

City of Gem Lake
City Council Meeting – July 21, 2020
Meeting Minutes

Acting Mayor Artig-Swomley called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Councilmembers Cacioppo (remote telephone call attendance, quarantine due to Covid 1) , Kuny and Lindner were present. City Attorney Patrick Kelly and Justin Gese, City Engineer. Other attending/residents/business owners: Laurel Amlee, John Birkeland, Don Cummings, Paul Emeott, Bill and Judy John, Dan Marier and Barb Major and seven others who did not sign in.

July 21, 2020, Agenda

A motion was made by Councilmember Kuny, seconded by Councilmember Lindner to approve the agenda with the approval of a mask policy and COVID relief discussion. Voice vote taken, all voted yes, motion passes. Agenda approved.

Minutes

A motion was made by Councilmember Lindner, seconded by Councilmember Kuny to approve the June 16, City Council minutes. Voice vote taken, all voted yes, motion passes, minutes approved.

Committee Reports – Planning Commission

No report.

Old Business

Newsletter – Next issue of Gem Lake News will be published around September 1 – September 15, 2020. Items will include draft 2021 budget, elections, Rush Line, and MS4.

New Business

Resolution 2020-011

Council discussed adopting a policy for mistakes in utility billing. Minnesota Statute 541.05 allows cities to collect up to six years of past charges for a mistake in utility billing. Currently the city has a resident that was not billed because of change over from Gem Lake billing to White Bear Township billing and then back to Gem Lake billing. Council agreed to charge the resident for three years in arrears and allow them three years to stay current. A motion was made by Councilmember Lindner, seconded by Councilmember Kuny to approve Resolution 2020-0011, Mistakes in Utility Billing. Voice vote taken, all voted yes, motion passes. Resolution approved.

City Sewer Connection XXXX Scheuneman Road

Bill John, 4015 Scheuneman Road, appeared to discuss why his property was not hooked up to the city sewer. All residents on Scheuneman Road were required to hook up to the city sewer within 10 years after the city sewer was available. Sewer was installed on Scheuneman Road in 2004. After a brief discussion, which Mr. John stated that 2 years prior to the city sewer being installed he had to install a new septic system for his property, he said he was told by the former Mayor that city sewer was never going to be installed on Scheuneman Road. Council agreed to allow Mr. John to continue to use his septic system until December 31, 2025. If the home sells prior to December 31, 2025, the property will be required to be hooked up to the city sewer. This arrangement assumes the septic system is currently in working order.

Rush Line Discussion

The council moved on to discuss the request by the BRT Rush Line organization to provide a resolution to approve the 15% plan for the proposed bus line project. A motion was introduced by Councilmember Lindner, seconded by Councilmember Kuny so the matter could be considered. A lengthy discussion ensued. Council members expressed numerous concerns with the project including the following:

- All four councilmembers expressed their support of mass transit, but felt this solution fell short of addressing the obvious problems with traffic congestion north of White Bear Lake into such areas as Forest Lake, Hugo and even farther north to Wyoming and Stacy. Original concepts for light rail often included these areas;
- State of Minnesota is in a budget deficit situation – at the same time, work patterns have changed – employers have gone virtual and numerous employees are now working from home – some of this will not return to “normal”. This could make the need for a bus line less pressing, perhaps the project should be put on hold and re-evaluated;
- Disappointment was expressed as to how the project parameters have changed so much since the inception of planning, first to Forest Lake with a fully dedicated lane and pedestrian bridges – to the current route, which is 14 miles shorter, and basically the same price tag;
- Concern that the price tag involved in a bus line would negate the possibility of eventual light rail;
- Traffic congestion produced with up to 80 buses per day going in and out of downtown White Bear;
- Parking problems, especially around Hoffman’s Corner;
- The location of the end of the line station – given its proximity to the eventual mega school being built next door;
- The lack of real service to Gem Lake residents. Only two homes are within walking distance of a station;
- Major safety concerns with County Road E and Cedar street stations, given that crossing of Highway 61 would likely occur;
- The need for feeder lines to make the bus project effective, especially at County Road E;
- Other bus routes in the area were very lightly used during a test evaluation by council members last summer – two buses in the a.m. and two in the p.m. were monitored for two days – each bus only had a handful of riders;
- Park and Ride to Maplewood exists and was well used, as was the Park and Ride at Walmart (pre-pandemic);
- Major skepticism that buses would be utilized or needed 19 hours per day.

The public was asked to provide feedback. Fourteen out of fourteen who spoke up were against the project. The most common reasons were concerns that ridership would simply not exist, traffic congestion into White Bear Lake and major skepticism as to whether this was the wisest use of public funds at this time, given changing work habits.

The council voted unanimously against the motion.

Addendum Contract for Arbitrate Monitoring Service

A motion was made by Councilmember Linder, seconded by Councilmember Kuny to approve the Addendum Contract for Arbitrage Monitoring Services. Voice vote taken, all voted yes. Motion passes.

2020/2021 Budget Overview

Tom Kelly, finance director, presented an overview of the 2020/2021 budget. Discussed the park and trail funds, sewer and water fund, road improvements and the park bench fund. The council authorized a motion brought forth by Councilmember Lindner, seconded by Councilmember Kuny for a manhole inspection budget. Voice vote taken, all voted yes, adding this item to the budget.

Scholarship Discussion

The charitable gambling funds are not increasing as fast as we anticipated therefore the council agreed to extend the deadline of scholarship award to October 31, 2020. A motion was made by Councilmember Lindner, seconded by Councilmember Kuny to extend the original motion from the May 19, 2020, City Council meeting from September 1, 2020, to October 31, 2020. Voice vote taken, all yes, motion passes.

Mask Policy

The Council introduced a temporary face mask policy requiring those who enter indoor public spaces in Gem Lake wear a mask. Exceptions are children under 2 and those with a medical condition that would make wearing a mask difficult or impossible. A motion was made by Councilmember Lindner, seconded by Councilmember Kuny to approve the Mask Policy. Voice vote taken, all voted yes, motion passes.

Election Discussion

The city has three open positions for city council and the Mayor's position for the upcoming election. Mayor Artig-Swomley's former position as councilmember is currently available to be filled immediately. The application process for her position is still open and will be appointed at the August, 2020, city council meeting.

Claims

A motion was made by Councilmember Lindner, seconded by Councilmember Cacioppo to approve the claims for April, 2020. Voice vote taken, all voted yes. Motion passes, claims approved.

Presentations from the Public

Open Items from the Council Members to Bring Up

Discussion in regard to Hoffman Road, at some point Hoffman Road is going to have be repaired. Discussed the COVID relief funds of \$35,000 available to the City of Gem Lake. Discussed whether there would be COVID related expenses from police or fire calls. Councilmember Lindner stated he has hired an attorney from Kelly and Lemmons, City attorney's office, to probate his late parent's estate. He received no reduced fees for this service.

Next Meetings/Workshop

City Council, Tuesday, August 18, 2020, Workshop, August 10, 2020, cancelled.

Adjournment

Being there no further business, following a motion from Councilmember Lindner, seconded by Councilmember Kuny, the meeting adjourned at 8:49 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Gloria Tessier.