



Gem Lake News



September 2022 | Volume 16 | Issue 6

Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Newsletter Editor

Special Interest Articles:

- **Water Summit 9/12**
- **Recycling Hauler**
- **City News, Page 4**

Water Summit Scheduled for September 12

An important informational meeting will be held on September 12 at 7:00 p.m. to discuss the Gem Lake water plan, which was recently completed by SEH, which functions as Gem Lake's City Engineer.

Potential funding options for a possible municipal water system will be discussed. The MPCA (Minnesota Pollution Control Agency) will be on hand to give an update on city well testing, and any progress on investigating the source of the contamination.

Late last year, the City Council of Gem Lake began to look at options for dealing with the discovery of small amounts of pollution in 22 private wells in the city.

The Informational Meeting on September 12 will be designed to look at the complex options that are available to the city, and to get feedback from the people who live here on what direction the city should take.



(Continued on page 2)

Scheduled Recycling Dates:

- **September 8**
- **September 21**
- **October 5 ***
- **October 19 ***

Check the Facebook page for updates on recycling pickup.

See page 3 for the Facebook page link.

* October recycling dates may be subject to change

Preliminary Budget for 2023 Presented 9/20

Minnesota Statutes require cities to certify their preliminary property tax levies by September 30 each year. Once the preliminary property tax levy is approved and certified to the County Auditor, the city can lower the levy during the remaining budget planning cycle, but cannot exceed the certified preliminary levy. For this reason, most cities certify a levy using worst-case budget scenarios, which is the case with the City of Gem Lake's 2023 preliminary property tax levy and budget.

The 2023 preliminary property tax levy is proposed at \$748,879, which is a 23.159% increase from the 2022 certified preliminary property tax levy. The 2023 preliminary levy consists of a debt levy of \$84,418 (a decrease of \$2,864 from the 2022 preliminary debt levy) and the general operating levy of \$664,461 (an increase of 27.59% from the 2022 preliminary tax levy).

(Continued on page 3)



Water Summit Scheduled for September 12

(Continued from page 1)

These options could include installing a city-wide municipal water system, installing a smaller more targeted municipal water system in the area where wells have been affected, or doing nothing for now.

Homeowners affected by the contamination could drill new wells or install sophisticated water filtration systems. Each of these options is potentially expensive and fraught with possible problems.

The process leading up to this informational meeting this September began with the commissioning of a comprehensive municipal water study. That study was meant to evaluate what options are available for obtaining water from a neighboring city, should it become necessary, and how the system might be implemented.

The first portion of the study detailed two potential sources for obtaining municipal water, The City of White Bear Lake, and White Bear Township, both of which border Gem Lake. The study concluded that a viable system that could supply the entire city efficiently is possible, from an engineering perspective, from either of these neighbors.

SEH evaluated factors such as water pressure, water quality, water treatment standards, etc. to draw their conclusions. They did not reach out to either neighbor to explore whether they would be able or willing to supply Gem Lake's water needs at this point. The ballpark cost of a system from either White Bear Township or the City of White Bear Lake was estimated at between \$11-12 Million. At the February City Council meeting, SEH was asked to develop Part Two of this water study. This second part evaluates options for phasing in a water system to the part of the city potentially most in need of municipal water. It also looks at possibilities for municipal water that could involve working with the City of Vadnais Heights.

Because many residents of Gem Lake don't currently want a municipal water system, and the majority of wells have not been impacted by contamination at present, it was the duty of the council to evaluate options such as moving from private wells to municipal water in phases on an as needed basis. Therefore, Part Two of the Water Study explores additional potential options of providing safe, reliable sources of water within the City, with a goal of prioritizing those areas with known well water contamination and the areas with a higher likelihood for potential future well water issues.

The goal would be to feed these smaller, localized water service areas by the nearest surrounding community's distribution system to limit project costs and complexities.

The Engineering Firm SEH mapped out three priority service areas and described prices and options for each of these areas. These more targeted options could cost between \$367,021 and \$3,478,076, depending upon the number of households served, and where the water would be coming from. Now that an extensive plan has been completed, the city can pursue possible grants and loan programs that might help finance the installation of any municipal water system. (Typically, grant applications require that a study be completed first.)

Many engineering factors would have to be considered while determining the best and most feasible options for Gem Lake. These factors include water quality, system efficiency, topography, and the ability to reach agreement with surrounding communities to supply the city with water.

No decisions have been made about what direction the city should go and public feedback is encouraged. We hope to see you on September 12 at 7:00 p.m. at Heritage Hall.



Preliminary Budget for 2023 Presented at 9/20 Hearing (Continued from page 1)

The following changes were made from the 2022 adopted budget, as a basis for the 2023 proposed preliminary property tax levy:

- Based on the 2015 Refunding Bond schedule, the debt levy for 2023 is set for \$77,873. In addition, in 2018, the City issued bonds for the improvements on Scheuneman Road and the 2023 debt levy for this issue is \$6,545. The two of these debt levies make up the City's 2023 debt levy of \$84,418.
- Licenses and Permits increased \$2,550, based on 2022 and past activity.
- The City Council contingency was increased to \$25,000 (up from \$8,000).
- Clerk/General Government budget includes \$10,000 for health insurance coverage and a wage increase of 5% for the Clerk.
- Clerk/General Government budget includes \$50,000 for new software installation.
- The Police budget was increased 23.16% to \$117,000, based on the City of White Bear Lake budget recently provided to Gem Lake.
- The cost of fire services could increase 15.96% to \$34,025.
- The \$14,579 for the part-time code enforcement position in the building inspections department, was removed from the budget.
- The road maintenance budget includes \$25,000 for road maintenance/repairs and \$15,000 for trimming boulevard trees.
- Salt/sand costs remain at \$15,000 and snow plowing increased from \$17,000 to \$20,000.
- A park/trail maintenance budget of \$6,000 for maintaining common area near the Villas of Gem Lake was added.
- The 2023 budget includes \$20,000 for future improvements.
- Revenue and other expenditure line items have been adjusted based on past history.

These changes result in the Gem Lake proposed preliminary tax levy of \$748,879 for 2023. This compares to the 2022 preliminary levy of \$608,060 and the final tax levy of \$558,210. Using a 2023 property tax levy of \$748,879 and the City's 2022 tax capacity (\$1,426,695) and median valued home (\$352,000) for Gem Lake, that median valued home would pay City property taxes of \$1,686.94 in 2023, compared to the 2022 preliminary levy of \$1,364.02, an increase of \$322.92.

As the City of Gem Lake prepares its final 2023 budget, the property tax levy can be lowered, from the preliminary numbers, but cannot be increased. The final budget is due to the State of Minnesota in December.

There will be a Preliminary Budget Public Hearing on September 20 at 7:00 p.m. at Heritage Hall. You are invited to attend.

Gem Lake Selects New Recycling Hauler

After numerous customer service complaints and nine delayed pick up cycles, the Gem Lake City Council voted to switch recycling contractors.

Sometime this Fall, Gem Lake will change from using Waste Management to Republic Services for residential recycling. Various details have to be worked out, such as when Waste Management will pick up their green and yellow bins, and when Republic Services will drop off their new bins.

It is projected that Waste Management will provide recycling pick up through the month of September and possibly a bit longer.

The dates of old bin pick up and new bin drop off are being worked out. For more up to date information, be sure to consult the City of Gem Lake Facebook page.



City News

Large Donation Given to Willow Lane Elementary

An extra-large assortment of school supplies was recently donated by the City of Gem Lake to Willow Lane Elementary School. For the second year in a row, the city gets a list from the school as to what supplies they need to stockpile, then buys those items using charitable gambling funds.

This year's shopping list filled two shopping carts at Walmart and included enough materials to last for several months. Items purchased included everything from pencils and erasers to folders, notebooks and pens. The City also authorized \$500 for the school to spend at their own discretion for children in need.



Two Positions Opening on the Gem Lake City Council

There will be two positions up for election on the Gem Lake City Council. The terms of Council Members Jim Lindner and Len Cacioppo will expire at the end of 2022.

Council member terms run four years. The filing deadline for candidates has passed. Jim and Len are the only candidates who filed and will be running for office unopposed.

Gem Lake Hills Golf Course is Hiring

Gem Lake Hills Golf Course is hiring part-time, seasonal workers for several positions, including course steward, grounds help, check-in personnel, bartender, etc. For more information, contact Matt Greer at 651-429-8715.

License Required for Dogs in City

Dog license tags issued in 2021 expired on May 31 of this year. Any dog over 6 months in age is required to be licensed by the City of Gem Lake. A reminder letter and application was sent out several months ago to all Gem Lake residents. If you have misplaced the application, it can be found on the Gem Lake web-site, under "Permits." The application has a space for information on up to three dogs. Proof of rabies vaccination must be supplied, along with the application. The fee per dog is \$10.

At a recent city council meeting, it was voted and approved to have dog licenses run on a calendar year schedule. With that change, all dog licenses issued for the 2022 cycle, will be good through December 31, 2023. The fee will remain the same for this one-time period. After that, all dog licenses will run January 1-December 31. The dog license tags you will get this year, were created before this change and will show an expiration of 5-31-2022. Don't worry, they will be good until the end of the 2023. Call 651-747-2790 with any questions.

Gem Lake Has a Facebook Page

Acting City Clerk Melissa Lawrence has designed and published a Facebook page for the City of Gem Lake. The address is: www.facebook.com/CityofGemLakeMN

The Facebook pages focuses primarily on special announcements and news items, events, etc. It is intended to compliment rather than replace the city web-site. Please check it out and "like" and "follow" the page. We are also looking for a few appropriate Gem Lake photos. Your feedback is welcome!

Septic Inspections Planned for October

Annual septic inspections for Gem Lake homeowners will take place in October. These inspections are done by contracted experts who insure that private septic systems are not creating problems for public health and safety.

As October approaches, the city may be able to get more specific on the exact time frame. It will be important to be sure your septic clean-out is accessible and can be easily found. The inspections are authorized by City ordinance.

Be Part of the County Road E Corridor Project

You can be part of a multi-city, and multi-agency effort to revitalize an important corridor in our area. You are invited to join in workshops this fall that are aimed at revitalizing the County Road E area from Century Avenue to approximately Centerville Road.

A series of planning and brainstorming events are planned in the coming months, all intended to produce an action plan and goals for attracting private investment through development and infrastructure improvements.

This project is being sponsored by The Cities of Gem Lake, White Bear Lake and Vadnais Heights, as well as Ramsey County and LISC Twin Cities. (This stands for Local Initiatives Support Corporation.)

Workshop I will be held Wednesday, September 14 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Century College in White Bear Lake. This kick-off workshop will focus on what is important and unique about the County Road E corridor. Land use and transportation experts will provide introductory presentations.

Next, there will be a series of three city-based workshops that will target specific neighborhoods and areas. Land use experts will be on hand to share insights. These workshops will be held as follows:

- A. Vadnais Heights sites, Wednesday, September 28 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the Vadnais Heights Fire Station, located at 3595 Arcade Street, North, Vadnais Heights
- B. White Bear Lake sites, Thursday September 29 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Redeemer Lutheran Church, 3770 Bellaire Ave., White Bear Lake
- C. Gem Lake site, Wednesday October 5 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at Heritage Hall, 4200 Otter Lake Road, Gem Lake

Following these events there will be two more workshops designed to explore opportunities and challenges of potential development and begin creating an action plan. These last two workshops will be held in October.

For more information, contact Ben Johnson, Gem Lake City Council Member at ben.johnson@gemlakemn.org.

MS4 Hearing Scheduled

A public hearing will be held on September 20 on Gem Lake's annual MS4 report, which is a mandatory document required by state law, covering stormwater flow within city borders. At the public hearing, an overview of Gem Lake's stormwater situation and anything that would have impacted it in the previous year will be presented. The report will then be on file at Heritage Hall and available to anyone who wants to read more about it.

What is an MS4 and what does it mean to be compliant? MS4 stands for "Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System" shortened to the "M" and four "S's" for a catchy acronym that is all about managing runoff from storm events. An MS4 is a government entity such as a city, county, or other governmental entity, that is charged with the responsibility of preventing the spread of pollution. MS4 falls under the direction of another acronym NPDES, the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System. NPDES traces its origins to the 1992 Clean Water Act that was designed to protect the nation's water supply.

New Bench Dedicated to Henry Hoffman

A new bench has been installed on Gem Lake's trail area, which is located on County Road E, to the west of the Gem Lake Villas development. The bench is dedicated to Gem Lake's first Mayor, Henry Hoffman. He was Mayor for over a decade, beginning in 1959. He was also a very active business leader, with many shops and properties in the Hoffman's Corner area, which is named after him. His last remaining child, Kathy Brown, died several months ago and was profiled in this newsletter. Check out the new bench!



The City of Gem Lake

Phone:
(651) 747-2790

Fax
(651)-747-2795

City Hall Address:
4200 Otter Lake Road
Gem Lake, MN 55110

General E-mail:
city@gemlakemn.org

Newsletter E-mail:
Gretchen.artig-swomley@gemlakemn.org

This newsletter is also posted on the city's website under the "Documents" section and the "News and Updates" section.
www.gemlakemn.org

**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)

Meetings: September and October 2022

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

September 12, 2022

City Council Workshop is 7:00 p.m. – Water Summit

September 13, 2022

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00p.m.

September 20, 2022

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

October 10, 2022

City Council Workshop is **CANCELED**

October 11, 2022

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00p.m.

October 18, 2022

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

See also the Gem Lake website for more information.

Your Gem Lake City Council

Mayor:

Gretchen Artig-Swomley
Email: gretchen.artig-swomley@gemlakemn.org

City Council Members:

Laurel Amlee
Email: laurel.hynes-amlee@gemlakemn.org

Len Cacioppo

Email: len.cacioppo@gemlakemn.org

Ben Johnson

Email: ben.johnson@gemlakemn.org

Jim Lindner

Email: jim.lindner@gemlakemn.org

You can also reach each City Councilmember by calling 651-747-2790. After hours you can follow the prompts for the City Council directory.

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