

Gem Lake News

Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Newsletter Editor

Special Interest Articles:

- Organic Farming in Gem Lake
- Police Chief Gives Report
- City News, Page 4

Upcoming Recycling Dates:

- July 14
- July 28
- August 11
- *Tip: put out your bin the night before for 7 a.m. pick-up.*

Trail Committee Seeks Volunteers

A new committee has been formed to come up with a plan for the long-term care and maintenance of Gem Lake's open space and walking trail. The trail is located on County Road E and is on the western and northern edge of the Gem Lake Villas housing development.

It was planted with small trees and wildflowers a little over a year ago and now has a bench that was dedicated in memory of the late Mayor of Gem Lake, Bob Uzpen, who died in May of 2020.

The committee will be led by retired Dr. Kimberly Anderson-Uzpen, who is the widow of the late mayor, and is also a master gardener. Gem Lake is looking for volunteers to help with this wonderful project. (Continued on page 3)



Organic Farming in Gem Lake

Daniel Meysembourg and his wife Kim have embarked on an ambitious project. He and his family, which also includes four children, decided to buy the small home that once belonged to Lloyd Labore and his wife Madonna. That might seem ambitious enough. They also decided to turn the half acre lot into a tiny but mighty veganic farm. The farm is located at the intersection of Scheuneman Road and Hoffman Road, near the railroad crossing.

To do so, he began preparing the lot in 2020 with buried cardboard, which is meant to cut down or eliminate weeds without the use of pesticides. He named the farm Happy Fields Veganic Family Farm. Dan's goal is to establish a garden that will engage his entire family; a project that will both supply vegetables to his subscribers, and teach his children the value of hard work.

As the farm began to take root, he approached the city to get a conditional use permit, allowing for a higher fence to protect his crops from deer and other wildlife.



Organic Farming in Gem Lake (continued from page 1)

Several public hearings were held and his neighbors proved to be very supportive of the concept.

Dan's idea for an organic farm was years in the making. Ironically, he works in the meat industry for a local firm, and is involved in sales and delivery. Several years ago, he and his wife decided they wanted to make some changes in their lives. "I was inspired to start this project for reasons of health. What really put me on this track was that I was starting to see cancers and other health issues in my own family. A lot of soul searching led me to this and played into my veganism. Spiritually, I felt I had to align everything."

The result is an ambitious plan to plant a variety of crops and sell them to subscribers, of which he currently has 6. Dan also plans to try to gain local restaurants as customers in the near future, so he can help them with their own "farm to table" concepts. When possible, he would like to supply grocery chains and establish on-line sales of certain items.

Currently, Dan's crops include tomatoes, cucumbers, sweet potatoes, eggplant, beans, kale, cabbage, watermelon, cantaloupe, and micro greens, such as sprouts. He is also working on building a mushroom house, because they want to be as diverse as possible.

"One of my ultimate goals is to grow about 90% of everything we need to feed our family. We really need small farms like this to produce local foods.

Dan grew up in Falcon Heights and has lived in several other places. He spent 7 years in Texas before returning to his roots in order to get involved in Community Supported Agriculture or CSA.

Most of the farming is done by Dan, although his wife also helps with the crops. The kids have chores that involve tending the garden, which Dan hopes will build discipline and work ethics. To a certain degree, his older children were involved in some aspects of selecting what to grow. "I have a son who loves strawberries."



Dan's wife takes care of the operations end of the farm business, including managing the web-site.

Gem Lake has a long history of "truck farming," which is defined as growing produce for immediate sale. Many years ago, the north end of Goose Lake Road was comprised of several large truck farms, roughly where Haven Lane and Tessier Road are located. These truck farms supplied the produce sold at several Hoffman's Corner groceries stores, including Hoffman's Market.

Ironically, the father of the former owner of Dan's house was also a local farmer. Dusty Labore had a larger dairy farm, roughly in the area of Gem Lake Hills Golf Course. The farm went through some rough times during the Great Depression and was sold off while Dusty's son Lloyd was away fighting World War II.

"I want to carry on some of these traditions and teach my kids about running a business. I think they can learn a lot!" Dan and his wife have three boys and one girl. The children range in age from several months to 12 years.

White Bear Police Chief Gives Annual Report

The White Bear Lake Police Department responded to 642 calls for service by Gem Lake residents between June 1, 2020 and June 1, 2021. For comparison purposes, the department responded to 22,500 calls in total in their entire service area during the same period, the vast majority coming from White Bear Lake residents.

These were just some of the facts reviewed by Police Chief Julie Swanson during an annual report before the Gem Lake City Council. The City of Gem Lake contracts with the White Bear Lake Police Department for law enforcement services.

About 53 of these calls were considered medical in nature, 125 were traffic stops, 237 were proactive calls (routine patrolling), 10 were theft calls, 10 were other motor vehicle thefts, and the rest were other types of calls.

Swanson noted that mental health related calls during the past years were up almost 30% for all calls received from their area of service. Theft of catalytic converters were also up dramatically, leading to some special efforts on the part of the department.

To deal with the dramatic increase in mental health calls, the White Bear Police Department has entered into partnership with Roseville, St. Anthony, Moundsview and North St. Paul to share the services of a full-time social worker. This person is on call to be present for proactive visits as the need arises, and is there to provide another alternative when a mental health crisis happens.

The White Bear Lake Police Department consists of 31 officers, with the newest one starting on June 15. This includes 3 investigators. The officers are broken up into 4 patrol teams, each led by a Sergeant. In addition, there are 6 Community Service Officers and 4 support staff.

Highlights this Spring included special events such as a Distracted Driving Enforcement Event from March 9-30, several DWI enforcement efforts in April and several crosswalk enforcement events throughout the year, including one at Gem Lake Hills Golf Course.

Swanson discussed the various types of training her officers get on a regular basis to help them perform the duties of the job in the most professional manner possible. This includes 'Use of Force' training to officers on a monthly basis and in

Additional topics covered in regular training sessions includes crisis intervention and mental illness crises, conflict management and mediation and recognizing and valuing community diversity and cultural differences to include implicit bias. The training must always consist of a combination of 16 of these continuing education credits within an officer's three-year licensing cycle.

Lastly, Swanson highlighted news of expanded facilities that will be built starting later this year, to include indoor parking for police vehicles.

Trail Committee Seeks Volunteers (continued from page 1)

Gem Lake's open space is planted with several dozen types of trees, plants and wildflowers, which are meant to be largely self-sustaining over the years. However, some annual maintenance will be required. In addition, some decisions will have to be made about additional plantings that may be required each year to keep the area looking good. Volunteers with an interest in gardening are a real plus.

If you would like to get involved, please contact Melissa Lawrence at Heritage Hall, or fill out the volunteer form that was mailed to you recently.



City News

Partnering with The White Bear Food Shelf

Perry Peterson, Executive Director of the White Bear Lake Emergency Food Shelf, gave a presentation at the May 18 City Council Meeting. He reported on the organization's efforts to serve the community throughout the pandemic.

According to Peterson, there was a 50% increase in visits to the food shelf in 2020. Visits increased from 1200 to 1800 per month, on average. Over 66,000 people were served, of which 36% were children and 14% were seniors.

The City of Gem Lake has been an active partner with the White Bear Area Emergency Food Shelf for many years. Often the City Council votes to contribute all or most of our charitable gambling receipts from pull-tab sales to their very important efforts to end hunger in our community. The City Council voted to grant a \$1000 donation the food shelf at the May 18 meeting.

There are now donation bins in Heritage Hall for your non-perishable donations of food, pet supplies and basic toiletries. We can accept monetary donations (no cash please) or you can send your checks directly to the Food Shelf (1884 Whitaker Street, White Bear Lake, MN 55110).

Their web-site always indicates current and particular needs if you are in doubt about what to donate. Right now, its things like size 5 and 6 diapers, cooking oils, flour, sugar, etc. Their web-site address is whitebearfoodshelf.org.

Pick up Your Dog Poop

Dog poop was front and center on the agenda for the June 15 City Council Meeting. The Council decided to add a whole new section into the Animal Control Ordinance having to do with your dog doing its business.

Therefore, language was added to section 8 of the ordinance, making an owner responsible for immediately cleaning up any feces your dog decides to gift to the world. Basically, any owner having custody of a dog on public property, such as a trail or

street, has to pick up and dispose of dog poop and has to carry in their possession means for doing so. The same applies if your dog decides to give your neighbor a special gift.

After Hour Emergency Number for Public Works

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 watermain 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 arrangement with White Bear Township to handle these emergencies.

No Overnight Camping Allowed on City Land

The City Council enacted a new ordinance at the June 15 City Council Meeting having to do with overnight camping.

The new rules now officially prohibit overnight camping on public land, which in Gem Lake terms consists of our small trail and open space on County Road E.

It was determined that overnight camping would interfere with the ability of residents and the public at large to use the area in the healthy and safe manner for which it was intended.

Fire Safety During a Drought

As drought conditions linger in Minnesota, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources suggests you think about creating a defensible space on your property, in the event of a wildfire.

A defensible space is an area around your house that can enable your home to survive a wildfire. It is an area of reduced fuels, and careful management aimed at making your property “fire-wise.”



There is significant information and graphics available on-line that shows how to create a three ringed approach to protection. The first is an area right around your house that is called the Intensive Zone. It should be at least 30 feet around, measuring from the edges of the main structure. This is where you would make sure you have cleared away dense or tall vegetation, fuel tanks and tree limbs that extend over your house. Your woodpile and other combustibles should be well outside of the intensive zone. Ideally, there would be no conifer trees inside the intensive zone to reduce fire hazards. You should remove all “ladder fuels” from beneath any trees. This would include tall grasses, small shrubs, tree limbs and other materials that allow a fire to climb to the crown of a tree.

The second ring around your home is called the Extensive Zone. This is the next 70-100 feet (or more) around your structures. This is an area of fuel reduction, designed to reduce the intensity of any fire. Within this zone, you should consider thinning trees and large shrubs so there is at least 10 feet between crowns. Limit the number of dead trees in this zone and mow the grass often.

If possible, stack firewood and woodpiles uphill or at the same elevation as the structure but at least 25 feet (or more) away from your house. Dispose of limbs and branches that have been trimmed or pruned by chipping or composting away from structures.

The General Management Zone is no specific size, but comprises the third ring of defense. In this area, you are encouraged to manage your forested areas in a traditional manager. You should consider spacing out trees and shrubs, when possible.

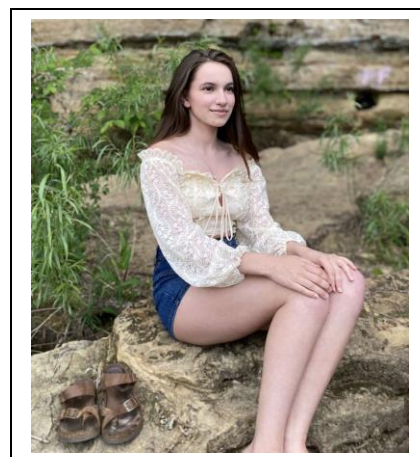
For more information go to:

<https://www.dnr.state.mn.us/firewise/livingwithfire/spac e.html>

Congratulations to Gem Lake Graduate!

Congratulations to Gem Lake resident Ms. Grace Nathanson. She recently graduated from White Bear Lake High School.

Grace will be attending St. Catherine University in the Fall. She plans to work towards a Teaching Degree, with English as a Second Language. Our best wishes to Grace!



The City of Gem Lake

PHONE:
(651) 747-2792

FAX:
(651) 747-2795
City Hall Address:
4200 Otter Lake Road
Gem Lake, MN 55110

GENERAL E-MAIL:
City@gemlakemn.org

Newsletter e-mail:
gretchenas@comcast.net

This newsletter is also posted on the city's web-site under the "Documents" section and the "News and Updates" section.

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)

We're on the Web!

See us at:

www.gemlakemn.org

Meetings: July and August, 2021

The following Gem Lake meeting will be held in the months of July and August. All meetings are held at Heritage Hall unless indicated.

July 12, 2021

City Council Workshop Meeting at 7:00 p.m. **is cancelled**

July 20, 2021

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

August 3, 2021

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m. at Heritage Hall

August 9, 2021

City Council Workshop at

7:00 p.m. CANCELED

August 17, 2021

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m. at Heritage Hall.

See also the Gem Lake web-site for more information.

Your Gem Lake City Council

Gretchen Artig-Swomley-Mayor

Phone: 651-260-9742

Ben Johnson

Phone: 612-968-7583

on the web-site under the "Documents" and "News and Updates" section.

City Council Members:

Laurel Amlee

Phone: 651-347-8357

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

Please email your ideas, comments and suggestions. See box at left for detailed contact information.

Len Cacioppo

Phone: 651-796-3222

Jim Lindner

Phone: 651-262-6678

Each Gem Lake Newsletter is also posted

CITY OF GEM LAKE
4200 Otter Lake Road
Gem Lake, MN 55110

