



Gem Lake News



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Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Newsletter Editor

Special Interest Articles:

- 2022 Audit Completed
- Gem Lake Scholarship Awarded
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- White Bear Area Food Shelf Seeks Your Help, Page 5

Scheduled Recycling Dates:

- August 2
- August 16
- August 30
- September 13
- September 27

City Passes 2022 Audit with Flying Colors

Gem Lake's 2022 audit is now complete and the results are fairly standard. City Council Members were given a complete presentation of the results at the June 18 City Council Meeting.

The audit was conducted by MMKR Certified Public Accountants, who also did the previous year's audit. According to MMKR, the result was what is called an unmodified report, which is good. Auditors found that the financial statements of Gem Lake presented fairly in all material respects the true financial position of the city.

Management judgments and accounting estimates were considered reasonable and supported. Disclosures were deemed to be clear and complete. According to the accounting firm, no difficulties were encountered in performing the audit.

Auditors found no incidents of noncompliance required to be reported under Government Auditing Standards. There were also no findings based on testing of the City's compliance with Minnesota laws and regulations.

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Gem Lake Scholarship Awarded

Ms. Kristina Pratt, a recent high school graduate in Gem Lake, was recently awarded a scholarship for post-secondary education as part of the Gem Lake Scholarship Program. This ten-year-old program is funded by Charitable Gambling receipts and has helped several dozen Gem Lake students with education expenses since its inception.

Pratt had a stellar scholastic background during her high school years, as demonstrated by her four years on the A-Honor Role at White Bear Lake Area High School. She was active throughout high school in both sports and volunteer activities. This included serving as captain for both the soccer and golf teams, and volunteering for Ambassadors, Link Crew and the National Honors Society.

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Gem Lake 2022 Audit Completed (Continued from page 1)

MMKR concluded that there were no transactions entered into by the City for the year for which there was a lack of authoritative guidance or consensus. Financial statement disclosures were considered neutral, consistent and clear. MMKR concluded that there were no misstatements detected as a result of audit procedures that were material, either individually or in the aggregate, to each financial statement taken as a whole.

Here are some findings regarding Gem Lake finances:

- The City's taxable market value increased 11.4% for taxes payable in 2021 and 2.2% for taxes payable in 2022. Tax capacity is considered the actual base available for taxation. It is calculated by applying the state's property classification system to each property's market value. The City's tax capacity increased 14.3% in 2021 and decreased 0.4% in 2022. The improvement in tax capacity values contributed to the decrease in the City's average tax rate.
 - The City's general fund accounts for the financial activity of the basic services provided to the community. It includes municipal operations, police and fire protection, building inspection, streets and highway maintenance, etc.
 - The City's General Fund case and investments balance at December 31, 2022 was \$379,587, an increase of \$66,567 from the previous year. The total fund balance increased \$57,011 in 2022, as compared to a balanced budget projected in the final budget.
 - The City has generally been able to maintain healthy cash and fund balance levels, which allows the City to properly meet cash needs, maintain the City's bond rating and navigate through fluctuations in state funding for cities in recent years.
 - Property taxes comprise about 88.8% of the fund's total annual revenue. Approximately half of these revenues are received by the City in July and the rest in December. Consequently, the City needs to have adequate cash reserves to finance its everyday operations between these payments.
 - The City's unassigned General Fund balance at the end of the 2022 fiscal year represents approximately 59% of annual expenditures, based on 2022 levels.
- General Fund revenue for 2022 was \$541,680, which was \$18,402 (3.5%) more than the budget. Total General Fund revenue for 2022 was \$11,688 (2.2%) higher than the previous year. Taxes increased \$27,330, due to an increase in public safety and franchise fees. Intergovernmental revenues were \$30,209 less than the prior year, due to the City not qualifying for the small cities assistance funding.
 - General Fund expenditures for 2022 were \$464,669, which was \$38,609 (7.7%) under budget. Some of the savings came as a result of Public Works expenditures being \$71,336 under budget, due to savings on snow plowing, road salt and tree trimming. A complete copy of the audit is available at Heritage Hall.

Scholarship Awarded

(Continued from page 1)

Despite her busy schedule, Pratt graduated with a GPA (Grade Point Average) of 4.39 and was ranked number five in White Bear Lake Area High School's senior class of 500 students.

Pratt earned academic awards for being an AP Scholar, AP Scholar with Distinction and many other accolades.

"Kristina Pratt is one of the top students I've encountered in my 16 years as a school counselor," according to White Bear school counselor Lori Soler. "She is a stellar student with an impressive GPA and is involved in many school and community activities. She has the motivation and skills to do well and would be very deserving of this scholarship."

One of her teachers, Matthew Danielson, had the following to say about her abilities and qualifications. "I have come to know Kristina Pratt in my Advanced Placement Calculus BC and Multivariable Calculus/AP Statistics courses. During these courses, she has demonstrated, in and out of the classroom, many of the qualities it takes to become a successful college student. These qualities include independence, determination and her math abilities. Kristina is one of the most gifted students mathematically I have encountered."

Pratt plans to study Journalism at the University of Minnesota, beginning this fall.

Congratulations Kristina Pratt!

VLAWMO Lake Study

The Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization (VLAWMO) was formed in 1983 to protect the Vadnais Lake watershed area in northern Ramsey County and a small portion of Anoka County. A joint powers agreement was ratified by five cities and one township within the boundaries of VLAWMO in order to comply with the then new state law called the Metropolitan Surface Water Management Act. The purpose of the act, and through it the purpose of VLAWMO, was to protect vital water resources that may cross municipal boundaries. The municipalities within this watershed include Gem Lake, Vadnais Heights, White Bear Township, White Bear Lake, Lino Lakes and North Oaks.

Other goals of VLAWMO include protecting groundwater quality and recharge areas, providing public education, protecting surface water quality, managing stormwater and controlling flooding through the use of best management practices.

VLAWMO conducts an annual water monitoring summary for lakes and waterways within the watershed district. The report is now available for 2022 and includes some encouraging data regarding the health of the waterbody of Gem Lake, as well as other nearby waterbodies. The water monitoring summary deals with 15 lakes, as well as Lambert Creek. Here are some highlights that show the Watershed at a Glance, with special emphasis on Gem Lake. Various data is collected annually that give an overall view of the health of lakes in the area. They include the Tropic State Indexes, Phosphorus Totals, Secchi Disk readings and Chloride Readings. Here is an overview of each:

Trophic State Indexes (TSI) of VLAWMO Lakes

The trophic status of a lake pertains to its nutrient levels, transparency and chlorophyll. When a lake is “oligotrophic” it has low nutrient levels and abundant oxygen. It might be suitable for an unfiltered water supply. The water is very clear. On the other end of the scale is a lake that is “hypereutrophic.” That means it has exceptionally high nutrients, causing dense algae. It has a severe taste and odor and fish kills are possible. The water would be very green. Gem Lake is right near the middle of the scale, with only a few lakes in the area coming in at the very green or hypereutrophic readings.



Average Total Phosphorus

Phosphorus is a naturally occurring nutrient and main driver of algae growth. High phosphorus levels determine whether the water looks like pea soup or an aquarium. Excessive algae can produce foul smells and toxins harmful to humans and pets. To prevent this, it is important to keep sediment and nutrients on the landscape and out of water bodies. Gem Lake’s phosphorus level in one of the lowest in the region, coming in at about 40 micrograms per liter. For comparison purposes, West Goose Lake has a phosphorus level of over 200 micrograms per liter.

Secchi Disk Readings

A Secchi disk is a 20 cm flat disk that is lowered into the water until it can no longer be seen. The depth where the disk disappears, called the “Secchi depth,” is a measure of the transparency of the water. Transparency is the most basic indicator to assess risks for most lake users, and suggests potential issues downstream. Transparency can be affected by pollutants or sediment draining into the lake. Gem Lake’s readings are one of the best in the area, with a Secchi reading of 2 meters. The least transparent lake in the watershed had a reading of only half a meter.

Chloride

Chloride is a common ingredient in salt de-icers and home water softening. Chloride is a permanent pollutant to water quality. It is toxic to aquatic life and interrupts lake temperature. There are currently no waterbodies in the watershed that are impaired by chloride levels. The state standard says chloride levels should be less than 230 milligrams per liter. Gem Lake stands at about 20 milligrams per liter. The highest reading in the watershed is about 95 milligrams per liter.

Representatives from VLAWMO will be doing a presentation of the annual report at the August Gem Lake City Council meeting, which takes place on August 15 at 7:00 p.m.

Gem Lake Historical Avg TP/Chl A/ SDT			
Year	TP (µg/L)	Chl A (µg/L)	Secchi (m)
2017	32	16	1.5
2018	36	15	1.8
2019	33	11	1.8
2020	35	14	2.4
2021	38	13	2.4
2022	39	8	2.4

City News

Use Caution with Recreational Fires

Due to drought conditions in Minnesota currently, it is especially important to be careful with any backyard fires. Here are some guidelines:

Open burn situations, called bonfires, are prohibited without a permit, but small recreational cooking and recreational fires are okay in certain circumstances. First, they need to be supervised by an adult, second, they need contained within an approved fire ring, and third, they need to be three feet or less in diameter.

Here is the exact language from Gem Lake ordinance No. 77, section 6:

“Open burning prohibited. It shall be unlawful for any person to kindle or maintain any bonfire, nor shall any person normally furnish as such material for any such fire, nor shall any person authorize any such fire to be kindled on or in any street, alley, road, land or public grounds or upon any private property without first obtaining a permit from the city clerk, which has been appropriately executed by the Fire Marshal. Recreational or cooking fires supervised by an adult and which are fully contained within approved fire rings, pits or appliances not greater than three feet in diameter shall be exempt from the permit requirement, providing no fire bans have been issued by the Fire Marshal or the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources.

All Open Burning permits must be obtained through the City of White Bear Lake Fire Department for Gem Lake residents.

License Your Dog

Any dog over 6 months in age is required to be licensed by the City of Gem Lake. The fee per dog is \$10.

Last year, 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, are good through December 31, 2023. After that, all dog licenses will run January 1-December 31. Renewal letters will be sent-out in November.



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 focus primarily on special announcements and news items, events, etc. It is intended to compliment rather than replace the city website. 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!

Spring Clean-Up Day is a Hit

Gem Lake residents took advantage of the first-ever Joint White Bear Township and Gem Lake Spring Clean Up Day on May 20. During the event, it was possible to drop off a variety of unwanted items free of charge to residents of the Township and the City. Accepted items included: appliances, automotive batteries, tires, mattresses, furniture, carpeting, household fixtures, TVs, electronics, lawn mowers, etc. It is anticipated that the popular event will be held annually.

Charitable Gambling Donations

A donation of \$1500 was approved by the Gem Lake City Council in June to be given to the White Bear Area Food Shelf. This donation comes from charitable gambling receipts that result from pull-tab and bingo sales within city limits.

MPCA to Provide Well Update

Key representatives from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency will provide Gem Lake with an update on well contamination at the September City Council Meeting. This meeting will take place September 19 at 7:00 p.m.

Several months ago, the MPCA reported to the City Council that a possible source for the 1,4-dioxane found in 22 Gem Lake wells had been located. The agency outlined a plan to do further well testing in the city and surrounding areas and to report back on the results. One of the key goals in collecting this data is to see if well contamination has increased or decreased and whether it has moved to new areas.

Please feel free to attend this important meeting.

The White Bear Area Food Shelf Seeks Your Help

The City of Gem Lake is proud to be a regular contributor to the White Bear Area Food Shelf. These contributions are made possible by the city's portion of charitable gambling income that occurs within city limits.

The need for the services provided by the White Bear Food Shelf are enormous and growing. The City Council received a report from the Executive Director of the organization, Perry Peterson, at the June 18 City Council meeting.

According to Peterson's report, the food shelf doubled the number of people served from 2018 to 2022 and now serves 2,821 households each month. "That is a 28% increase over the prior year," says Peterson.

Due to high demand from the public, the food shelf has expanded the ways they provide services. "We now provide fresh and healthy groceries five days a week through curbside, delivery and mobile programs. The food shelf also provides 300 Kid Packs and food pantries in schools each week. We do this because one in eight kids in Minnesota don't know where their next meal is coming from."

Peterson thanked the city council of Gem Lake for their regular and generous support of their efforts. Due to rising demands for food services, the food shelf is looking to open a second location that would allow in person shopping by those in need. Peterson also added that the White Bear Area Food Shelf is always looking for volunteers to help with a variety of activities.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

<p>Curbside Market: <i>M-T afternoon & evening. W-F morning & afternoon</i> Greet neighbors, data entry, shop orders, sort food and stock shelves.</p> <p>Food Rescue: <i>M-F mornings</i> Pick up and deliver food from local grocery stores.</p>	<p>Farmers' Market Outreach: <i>F mornings</i> Collect food donations at White Bear Farmers' Market.</p> <p>Garden Volunteers: Help maintain and harvest our herb garden.</p>
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To learn more or volunteer:
carol@whitebearfoodshelf.org 651-433-7286

The White Bear Area Food Shelf has served as a critical resource for families experiencing food insecurity since 1977.



whitebearfoodshelf.org

Conditions were poor during the mid-February survey, which prompted the re-survey of certain areas in early March. The early March conditions were fair to poor in certain areas.

Survey conditions should be taken into consideration when making management decisions.

According to Ramsey County's survey taken in March for Gem Lake 23 deer were counted, one of the highest in the area.

Labore Road Resurfacing

The surface layer on Labore Road between County Road E and Goose Lake Road will be removed and replaced with new, smooth pavement in 2023. There will be no cost to property owners for this project.

The project will also include ditch cleaning and restriping to match what is there currently.

Land surveying crews were and will be working in the project area before, during and immediately after construction.

Timeline

Work was expected to start the week of July 10th. No expected end date has been given for this work.

MNRR Railroad crossing reconstruction was set to begin July 12th and was expected to last for one week.

Traffic Impact

Road is closed at the railroad crossing. A signed detour is in place using Goose Lake Road, County Road E and Centerville Road.



Ramsey County Deer Survey

Ramsey County conducted their annual fly over deer surveys for all Ramsey County cities.

To receive text or email updates you can go visit the Ramsey County website and subscribe to the 2023 road project updates.

The City of Gem Lake

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city@gemlakemn.org

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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: August and September 2023

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

August 9, 2023

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

August 14, 2023

City Council Workshop is **CANCELED**

August 15, 2023

City Council meeting at 7:00 p.m.

September 11, 2023

City Council Workshop is **CANCELED**

September 12, 2023

Planning Commission Meeting is **CANCELED**

September 19, 2023

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

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

Your Gem Lake City Council

Mayor:

Len Cacioppo

Email: len.cacioppo@gemlakemn.org

Gretchen Artig-Swomley

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City Council Members:

Laurel Amlee

Email: laurel.hynes-amlee@gemlakemn.org

Jim Lindner

Email: jim.lindner@gemlakemn.org

You can also reach each city council member by calling 651-747-2790. After hours you can follow the prompts for the city council directory.

CITY OF GEM LAKE
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