

# Gem Lake News

Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Newsletter Editor

## Special Interest Articles:

- Get to Know Your Council Members
- Road Construction Begins
- City News, Page 4

## Upcoming Recycling Dates:

- April 7
- April 21
- May 5
- *Tip: put out your bin the night before for 7 a.m. pick-up.*

## Jim Lindner: Serving Gem Lake since 1998

Gem Lake City Council Member Jim Lindner has lived in Gem Lake since 1988, when he moved here shortly after he and his wife Amanda were married. He grew up in Maplewood and went on to obtain a BA in History from the University of Minnesota and a Masters in American Colonial History from the University of Wisconsin at River Falls.

Jim has worked in the field of facilities management for over 40 years, for such organizations as the University of Minnesota, Washington County, Cardiac Pacemakers and Ecumen. He is now semi-retired and working part-time as a delivery driver.

So, what has he done for Gem Lake? Plenty. Jim served on the city's planning commission for ten years, from 1998-2008. The last three of those years, **(continued on page 2)**



## Hoffman Road Project to Start Soon

The resurfacing of Hoffman Road from Highway 61 to County Road E, will start sometime this Spring, probably around May, according to City Engineer Justin Gese.

Bids for the road construction project are due on March 19 and a contractor is expected to be finalized by April.

The project is expected to take between 2-3 weeks, depending upon contractor availability, weather, etc. No disruption to businesses in the area is anticipated.

Planning for the project began last year when an engineering study was done to evaluate options for bring the road up to satisfactory standards. The street has been in need of TLC for a while.



## Jim Linder: Serving Gem Lake Since 1998 (continued from pg. 1)

Jim served as the Chairman of the Commission. At the time, one of the biggest projects involved the Hillary Farm Development, on Scheuneman Road. The project involved the redevelopment of the large tract of open land that made up the old Judson Bemis Estate.

Jim was elected to the City Council in 2008, 2012 and 2016. He then ran for the open spot on the council that was created as a result of an unexpected opening on the council. He was elected by special election on February 9 of this year. This means that, with the exception of one month, Jim has served his community continuously for over 22 years.

Jim's favorite accomplishments to date include things like getting to 2008 Gem Lake Comprehensive Plan approved through the Metropolitan Council, while he served as the chair of the Planning Commission. He is also proud of creating the city's Consolidated Land Use Ordinance, by merging zoning, subdivision, tree preservation, telecommunications, shoreline, etc. rules into one consolidated ordinance document. "This project started as an idea, while I was on the planning commission, and upon hearing the frustration developers expressed over conflicting language in several ordinance, I decided it was time to pull all these together and root out conflicts, to make one stand-alone ordinance related to land use."

In addition to serving on the council directly, Jim has served Gem Lake by getting involved in related activities. These include involvement in the local watershed organization. The watershed district that Gem Lake belongs to is the Vadnais Lakes Area Watershed Management Organization (VLAWMO). Jim served on the Technical Committee from 2008-2016 and then became a full board member in 2016. He is now Chairman of the Board of Directors of VLAWMO.

His favorite VLAWMO accomplishment was working to get Gem Lake (the lake itself) off the impaired water list, as well as working with VLAWMO staff on water improvement projects across the organization.

Jim has two adult children, one son and one daughter. Now that he is semi-retired, he has had a little more time to enjoy hobbies such as history research, hiking, bird watching and photography.

His newest hobby is cooking with his Instant Pot pressure cooker. "I started out with just cooking rice and boiling eggs, but have advanced to BBQ ribs, various Asian meals, an awesome mac and cheese, gyros and lots of chicken meals. No recipe intimidates me, though I learn something with each meal I cook."

When it comes to history, Jim is always writing something, including three articles that were printed in the Ramsey County History magazine. "I love all history and haven't really found an era or topic that is uninteresting. I am currently working on an account of Colonial Jamestown's relations with indigenous natives, with the intent of having it printed in a national magazine."

Here is an odd fact about Jim: "I have a master's degree in history, as well as a State of Minnesota Chief Boiler's license. I just may be the only such person in Minnesota with this combination. This means I can operate any low-pressure steam boiler in Minnesota of unlimited horsepower, and recount the Anglo-Dutch rivalry in Colonial New York at the same time!"

## Surviving and Thriving Through the Pandemic: Gem Lake Businesses Learn to Adapt

The **White Bear Meadery**, located on County Road E in Gem Lake, was less than a year old when the pandemic hit. They have had to build their business model around adaptation and being nimble. So far it has worked.

“We offered free delivery service to our customers within a 30-mile radius, in order to adapt to COVID early last year,” said owner Joshua Eckton. “In the Fall of 2020, we added website ordering and mailings of our products within Minnesota.”

White Bear Meadery is fast approaching its two-year anniversary this June. “Our plans are to release a 2021 Anniversary Reserve, a chocolate/cherry mead, aged in an American Oak rye whiskey barrel.”

In terms of how the past 12 months have impacted them, Joshua added “We appreciate all the support of our customers. Without it, we would have gone out of business.”

**Gem Lake Hills Golf Course** had one of their best years ever in 2020. Outdoor activity, with social distancing built in, made golf the ‘recreation of choice’ last year.

“During the height of the shut-downs, people had limited things they could do for recreation that were safe and acceptable,” said Matt Greer, General Manager of Gem Lake Hills. “People felt safe playing golf. In a weird way, it was a great year for golf courses across the United States. Courses everywhere saw record setting round counts.”

The course was busy all season and the business did pretty well, considering all the small modifications that had to be made, such as limited seating in the club house, sanitizing routines for frequently touched surfaces, and strict rules about golf cart usage. For instance, there could be only one person per cart, unless it was two people from the same household. With only 40 golf carts total, this was sometimes challenging for Gem Lake Hills Golf course to accommodate. “Everyone knew we were doing our best to serve our golfers.”

Course owners decided to re-invest some of the 2020 revenues into improvements at Gem Lake Hills Golf Course.

This includes extensive remodeling and redecorating of the club house. The project has involved new floors, a new countertop in the bar area, redecorating bathrooms, and much more.

Extensive tree work will be done in the next few weeks to take down dead or dying trees. “We will be ready for a great season,” said Greer.

There were about 500 junior league golfers involved at the course in 2020 and Greer says they expect the same or better this year.

**White Bear Floral** also had a banner year in 2020, not despite the pandemic, but partly because of it.

There were two main reasons for this. First, people felt trapped inside for a long time. When the planting season started last year, White Bear Floral sold out of their home-grown inventory quickly. People wanted to get outside and plant their gardens.

The second reason for the upsurge in sales was also related to people being shut in. You couldn’t go visit grandparents, friends, family, etc. But, you could send them flowers. And people did just that.

During the first shut down, White Bear Floral operated with a reduced staff. Owner John Birkeland went out of his way to make sure his staff was taken care of in any way he could. After a few months, they were able to come back to full staffing capacity. The greenhouse did well and employees were very grateful.

## City News

### **April Meetings to be Virtual**

City meetings in Gem Lake will be held virtually in April. See page 6 for a list of meeting dates. Meetings were held virtually for most of the past 12 months with much success. You are welcome to attend any of these meetings on-line. To do so, make sure the Gem Lake City Clerk, has your contact information. Several days prior to each meeting, the clerk emails everyone with a link to the meeting call-in. See contact information on page 6.

### **Charitable Gambling Funds Donated to Food Shelf**

The Gem Lake City Council voted at the March 16 meeting to give a donation to the White Bear Area Emergency Food Shelf. A donation of \$1,000 was made possible by utilizing the city's portion of recent charitable gambling receipts.

### **Gem Lake Hills Golf Course is Hiring**

Gem Lake Hills Golf Course is looking to hire seasonal part-time grounds keeper help for the coming golf season. If you like to work outdoors, you should contact the course manager at [Tfjgem@yahoo.com](mailto:Tfjgem@yahoo.com). One benefit of working there is free golf. Nice.

### **Deer Hunting/Discharge of Weapons Ordinance to be the Topic of Workshop in May**

The topic of deer hunting and the discharge of weapons in Gem Lake will be the subject of a City Council Workshop on May 10. The public is encouraged to attend this session, which will focus on Ordinance 124B. (Available on the Gem Lake web-site.)

During this workshop, the council is seeking input on how, or whether, our archery deer hunting ordinance can be improved, edited, clarified or otherwise changed to benefit the public. Currently, a land-owner can apply for a permit to conduct a deer hunt on his or her own property within very strict guidelines. For instance, the property on which the hunt takes place must be at least five acres, but can be made up of several parcels joined together, as long as all property owners agree to it.

There are strict rules about deer stand placement, timing of hunts, etc. Deer hunts have taken place for the past few years without incident, but various concerns have been raised about size, goals, etc.

Some members of the public think the rules are too stringent, while others think this type of hunt should only be conducted by agencies approved by the Minnesota DNR. Currently, Gem Lake hunts must follow all State deer hunting rules, and each hunter must have a license and must have certified training.

Your input is needed. The workshop will start at 7:00 p.m. and will be held at Heritage Hall.

### **Get Us Your Email Address**

Stay informed of Gem Lake activities, such as meetings, workshops, reminders and special events. Make sure our city clerk has your email address. See contact information on page 6. Links to our online meetings are sent several days prior by email.

### **Gem Lake Welcomes New City Clerk**

Melissa Lawrence will be joining the staff of Gem Lake as our new city clerk. Her training began on March 29, as she transitions with our current staff person, Gloria Tessier. Gloria will be leaving in the near future, after serving in the role for 5 years.

Melissa served in the military for 8 years, as well as working as an administrative assistant for a grocery chain and as a convenience store manager. Please welcome her to Gem Lake. The City Council also thanks Gloria for her service to our community.

## Met Your New Council Member: Laurel Amlee

Laurel Amlee has worked hard all her life. She not only raised three kids as a single parent, she also put them through school.

She not only got a degree in marketing, she also went back to school to get her Master's Degree in Logistics. She is now 3 classes away from finishing.

Laurel currently helps manage the business interests of White Bear Floral and Country Lounge owner John Birkeland, which keeps her very busy. But, let's add to that. She plays an active role in the lives of her 9 grandchildren and is with them literally every weekend.

Laurel is an active volunteer with the Auxiliary of the American Legion in downtown White Bear. She has been involved with the organization for 16 years, originally because her father was a veteran.

During her service at the Legion, she has done such things as organizing special events, getting donations for the White Bear Food Shelf, sponsoring local veterans who need attention, care and outreach from the community, and putting together packages for deployed soldiers, mostly from the White Bear area.

"We make care packages for them with all kinds of useful things in them. It might be socks, lip balm, hand lotion, whatever they need."

Laurel also makes food for bingo nights and performs other duties there. "I love the American Legion."

Helping the White Bear Food Shelf is especially important to Laurel. "There was one time when my ex-husband got laid off from his job and I needed to use a food shelf myself. They were so generous and it really got me through a hard time."

Give all her activities, both personal and professional, you might wonder why Laurel would want to add public service to her life.

The answer is partly in her DNA. Laurel was raised by parents who were very active politically. Her mother helped out on several campaigns. Laurel was one of 6 children and feels her

parents did a great job of impressing on the family the importance of service to the community.

Laurel was appointed to the council last year when there was an unexpected opening created with a resignation. She then ran for one of the open council spots in November and won the spot.

She took the oath of office in January and now serves a four-year term as a Gem Lake City Council member. She is especially determined to help small businesses in Gem Lake when ever possible throughout her term. That might mean looking for suggestions she can make to the council on ways to streamline processes for small businesses.





## The City of Gem Lake

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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](http://www.gemlakemn.org)

## Meetings: April and May, 2021

The following Gem Lake meeting will be held in the months of April and May. All meetings will be virtual meetings, unless noted. Call in information will be provided by email. **(Do we have yours?)**

### April 6, 2021

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

### April 12, 2021

City Council Workshop at 7:00 p.m.

### April 20, 2021

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

### May 4, 2021

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

### May 10, 2021

City Council Workshop at 7:00 p.m.

### May 18, 2021

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

**If May meetings switch back to in-person, it will be noted on the city web-site and by email.**

## Your Gem Lake City Council

### Gretchen Artig-Swomley-Mayor

Phone: 651-260-9742

### City Council Members:

#### Laurel Amlee

Phone: 651-347-8357

#### Len Cacioppo

Phone: 651-796-3222

#### Jim Lindner

Phone: 651-262-6678

#### Ben Johnson

Phone: 612-968-7583

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 "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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