

Gem Lake News

Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Newsletter Editor

Special Interest Articles:

- New Council Sworn In
- Dick Arcand: What a Life!
- City News, Page 4

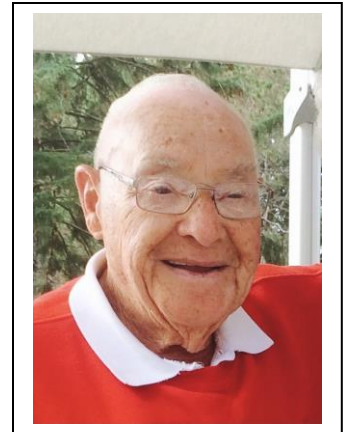
Upcoming Recycling Dates:

- January 27
- February 10
- February 24
- *Tip: put out your bin the night before for 7 a.m. pick-up.*

Our True Gem: Dick Arcand Passes Away

Several days after his 99th birthday, beloved Gem Lake resident Dick Arcand passed away on December 6. Dick had lived in Gem Lake since the 1950's. He married Shirley Hoffman the daughter of Gem Lake's first mayor, Henry Hoffman. Together the couple started Hoffman's Food Mart, located right across the street from present day White Bear Floral. The area was growing, with increased needs for services like theirs, and the store was very popular with locals.

Dick knew everyone and loved everyone. He also remembered everyone and everything. His phenomenal memory made him the "go-to" person for anyone (including me) who wanted to know anything about Gem Lake history. I had the pleasure of frequently interviewing him about the development and growth of Gem Lake. (continued on page 3)

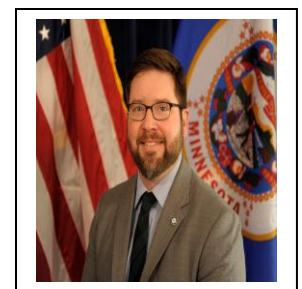


New Council Members Take Office

Three members of the Gem Lake City Council were sworn into office at the City Council meeting on January 19. They included Council Members Laurel Hynes-Amlee and Benjamin Johnson (pictured at right), as well as Mayor Gretchen Artig-Swomley.

Laurel was appointed to the City Council last year to fill a vacancy, and also served one year on the Gem Lake Planning Commission. She is a long-time resident of the City and has worked in various capacities at White Bear Floral for many years.

Benjamin served as the chairman of the Planning Commission for six years, and as a volunteer for his daughter's elementary school and scout troop for three years. He and his wife and family have lived in Gem Lake since 2013. Benjamin has a B.A. in Criminal Justice, a J.D. from William Mitchell College of Law (2011) and he is a Policy Fellow (continued on page two)



Water Gremlin Update: New Permits in the Works

In January 2019, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and the Minnesota Department of Health investigated community exposures to an industrial solvent called trichloroethylene (TCE) used by Water Gremlin, a manufacturer in White Bear Township. MPCA's investigation showed that the company failed to report accurate emission data for more than 15 years. Water Gremlin violated its permit and exposed the surrounding neighborhoods to TCE level above the MDH's health benchmark of 2 micrograms per cubic meter of air. A settlement between Water Gremlin and the MPCA in March of 2019 resulted in large civil penalties, but allowed the company to switch to an alternative product from TCE.

For the past year, various remediation strategies have been discussed or put in place. In the meantime, operations at the facility have been changed or curtailed to accommodate guidelines from various agencies. Water Gremlin has submitted an application for a major new permit, which is being reviewed by the state. It is anticipated that the permit will be issued in March or April. The State of Minnesota is looking into various options for emission controls, such as adding additional filters to the plant's stack. The Minnesota Department of Health standards are being reviewed as guidance, in addition to health standards from Michigan and California.

There is also a minor permit application in the review process. The State is reviewing citizen comments and expects the permit will be issued around February 28. Water Gremlin is proposing to convert one solvent based coater to a non-solvent curing process using ultraviolet light. The proposed change will reduce potential emissions of volatile organic compounds, and increase potential emissions of particulates within allowable limits.

An extensive on-site inspection of the plant was completed last September. The State expects to conduct inspections every six months for a while, and then once a year. The State of Minnesota is still monitoring lead exposures, and thus far, the reports indicate an acceptable status. An independent firm, named Wenck Company is in the process of preparing a review concerning wells in the area. They have or will tested 65 residential properties south of the campus. More broadly, the State of Minnesota is working with the Legislature to update rules involving TCE usage. Work is on-going.

New Council Members Take Office (continued from page one)

For the Study of Politics and Governance at the Humphrey School of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota.

Following the events of September 11, 2001, Benjamin withdrew from undergraduate studies and enlisted in the United States Navy in early 2002. He was assigned to the Engineering Department aboard the USS O'Bannon. His first deployment involved participation in international naval exercises in the U.S. Southern Command: Central and South America. His second duty station was the Naval Expeditionary Combat Command—Mobile Security Squadron Six. In 2005 and 2007, his unit was deployed to the Middle East in support of Operation Iraqi Freedom and the Global War on Terrorism. He participated in anti-terrorism and force protection operations off the southern coast of Iraq and elsewhere.

After completing his enlistment, Benjamin and his wife Sherri returned to Minnesota. He worked for a small law firm, then joined an employment and consumer rights law firm in Minneapolis. He currently works for the Minnesota Department of Veterans Affairs as the agency's Legislative Director.

He and Sherri have two elementary school aged children.

Gretchen served on the city council and as the city newsletter editor for 14 years and as back up mayor for nine years. She was appointed acting mayor in May of 2020, when Mayor Bob Uzpen died of ALS. She was elected as mayor in November.

Prior to this, Gretchen spent many years as a reporter, 14 years as the executive vice president of an international trade association and then as the CEO of a technology company.

All three individuals will serve four-year terms. Acting City Clerk Gloria Tessier administered the oath of office to each person.

The Real Gem of Gem Lake—Dick Arcand (continued from page 1)

When Dick moved to Gem Lake, he described it as having a “quiet village feeling. Everyone knew everyone,” he said in an earlier interview.

At that time, Highway 61 ran right in front of their store, not behind it, as it is today. Highway 61 was a two-lane roadway that was in dire need of straightening and increased capacity. (Today, the street is called Hoffman Road.)

Shortly after he began to build the family house, the end of his driveway intersected the new, wider and straighter Highway 61. He was concerned about traffic right from the start. But, Ramsey County worked with him to plant trees to shelter the home from the increased noise. (Today, the home is nestled behind a grove of mature trees.) He grew to love the community of Gem Lake and had many ties here. His father-in-law, Henry Hoffman started several businesses in the Hoffman’s Corner area. (The area is named for Henry) Henry became mayor in 1959. Henry’s daughter Kathy, Dick’s sister-in-law, still lives in the community.

Hoffman Food Mart was used by most of Gem Lake and became a bit of a hang out and meeting spot. He and Shirley got the chance to meet and know nearly everyone over the years, and their eight children (four boys and four girls) had many friends in the area.

“My four daughters all rode horses, so this was the perfect place for them,” said Dick. His property bordered land once used as an old horse trail around Gem Lake. “All the folks with horse farms used the trail, so the kids had a lot of fun.”

From the beginning, Dick’s experiences with Gem Lake involved the animal kingdom. The Arcand family kept three horses and three ponies, as well as a variety of dogs. Deer, fox, pheasants and wood chucks routinely wandered across his property.

Dick had his share of adventure and tragedy. He served in the 7th Army during World War II. Although he would always mention he was in Patton’s Army as it marched across Europe, he would then add, with a humble laugh, that he served predominately as a barber. During a portion of his time in the war, he was housed in the estate of German General Rommel in Germany. When things got rough, he also helped care for injured soldiers.

Dick remembered moving across Europe around Thanksgiving time of 1944. “We were right behind the lines, setting up logistics. I don’t remember having turkey or any kind of holiday meal that year. However, I can’t even look at a can of SPAM to this day. We ate a lot of C-Rations!”

In the early 1950’s, he and Shirley lost one of their children to a tragic accident. Five-year-old Larry followed his dog across the new Highway 61, when it was being constructed, and was hit by a car. Sixty years later he told me what his wife was wearing that day and what his son was going to have for lunch. The day remained frozen in his memory. Later, his oldest daughter died of cancer.

In 2000, his wife died of Alzheimer’s. He cared for her for years prior to her death, taking her on long car rides to occupy her mind and keep her happy. Currently, two of his sons and one of his daughters live in Gem Lake, with the others living nearby. Because his children were close, Dick was able to continue to live independently in the family home, despite being legally blind.

Dick maintained his can-do attitude despite blindness and, amazingly, continued to bike around Gem Lake. At times, it was extremely scary and extremely cool to see him tooling around happily. He once told me that he ate a lot of microwave meals because it was easy. I asked him how he read the directions and he replied, with a laugh, “I just cook everything for three minutes on high.”

Dick served for a time on the Gem Lake City Council during the time when Henry Hoffman was mayor. He told me ten years ago that he hoped Gem Lake could maintain its rural feeling, while still “moving with the times.”

A week before he was hospitalized in November, he was blowing leaves in his yard. He remained as active as possible until near the end of his life. Dick passed away in his sleep on December 6. There was a funeral mass in his honor the following week at St. Mary’s Church, where he had been a parishioner and volunteer for many years. Dick will be remembered with fondness and missed by everyone who knew him.

City News

February Meetings to be Virtual

Due to COVID-19 numbers in Minnesota, City Meetings in Gem Lake will be held virtually in February. See page 6 for a list of meeting dates. The City Council arrived at this decision at the January council meeting, based on pandemic trends. Meetings were held virtually for months last year, with much success. You are welcome to attend any of these meetings on-line. To do so, make sure Gloria Tessier, Acting City Clerk, has your contact information. Several days prior to each meeting, she emails everyone with a link to the meeting call-in. See her contact information on page 6.

Trail to be Open Year Round

The Gem Lake trail, which borders the city open space on the west side of the Gem Lake Villas project, is now open year-round. Previously, the newly established trail was closed between November 1 and April 1. The council voted to keep the trail open and to have it plowed when a snowfall event reaches 2". The trail will generally not be salted or sanded.

New Members Appointed to Gem Lake Planning Commission

Two Gem Lake residents were appointed at the January 19 City Council meeting to fill vacancies on the Planning Commission.

Joshua Patrick has been a resident of Gem Lake for a little over a year, but has worked as a caretaker for a city resident for over 10 years.



Professionally, he is a licensed Boiler Engineer, Building Engineer, and LEED Certified Operations Manager. He sees his fit on the Planning Commission as someone who can apply real-world building and facilities experience to assist with code review and mechanical recommendations. He is also someone who appreciates how unique Gem Lake is. He is a big proponent of keeping the charm of the city and not trying to overbuild.

Stephanie Farrell has been a Gem Lake resident for about two years. She attended college at the University of Minnesota Duluth and majored in International Business. She lived in Blaine, following a three-year stint in China. She and her husband and two daughters finally landed in Gem Lake.

"I am interested in serving on the Planning Commission because I love Gem Lake and would love to have an active role in the future growth and changes of the community. I am hoping my diverse background will lend a helping hand in the decision-making process. While living in China, I was a member of both the International Women's Club and the PTA of my daughters' international school. In both committees, I provided insight, gathered information, and assisted in the decision-making process, which ultimately led to the successful execution of numerous events. I am excited to meet new people and get more involved in my community."

Special Gem Lake Election Set for February 9

Due to Mayor Bob Uzpen's death last May, an opening was created on the City Council. When Council Member Artig-Swomley was appointed to fill the role of Acting Mayor until the election, the open position of council member was fill by Laurel Hynes-Amlee. When she ran for a spot on the council and won a seat, her position became vacant.



That spot is the subject of a special election on February 9. You can apply for a mail in ballot or you can vote in person at Heritage Hall on the day of election. Anyone interested in running was eligible to file for election between December 1-15. Jim Lindner is the candidate for the special election. Jim has served on the Gem Lake City Council for 12 years, served on the Planning Commission for 10 years, and served on the VLAWMO (our watershed organization) board of directors for 10 years.

Thank You to Former City Council Member Faith Kuny

The Gem Lake City Council thanks former council member Faith Kuny for her years of service to Gem Lake.

Faith moved to the city about 10 years ago and began with a stint on the city's Planning Commission. She chaired the group for a while and worked on projects such as a major revision of the City's Ordinance 43K, as it pertained to residential zoning rules.



She was elected to a position on the Gem Lake City Council in 2012 and again in 2016. During her eight years of council membership, Faith worked on many significant projects, including bringing municipal water to the business district, the Gem Lake Villas Development, several road projects, and a variety of other items. She is very proud of working on the effort to bring the White Bear Police force into Gem Lake as our law enforcement agency.

She was passionate about trying to bring more trails and public open space to her city. Faith was known for her preparation and thoughtful questions at meetings. Due to moving out of the city recently, she was unable to run for another term. She will be greatly missed!

Help Available for Local Businesses

Small businesses in our community are encouraged to contact their lenders for PPP (Paycheck Protection Program) loans. The application process has started and will go fast. Check with the Small Business Administration for more details.

The Paycheck Protection Program provides loans to help businesses keep their workforce employed during the COVID-19 crisis.

The SBA is currently offering [First Draw PPP Loans](#) for first-time participants and [Second Draw PPP Loans](#) for certain businesses who have previously received a PPP loan.

On Friday, January 15, the SBA began accepting applications from participating small lenders. Several days later, it began accepting PPP loan applications from all participating lenders. As a reminder, you must apply for a PPP loan through a participating lender, not the SBA. [Lender Match](#) can help you find a participating lender.

Who Were Hoffman, Tessier, LaBore and Scheuneman?

Most of us pass street signs hundreds of times a year without knowing much about the folks they were named after. Sound familiar? Here are a few facts about several local streets and their name origins.

[Hoffman Road](#) is named after Henry Hoffman (1898-1986), whose family first came to the area in the 1890's. Henry owned the land that is now commonly known as "Hoffman Corners" or "Hoffman's Corner" at the intersection of Highway 61 and County Road E. He was a progressive businessman and family man. He also served for over a decade as Gem Lake's first mayor, beginning in 1959.

[Tessier Road](#) is named after Joe Tessier who operated a farm and apple orchard approximately where Structural Wood Company is today. Tessier Road was originally his driveway. He was born around 1900 and died "about thirty years ago," according to relations still in the area.

The origins of [LaBore Road](#) are less definite. It may be named after Antoine LaBore, an early settler to the area, who was of French-Canadian descent. His name begins to show up on land surveys of the area around 1847. Antoine LaBore owned land in what is now known as Gem Lake, as early as 1874, as did family members Joseph, Leon and Damasa.

[Scheuneman Road](#) is reportedly named after Augie Scheuneman, a local farmer. The street was an unpaved country lane for decades. Mapquest and other on-line mapping services have not made up their minds on correct spelling. You may find the street as Schuneman, Schuman, Scheunemann, and others!

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

Meetings: February and March, 2021

The following Gem Lake Meetings will be held in February and March. All meetings will be virtual meetings, unless noted. Call in information will be provided by email.

February 2, 2021

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

February 8, 2021

City Council Workshop at 7:00 p.m. This meeting is cancelled.

February 16, 2021

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

March 2, 2021

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

March 8, 2021

City Council Workshop at 7:00 p.m.

March 16, 2021

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

If March meetings switch back to in-person, it will be noted in the next newsletter.

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

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

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.

CITY OF GEM LAKE
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