the hunt to take place. The bow hunters must be identified in advance and must provide copies of their credentials, such as their hunting permits. Deer stands must be laid out and approved in advance, to insure that neighbors know where the hunting will take place. These residents, who live on the south side of Gem Lake, also sponsored a hunt in 2016.

City News Page

Presentation From Food Shelf Official and Resulting Donations

The Gem Lake City Council was honored to receive a visit from Anna Bosak of the White Bear Lake Area Emergency Food Shelf during the City Council Meeting on August 15.

After thanking the city for its continuing support, Ms. Bosak provided an overview of how the food shelf serves the community. In 2016, the food shelf served over 3,500 individuals, of which 57% were children. The average customer visits the food shelf five times per year during times of need. An average of about 600 families per month visit the facility. The food shelf serves anyone who self identifies as in need of help.

Bosak went into how the public can provide assistance for this very important service. For instance, monetary donations are always welcome and are the very best way to provide support. Donation of staples such as flour, sugar, spices, cooking oils, etc. are also greatly appreciated, as are items such as diapers, toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap and other basics. Garden produce is now accepted.

Following her presentation, the Gem Lake City Council voted to donate \$1,000 to the White Bear Lake Area Emergency Food Shelf from the funds accumulated from charitable gambling in the community. Another \$1,000 was donated to the Meals on Wheels program.

Ramsey County Sheriff's Report on Calls for Service Year to Date for Gem Lake

For the first seven months of 2017, the Sheriff's office had 164 calls for service in the city of Gem Lake. There were an average of 23.42 calls for service per month.

The main types of calls were traffic stops (38), proactive visits/welfare checks (22), alarms sounding (22), assists in medical calls (10), accident with property damage (10), suspicious activity (9), follow up from previous incidents (5), theft from auto (4), general assistance to citizen (4), investigative calls (4), animal complaints (3) and theft (3).

The remaining calls were either one or two from various categories such as property damage, fire assistance, etc.

Sewer Bills

Would you like to have your quarterly sewer bill emailed to you? If you would, email Gloria.Tessier@gemlakemn.org. Please include your name, address and phone number. Your next sewer invoice (billed October 9) and future invoices will be emailed.

New Rental Property Requirements

Effective January 1, 2016, the City of Gem Lake began licensing all rental property in the City. Persons with rental property will be required to obtain a rental license for their rental units. Licenses will be for a two-year period. The licensing fee is \$100.00 for a single family unit and for a two family unit \$50.00 per unit. All units will be subject to an annual inspection. Contact Gloria Tessier at 651-747-2792.

New Guidelines for Meetings

The Gem Lake City Council adopted guidelines for public comment at all future city meetings, after discussing the matter at its July meeting.

The guidelines govern courtesy at meetings, how public comment is conducted and what types of behavior will not be tolerated (such as abusive language, shouting, speaking out of order, disruptive behavior, etc.).

The guidelines are copied from several cities in the Twin Cities area. Research showed that almost all cities in Minnesota have some kind of reasonable guidelines for public meeting, also known as "codes of conduct." The guidelines were reviewed by Gem Lake's legal counsel to insure the need for a set of rules won't conflict with the need for open public forums on issues discussed at meetings.

The guidelines will be available near the entryway at public meetings, and are also available through the Gem Lake web-site.

Gem Lake Volunteers Sought

Opening are anticipated on the Gem Lake City Council next year. If you are interested in serving your city, please contact Gloria Tessier at Heritage Hall at 651-747-2792. Positions on the city council and the planning commission are generally volunteer positions. Council members receive a stipend of \$100 per month to cover expenses.

Rick Bosak Serves Community for nearly 20 Years

"I found the meetings to be very interesting and was impressed with their willingness to volunteer."

"I kept attending meetings from time to time and started attending council meetings as well. It seemed obvious to me that the city level was the place where the average person could have the most impact on government decisions that affect day to day life, such as taxes and roads. This has much more impact than just voting every four years, but it is more work!"

"One day, then mayor Paul Emeott called and asked if I could accept an appointment to the Planning Commission. He said 'you're coming to the meetings anyways, you might as well be on the commission. I accepted the opportunity to get involved and have been taking part ever since."

Although he calls any accomplishments he may have been a part of 'a team effort,' Rick said he was especially proud of continual efforts to keep taxes as low as possible. He cited Mayor Uzpen's financial expertise as very helpful in that respect.

"Our housing developments such as Hillary Farms, Hunter's Run, and Heritage Court, were very beneficial to our city, as will be the long term effort to bring municipal water to the Hoffman's Corner area. The building of our city hall, and the conversion of the Lamb of God Church building to the Montessori School are also on my list of highlights."

Rick feels the general view of government has changed over the years. Although government was sometimes seen as overly bureaucratic in the past, he thinks most people saw the value of a system that helped us all work as one to provide needed services and to regulate areas that could hurt the common good if not supervised.

"Now with the advent of extremely partisan social media, many people view any government as an unnecessary and expensive control of their personal rights,"

said Rick. "Often times, citizens now view those in government as adversaries, rather than neighbors. These beliefs have now finally trickled down to the city level as well, and the city level is where the impact will be felt most quickly."

Rick plans to attend occasional city meetings, as time allows. Please join us in thanking Rick for his years of service to his community.

Work Continues on 2018 Comprehensive Plan

Preliminary drafts of major sections of the 2018 Comprehensive Plan for Gem Lake have been completed and are now being reviewed by outside experts.

Chapters on Land Use, Housing, Resilience and Economic Competitiveness have been written by city council members and others and then submitted to the Metropolitan Council for initial comments. The Metropolitan Council requires that all cities within the Twin Cities Metropolitan area submit a detailed comprehensive plan every ten years. This plan covers everything from land use and transportation to parks and storm water run-off. The plans typically take multiple years and significant engineering expertise to complete. This year, the City of Gem Lake is enlisting the help of two outside agencies to complete this monumental task. They are the engineering firm of SEH, which acts as Gem Lake's engineering representative, and the consulting firm of Northwest Associated Consultants, which specializes in helping cities with this type of plan. We are on target to complete the project on time.



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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: October and November, 2017

The following Gem Lake Meetings will be held at Heritage Hall in October and November.

October 3, 2017

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

October 10, 2017

City Council Workshop on this date is CANCELLED.

October 17, 2017

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

November 13, 2017

City Council Workshop at 7:00 p.m.

November 14, 2017

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

November 21, 2017

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

Your Gem Lake City Council

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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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