

# Gem Lake News

Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Newsletter Editor

## Special Interest Articles:

- Audit Complete
- Water Gremlin Update
- City News Page 4
- MS-4 Update

## Upcoming Recycling Dates:

- September 25
- October 9
- October 23
- *Tip: put out your bin the night before for 7 a.m. pick-up.*

## City Passes Audit with Flying Colors

Gem Lake's 2018 audit is now complete and the results are fairly standard. City Council Members were given a complete presentation of the results at the August 20th City Council Meeting.

The audit was conducted by CliftonLarsonAllen LLP, who also did the previous six audits. According to CliftonLarsonAllen, 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 Michelle Hoffman, a Principal for CliftonLarsonAllen, no difficulties were encountered in performing the audit. The audit showed that management judgements and accounting estimates were reasonable and supported, there were no uncorrected adjustments and disclosures were adequate, clear and complete. **(Continued pg.2)**



## More Contamination Found at Water Gremlin

Due to contamination found on its site in White Bear Township, Water Gremlin has ceased its coating operations, pending site clean-up activities. Contaminants found on the site are lead and the chemicals TCE and DCE, which were used in the coating process. (TCE is now banned.)

Recently, Water Gremlin attempted to subcontract its coating operation to a Wisconsin company. However, that potential subcontractor cancelled the contract soon after a CBS news report on the activity. It is unknown at this time if Water Gremlin is searing for other potential subcontractors.

The long-term goal of Water Gremlin is to operate at levels of DCE and other VoC's that would be the level, not requiring a permit from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. To this end, Water Gremlin is testing a water-based solvent to coat the battery terminals they manufacture. (continued on page 2)



## Water Gremlin Update (continued from page 1)

Part of the settlement imposed on Water Gremlin for pollution related activities, requires them to pay for the planting of trees in affected cities, such as Gem Lake.

The first round of planting was scheduled for September, 2019; however, due to logistical challenges related to the development operations at the Gem Lake Villas project, this initial planning has been postponed to Spring, 2020. This site was selected because there is a portion of Gem Lake owned open space on the edge of the project.



## Audit Complete for 2018

(continued from page 1)

In terms of financial results for 2018, Knopik had a number of observations. The Minnesota Office of the State Auditor recommends that cities have no less than six months of operating revenues in reserve at any one time, to account for the long periods of time between county property tax payments to municipalities. At present, Gem Lake has approximately 11 months, which is good. This increase in reserves is due partly to an increase in property taxes in 2018.

Tax revenues, as a portion of overall income in the city, increased one percent from the year before, increasing from 76% in 2017 to 77% in 2018. License and permit revenues increased 2% in 2018, and miscellaneous income grew by one percent over the year before. In terms of expenditures, general government, and public safety costs were down in 2018, as compared to the year before, while conservation and development and public works expenditures in 2018 were up slightly. General government costs decreased from 36% of total expenditures in 2017 to 34% in 2018. Public safety costs were down significantly, due primarily to Gem Lake's switch to White Bear Lake for police services. Expenditures were 19% of the total in 2018, compared to 34% of the total in 2017. Conservation and development expenditure accounted for 30% of costs in 2018, compared to 22% a year earlier. Finally public works were 17% of total costs in 2018, compared to 8% the year before.

In terms of the Gem Lake Sewer Fund, there was a slight increase in revenues in 2018. Expenses increased by \$37,000 in 2018 over 2017, due to the televised sewer system inspection and flushing. The unrestricted net position of the sewer fund is \$442,851. The sewer fund has a positive cash flow from its operations.

Auditors pointed out several material weaknesses, which exist in Gem Lake and many other small cities in the State. We lack complete segregation of duties on financial reporting duties, internal controls for utility reconciliation, and several other items. This is due to the small size of the staff available to perform the necessary tasks. The complete audit is available for viewing at Heritage Hall.

## Gem Lake Comprehensive Plan Now in Review and Comment Phase

The final draft of Gem Lake's 2018 Comprehensive Plan is now being reviewed by neighboring cities, who will provide comments in the near future. The Metropolitan Council requires that all cities within the Twin Cities Metropolitan area submit a detailed comprehensive plan every ten years. This plan covers everything from land use and transportation to parks and storm water run-off. The plans typically take multiple years and significant engineering expertise to complete.

To get the job done, the City of Gem Lake enlisted the help of two outside agencies to complete this monumental task. They are the engineering firm of SEH, which acts as Gem Lake's engineering representative, and the consulting firm of Northwest Associated Consultants, which specializes in helping cities with this type of plan.



## White Bear Meadery Going Strong

Gem Lake's newest business is the White Bear Meadery, located at 1595 County Road E East. Nearly 1,000 people attended the Grand Opening on July 12 and sampled some of the establishments hand crafted products.

Mead is an alcoholic beverage made by fermenting honey, then adding fruit and spices to make various flavors.

Since the opening, the company has added three new mead varieties. VALHALLA is a wildflower

and honey traditional drink. Also added is a mead called FREYA, a traditional basswood honey drink. Lastly, there is VIKINGS BLOOD, a tart cherry wildflower honey mead.

These three new meads compliment the company's two original varieties, SKAL, a hopped buckwheat honey mead, and SPICED APPLE, a cinnamon apple cider wildflower mead.

"It was great seeing so many people supporting our small family business," says owner Joshua Eckton of their grand opening festivities this summer.

He adds that "The great thing about our meads is that we source our fresh ingredients, like honey and apple cider, locally. Another fun fact is that our meads are naturally GLUTEN FREE.

Later this month, another new variety will be coming out—BERSERKER, a coffee bochet honey mead.

Check out White Bear Meadery!



## City News Page

### Keep Gem Lake Pet Friendly

There have been several recent complaints about pets in Gem Lake. They include pets running wild and folks walking their dogs who don't pick up after them. Just to be clear, your dog or cat needs to be on a leash if its outside your yard. Bring your disposal bags along on your walk so you don't give your neighbor a soft little surprise. YAY!

### Golf Cart Usage in Gem Lake

The draft of an ordinance allowing for limited use of golf carts on several streets in Gem Lake will be discussed at the next City Council Meeting, which is scheduled for September 17.

This ordinance was developed by the Planning Commission over the course of the past several months, in response to increasing use of golf carts within city limits. Golf carts are generally not allowed on city streets anywhere, unless a city approves their use and spells out conditions under which they are permitted. For instance, several cities around Gem Lake allow for very limited use of golf carts on one or two streets withing their cities, typically where there is a golf course, or where there is a disabled person with mobility issues. A survey of over a dozen nearby cities was done by Gem Lake's city clerk in preparation for this effort.

Gem Lake's draft ordinance allows for use of golf carts only on Scheueneman Road and Hilary Farm Lane by a licensed driver. There are other conditions placed on their use that will be discussed at the meeting. The Planning Commission approved their draft and has sent it to the full City Council for discussion and possible approval.

### Large Donation Approved

The Gem Lake City Council approved a donation of \$3200 at the City Council Meeting of August 20 for the Willow Lane Elementary School.

The contribution is to be divided up among the school's 16 teachers to be used for school supplies and books for the classroom libraries.

The donation comes from funds collected through charitable gambling within city limits.

### Impressive Recycling Numbers for First 2 Quarters of 2019

Over 90% of Gem Lake households participated in city wide recycling for the first six months of 2019. Of the possible pick up sites, an average of 91.63% of households remembered to put out their container every two weeks.

The results of our recycling efforts were impressive, according to a recent report by Waste Management. A total of 15.2 tons of materials have been collected from January 1 to June 30 of this year. This broke down into the following categories:

- \*8.9 tons of newspaper
- \*2.0 tons of glass
- \*0.6 tons of aluminum and steel cans
- \*2.1tons of cardboard and mixed paper
- \*0.5 tons of plastic
- \*0.1 tons of scrap steel
- \*0.9 tons of residue

Residue refers to material that was put in the recycling container, but was not able to be recycled. Watch your newsletter or the Gem Lake website for recycling dates.

### Sidewalk Project Under Discussion

Sidewalks along the northern edge of County Road E in Gem Lake are now being discussed by the Gem Lake City Council. Phase 1 would encompass a sidewalk from the corner of LaBore Road to the western edge of Big Fox Lane. This sidewalk would be partially funded by Ramsey County. Start dates for such a project have not yet been finalized. Phase 2 would encompass a sidewalk from the eastern edge of Big Fox to the eastern edge of the Gem Lake Villas project. Because Phase 2 could adversely affect the existing tree line, it was decided to put this part of the project on hold until the county requires widening of County Road E sometime in the future.



## The MS-4 Report—What is it and Why Does it Matter?

*By Jim Lindner, Gem Lake City Council*

Each year, Gem Lake files its annual MS4 report with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). The report is a mandatory report and requires that a public hearing be held at a city meeting, so anyone can learn of what Gem Lake did to remain in compliance with MS4 requirements.

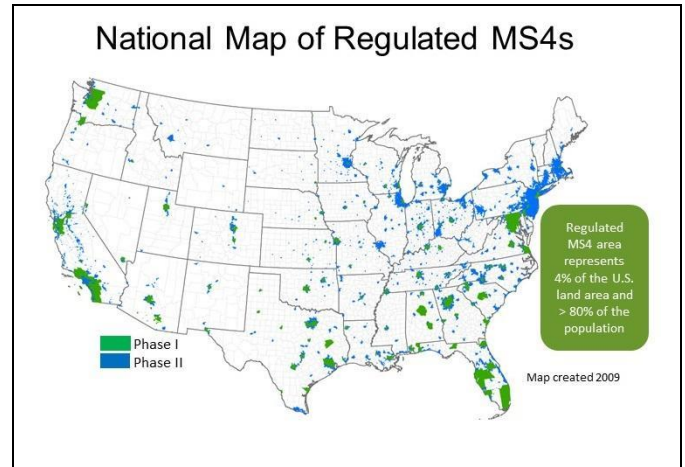
But what is an MS4 and what does it mean to be compliant? MS4 stands for “Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System” shortened to the “M” and four “S’s” for a catchy acronym that is all about managing runoff from storm events. An MS4 is a government entity such as a city, county, or other governmental entity, 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.

When rain falls, it may come in contact with pollutants such as agricultural chemicals, leaked motor oil in a parking lot, or any number of other pollutants. Since stormwater is collected into stormwater drainage systems, this contaminated water is then directly discharged into our rivers and streams, spreading the pollution.

The goal of NPDES through permits granted to MS4 agencies per the US Environmental Protection Agency’s website, was to manage stormwater runoff.

“To prevent harmful pollutants from being washed or dumped into MS4s, certain operators are required to obtain NPDES permits and develop stormwater management programs (SWMPs). The SWMP describes the stormwater control practices that will be implemented consistent with permit requirements to minimize the discharge of pollutants from the sewer system.”



Gem Lake is not alone in the mandatory reporting requirement. Across the Twin Cities metro area are dozens of MS4 entities, part of a network of thousands of similar MS4’s across the country. Just think, that’s a lot of report filing and public hearings. Gem Lake’s most recent public hearing drew exactly 0 residents from the community who came specifically to attend the public hearing. How many interested parties across the nation who look forward to these annual events is anybody’s guess. Above you will find a map of other MS-4s around the nation.

A copy of the complete MS4 report is available at Heritage Hall.

## 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.

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We're on the Web!

See us at:

[www.gemlakemn.org](http://www.gemlakemn.org)

## Meetings: September, October and November

The following Gem Lake Meetings will be held at Heritage Hall in September, October and November of this year.

### September 17, 2019

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

### October 1, 2019

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

### October 8, 2019

City Council Workshop at 7:00 p.m.

### October 15, 2019

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

### November 6, 2019

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

### November 12, 2019

City Council Workshop at 7:00 p.m.

### November 19, 2019

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

## Your Gem Lake City Council

### Bob Uzpen-Mayor

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### City Council Members:

### Gretchen Artig-Swomley

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### Len Cacioppo

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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](http://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.

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