

Gem Lake News

Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Newsletter Editor

Special Interest Articles:

- New Land Use Ordinance
- 2018 Comprehensive Plan
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- Land Purchase and Park Considered

Upcoming Recycling Dates:

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

City Contemplates Park and Land Purchase

During the month of June, a very important issue will be discussed at the Planning Commission Meeting on June 6 and the City Council Meeting on June 20. This issue involves the contemplated purchase of 18 acres of land owned by resident Tom Hansen by the City of Gem Lake for purposes of building a city park with 7.24 acres of it and making the remainder (10.85 acres) of the land available to developers for residential development along County Road E for homes that would add to our tax base and potentially lead to lower taxes, depending upon the number built.

This purchase would solve several issues the city has faced for years and would also potentially represent a cost effective way of reaching certain specific goals. The purchase involves many details for which public input would be especially important. **(Continued on page 5)**



Gem Lake's New Consolidated Land Use Ordinance

For nearly a year, volunteers such as Jim Lindner and Paul Emeott and Ben Johnson have been working on a revised land use ordinance for Gem Lake.

The project's focus has been to update Gem Lake's land related ordinances, not drastically alter them. It brings a consistent format that will provide a single source for all zoning questions, and position the city for the new 2018 Comprehensive Plan, required by the Metropolitan Council.

Early in the process, the team determined the existing ordinances would work best in they were combined into one single ordinance, with a sole source for all definitions. The new draft ordinance is intended to finally make navigation through Gem Lake's land-related ordinances straightforward. For the first time, several formerly stand-alone ordinances are now combined into one location, cross-referenced, with a single set of definitions. **(continued on page 2)**



Gem Lake's New Draft Land Use Ordinance

Gem Lake's new consolidated land use ordinance (CLUO) combines zoning, subdivisions, planned unit development, garden and institutional overlays, signs, landscaping, tree preservation, and environmental review into one document.

Having these ordinances combined into the CLUO will make future revisions easier since sections will be hyperlinked together. It should also make it easier for end users such as developers to navigate. Before the CLUO readers had to know that other ordinances existed that might impact their plan. Now a simple mouse click can bring a user to a specific section.

The process took nearly fifteen full months of committee meetings and numerous drafts to reach a final product. Prior to being commissioned by the city council to begin action, former mayor Paul Emeott started looking at existing ordinances for clarity and comprehensiveness. When he noticed gaps and inconsistencies, he approached Mayor Uzpen with his concerns. Mayor Uzpen then asked councilmember Jim Lindner to head the committee. Planning Commission chair Ben Johnson agreed to join the group and the committee was formed. For Lindner it was a return to his roots to when he chaired the planning commission prior to joining the city council. He recalls the frustrations he and subsequent planning commission chairs faced when trying to consider development projects without a clear set of guiding ordinances.

Committee members wanted an open process and often invited landowners and even developers to provide information on how a successful ordinance would look. While the immediate focus was on those lands under the moratorium imposed in June, 2016, the committee recognized the tracts of large estate landowners who may want to consider development options for their properties.



. "Bringing varied interests to our meeting table really provided insight into what may or may not work from different perspectives," Lindner commented. Those perspectives led the committee, often in partnership with the planning commission, to take a fresh look at buildable areas and zoning requirements across the entire city. One planning commission meeting was particularly productive when the combined groups looked at the several tables found in the current zoning ordinance and asked "why?" to many of the established parameters. The end result was greater allowance for flexibility on where buildings might be placed on individual parcels.

While the process has taken over a year to complete, Lindner states that the genesis for the idea dates back ten years or more to his time on the planning commission. "I often wished Gem Lake's ordinances would be simpler to understand and state what the city really wanted to look like. Unfortunately, without a full-time city staff, I would conclude this was never going to happen." Then when Mayor Uzpen approached him on leading the committee, Lindner decided that the time had come. He figured it would be a lot of work, but the result would be worth the effort. "I'm glad we did it," he says with a slight smile of satisfaction. Standing next to Lindner at a recent city council meeting, Ben Johnson nods his head in agreement. "It was a team effort," Johnson concurs.

Gem Lake 2018 Comprehensive Plan in Process

It seems like yesterday when we were all working to put together the many parts of the last city wide comprehensive plan, that is required every ten years by the Metropolitan Council. That was 2008!

Work has now begun on the 2018 plan, which requires some new sections, such as “Resilience,” and “Economic Competitiveness.” These sections are meant to outline how cities will deal with things such as climate change, creating healthy communities and fostering diverse economic opportunities.

As in previous plans, the pivotal section remains the one dealing with “Land Use.” The need to complete this section has been one of the factors driving the rewrite of the “Gem Lake Land Use Ordinance,” a draft of which is due to be presented at the June 20 city council meeting.

Assisting Gem Lake in the drafting of the plan will be our city engineers—the firm of SEH. Technical personnel at the firm will draft the sections that require special expertise, such as the chapters on water planning.

This time around, the City Council is committed to writing as many sections as possible without outside help, in order to save money.

Several of the smaller sections have already been written in draft form. As all sections are being drafted, they will be discussed frequently at city council meeting. There will be many opportunities to get involved in the writing of the comprehensive plan—and your involvement is encouraged!

When assembled as a complete draft, the plan will go through multiple forms of public review at council meetings, as well as being sent to surrounding communities for comment and review.



Take Part in the “Hot Dog with a Deputy” Program

You are invited to take part in this year’s “Hot Dog with a Deputy” program, a summer initiative to build connections in the communities served by the Ramsey County Sheriff’s Department.

There will be a food trailer with hot dogs, chips, bottled water and frozen fun pops, served free of charge at the following locations between 5-7 p.m.:

- *Tuesday, June 6, 2017 at Bobby Theisen Park in Shoreview
- *Tuesday, June 13, 2017 at Polar Lakes Park in White Bear Township
- *Tuesday, June 20, 2017 at Berwood Park in Vadnais Heights
- *Tuesday, June 27, 2017 at Pioneer Park in Little Canada
- *Tuesday, July 11, 2017 at Tony Schmidt Park in Arden Hills
- *Wednesday, July 12, 2017 at Commons Pavillion in Shoreview
- *Tuesday, July 18, 2017 at West Rec Center in North Oaks.

For more information, go to www.ramseycounty.us and search “Hot Dog with a Deputy.”

City News Page

Dog Licenses Due for Renewal

It's time to make your dog an official member of the Gem Lake community. Dog licenses in our fair city run from June 1-May 31. If you currently have a licensed dog, you will be mailed a new application form. The application should be returned with a \$10 fee and a copy of your dog's rabies certificate. The certificate will be returned to you.

If you need more information or another copy of the application form, call Gloria Tessier at 651-747-2792.

WaterFest 2017 Set for June 3

"Make Waves" at WaterFest 2017! This family friendly festival celebrates our clean lakes and is scheduled for Saturday, June 3 in Lake Phalen Park—11 a.m. to 4 p.m. (Rain or Shine).

The event is organized by the Ramsey-Washington Metro Watershed District and provides a fun and hands-on opportunity for the whole family to learn more about water, wildlife, land and water conservation, and much more. There will be kayak, paddleboat and canoe rides, as well as fishing lessons and contests, art exhibits, native plant giveaways, a food arcade, and so much more.

For more information: <http://www.rwmwd.org>.

New Rental Property Requirements

Effective January 1, 2016, the City of Gem Lake began licensing all rental property in the City. Persons with rental property will be required to obtain a rental license for their rental units. Licenses will be for a two-year period. The licensing fee is \$100.00 for a single family unit and for a two family unit \$50.00 per unit. All units will be subject to an annual inspection. Contact Gloria Tessier at 651-747-2792.

Tessier Accepts Position on VLAWMO Commission

Gloria Tessier, Gem Lake resident and the city's administrative assistant, has accepted a position on the Technical Commission of the Vadnais Lake Area Water Management Organization (VLAWMO)..

VLAWMO's mission is to protect and enhance the water quality of its lakes and streams and its Technical Commission serves as an advisory committee to the board of directors. The TEC consists of representatives from each of VLAWMO's member communities and meets at 7:30AM on the second Friday of every month at Vadnais Heights City Hall. Each month the TEC works with VLAWMO staff to review and consider various projects intended to keep our surface and ground water safe for current and future generations. A Gem Lake resident is needed to assure that projects intended to improve Gem Lake water quality are considered among the projects reviewed and recommended for approval. Appointment to the TEC is through the Gem Lake City Council and run in one year terms.

Gem Lake Hills Golf Course Looking for Grounds Crew

The Gem Lake Hills Golf Course is looking to hire grounds crew help for the summer. If you are interested in a rewarding outdoor job, please contact Tim, Grounds Maintenance Supervisor, at 651-429-8715.

City Contemplates Land Purchase and Park

The purchase would be structured to insure the least impact possible on the annual tax levy and would involve a combination of the use of city reserves, a contract for deed and a 15-year bond for a portion of the price. Here are some of the details:

The 18-acre parcel would be divided into two parts for purposes of this purchase. The portion that would be the subject of future residential development involves 10.85 acres of land. The purchase price of \$659,000 for this section would be paid for with a \$359,000 contract for deed for a period of 5 years, and a \$300,000 payment using city reserves. The contract for deed would have a 3% interest rate with semi-annual payments. This would be paid back in full either when the developer buys the land and pays outright for it, or as it sells specific lots within the future development. One idea to keep in mind is that the contract for deed costs could be entirely off-set also by the reduction in police protection costs that are projected. The developer would pay the cost of putting in sewer, roads, etc.

The other portion of land within the Tom Hansen property is a 7.24 acre parcel would be purchased for \$550,000 and would be paid for by a 15 year bond. Depending upon the terms of the bond, it is possible that city reserves or prices paid for the other section of land may allow for the bond to be paid off even earlier.

The layout of the park will be determined by our city engineers at (SEH), considering such things as storm water flow, future road locations and topography. Ideas about the park involve a small parking lot, picnic tables, simple playground equipment and a walking trail that would circle the entire development and run through the park.

Costs involved in the initial development of the park would come out of the City's park fund, which now has a balance of around \$40,000. The fund was established years ago to coordinate with the state law regarding developers and open land designation. Basically when a development over a certain size happens (such as Hillary Farm), the developer has to designation either 10% of the purchase price of the land to that city's park fund, or they can designate 10% of the land in the development to parks and open space



The purchase of this land not only represents a cost effective way to get a park, it also solves several issues the city faces. One is that the Metropolitan Council puts serious pressure on cities to designate land for parks, trails and open space. The other is that the Hansen land has been for sale for decades without success. Despite the urban legend that the City has repeatedly turned down applications for development, the truth is that in the past 12 years there has not been a single official application that has come before the council, although one has come close. The reasons are many and involve the economic downturn of 2007, the amount of wetland on this property, the fact that there is a private road in the middle of two large tracts of land and other reasons, such as concepts presented with very high density rates. Purchasing the land and putting it out to bid to developers with very clear ordinances and guidelines should help jump start the process and finally get the land contributing to our tax base in a more effective manner.

How does this impact you, other than having a park and trail system available to you in the neighborhood? Although the figures are preliminary at this point, it is thought that the bond for the park would cost you about \$211.10 over the course of 15 years if your home falls into the \$150k range. If your home is nearer to the \$500k+ range, the cost could be around \$875.55 over 15 years. These estimates are based on a minimum number of homes being built on the land. (20 homes at an average cost of \$400,000). It is important to note that 47% of Gem Lake homes are worth \$250k or less. Please come to one of the meetings in June to ask questions and learn more.

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:
gretchenas@comcast.net

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

We're on the Web!

See us at:
www.gemlakemn.org

Meetings: June and July, 2017

The following Gem Lake
Meetings will be held at
Heritage Hall in
December.

June 6, 2017

Planning Commission
meeting at 7:00 p.m.

June 12, 2017

City Council Workshop at
7:00 p.m.

June 20, 2017

City Council Meeting at
7:00 p.m.

July 5, 2017

Planning Commission
meeting at 7:00 p.m.

July 10, 2017

City Council Workshop at
7:00 p.m.

July 18, 2017

City Council Meeting at
7:00 p.m.

Your Gem Lake City Council

Bob Uzpen-Mayor

Phone: 651-492-5083

City Council Members:

Gretchen Artig-Swomley

Phone: 651-260-9742

Rick Bosak

Phone: 651-426-9695

Faith Kuny

Phone: 612-718-4316

Jim Lindner

Phone: 651-429-7597

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

Each Gem Lake
Newsletter is also posted
on the web-site under the

news section.

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

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

