

Gem Lake News

Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Newsletter Editor

Special Interest Articles:

- Election Results and Certification
- Exciting Information about Culverts
- City News, Page 4

Upcoming Recycling Dates:

- November 18
- December 12
- December 16
- *Tip: put out your bin the night before for 7 a.m. pick-up.*

Election Results Certified Nov. 12

State statutes require each city to officially certify the results of an election within a certain amount of days of the event. Gem Lake held its certification meeting on-line on November 12 at 7:00 p.m. This meeting was held virtually, due to rising COVID-19 numbers. Anyone for whom the city clerk had an email address, received an email link to the meeting several days prior.

At this meeting, the number of each votes each candidate received was reviewed and certified. According to the Minnesota Secretary of State's official web-site, the winners were as follows:

For Mayor: Gretchen Artig-Swomley with 59.35% of the vote.

For City Council (two spots open): Ben Johnson with 32.8% of the vote; and Laurel Amlee with 25.45% of the vote. As of November 3 at 7:00 a.m., there were 402 registered voters in Gem Lake. A total of 374 of them voted, meaning a voter turn-out rate of 93.03%!



Recreational Fires in Your Backyard

As the weather outside gets frightful, a backyard fire might be quite delightful, right? Well, that depends. 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 #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
(continued on page 2)



Special Election to be Held on February 9

Just in case you haven't had your fill of elections, Gem Lake is going to hold another one on February 9. Why? To make a long story short, it has to do with the date our late Mayor died. His death created an open spot on the council, when the back-up mayor stepped into the spot as acting mayor. We missed the deadline to get the third opening on our council on the regular ballot. The two that appeared on the ballot this November 3 were due to terms being up.

Gretchen Artig-Swomley's spot on the council became vacant and was then filled temporarily by the appointment of Laurel Amlee.

Then Laurel ran for one of the two normally open spots and won one of them. She now serves for four years starting in January of 2021. That leaves the original opening left vacate by Gretchen becoming acting mayor. That term would have expired in December of 2022. That means the spot up for special election on February 9 will be a two-year term, not a four-year term, as would be normal.

If you are interested in running for this opening, here are some of the deadlines to keep in mind:

December 1-15 is the Candidate Filing Period. You can get a form from Heritage Hall or on-line, pay a small fee and file to run for this position.

December 15-17 is the withdrawal period, just in case you change your mind.

February 6 Absentee Voting begins and runs from 10-3 p.m.

February 8 absentee voting closes at 5 p.m.

February 9—Election Day!

If you are interested in this spot, any member of the council can give you more information on serving on the city council. There is a bit of work involved, but you may find it fun and you will be doing something for your community.

Archery Deer Hunt Approved

The Gem Lake City Council approved an archery deer hunt permit at the October 20 City Council Meeting. The permit covered a hunt to be conducted during several weekends in late October and early November on private property on the south end of Gem Lake.

To obtain the permit, the property owner applicant, Anthony Scornavacco, was required to go through an extensive application process and obtain written permission to conduct the hunt from all adjoining property owners.

The hunt itself will be conducted by trained and licensed bow hunters. All 11 hunters who are part of the event had to produce not only their deer hunting permits, but also proof that they had completed the Minnesota Advanced Hunter Education Program. Deer stands had to be diagramed in advance to be sure they were far enough away from buildings and other obstacles to a safe event. A summary of the event will be published in a future newsletter.

Recreational Fires in Your Backyard

(continued from page 1)

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.

Culvert: Not Glamorous, but Necessary.....

By Jim Lindner, City Council Member

Did you know that culverts play a silent but important part of water management? Particularly when it comes to storm water runoff and flood control, culverts allow for water to flow towards wetlands and water bodies and prevent water from accumulating where it could lead to flooding and property damage.

Culverts often run under roads and we drive over them without even knowing it. Sometimes culverts are placed at the end of driveways to provide a path for water that collects in roadside ditches. Culverts can be as small as a few inches in diameter or as large as several feet across. Likewise, culverts may only be as long as a driveway is wide, or they can be over a mile or more. Whatever is needed to keep the stormwater running away from properties, a culvert can help provide a solution.



Gem Lake has a variety of culverts, some run under roads and connect wetlands on opposite sides of the street, while other culverts are at the end of driveways. Recently, Gem Lake contacted with its city engineering firm, Short Elliot Hendrickson, Inc. (SEH) to assess the conditions of culverts within the city.

Periodic inspections are necessary as culverts are prone to sediment buildup or structural issues from the weight of vehicles passing overhead. Culverts are typically constructed from ribbed metal, which can corrode over time and potentially collapse from metal fatigue.

Given the wet springs the area has experienced over the past few years, making sure the culverts still serve as they were intended is an important part of Gem Lake's stormwater management program.

In all, SEH inspected 81 culverts throughout the city. While most culverts are in good structural condition, many are collecting sediment, which gradually reduces the effectiveness. Older culverts, especially those constructed of plastic, are susceptible to weather and have a greater chance of structural issues.

Many culverts are located at the end of private driveways. Maintenance on these culverts is the responsibility of the homeowner. Depending on the width of the driveway, this can be a challenge, but it's important to keep the culvert clear of dirt and debris so water continues to flow through. Those culverts under public roadways are maintained by the owners of the road.

Culverts are not glamorous, and are generally not part of everyday conversations, but they do serve an important purpose related to stormwater management. Keeping them clear of debris keeps the water flowing. After heavy rain events culverts suddenly become more prominent, especially if runoff water is ponding in someone's yard. If your driveway includes a culvert, it is your responsibility to keep it clean. Doing so will assure storm water flows to its intended designation. Minnesota's Department of Natural Resources has information relating to culverts on its webpage at www.dnr.state.mn.us.

City News

November Meetings to be Virtual

Due to rising COVID-19 numbers in Minnesota, City Meetings in Gem Lake will be held virtually in November. This includes the Planning Commission Meeting, held November 4, as well as the Special Meeting for Election Certification scheduled for November 12, and the City Council Meeting, scheduled for November 17. The City Council arrived at this decision at the October council meeting, based on pandemic trends. Meetings were held virtually for three months this year, with much success.

You are welcome to attend any of these meetings. 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 zoom call. See her contact information on page 6.

There are Rules About Where Your Snow Can Get Dumped

It is not permissible in Minnesota to plow your snow onto your neighbor's side of the street or into the roadway or ditches in general. This was the subject of several complaints last winter. Due to the heavy snowfall that occurred in past years, there were complaints of what we will call "unfair snow rearrangement." Last winter, some snow plowing ended up blocking several culverts. This prevented proper drainage and may have caused some flooding in yards and basements.

Intentionally plowing or blowing snow onto a public roadway or culvert which results in any dangerous condition is a violation of Minnesota Statute #169.42 and Gem Lake Ordinance 86.

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, will shortly be 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 is now in the process of ironing out arrangements for snow plowing.

Planning Commission Looking at Several Ordinances

The Gem Lake Planning Commission will be looking at several ordinances in the months ahead to see if any modifications, additions or improvements need to be made.

The commission will be examining the Archery Deer Hunting ordinance, which covers the procedures for holding a hunt on private property to cull the deer population.

Also, the council has asked the group to look at the city's ordinance covering permissible home businesses activities. With the move to virtual work spaces this year, it was thought that refinement of this ordinance might be needed. Your input is welcome. Please see page 6 for the dates of upcoming Planning Commission meetings.

Your Dog Should be Licensed

All dogs residing in Gem Lake must be licensed. Its easy. Call Heritage Hall and get the dog license form. Send it in with a copy of your dog's rabies shot certificate and a \$10 fee. One of the advantages of getting that tag is another method for reuniting you with your little darling if they go astray. Call Gloria Tessier for more information.



Memorial Bench Honors Bob Uzpen

This summer the Gem Lake City Council approved the purchase and installation of a memorial bench to honor the late Mayor Bob Uzpen. He died on May 13 after a long battle with ALS.



Bob served as Mayor for 12 years. He was initially elected in 2008 and then re-elected in 2012 and 2016. Bob's biggest asset to the council was his rich experience with finance. He spent much of his career in the banking field.

Prior to moving to the Gem Lake area, Bob also served in the military during the Vietnam War era.

The memorial bench was paid for out from the city's park fund and the bench was installed along the Gem Lake trail, along the western edge of the Gem Lake Villas project. This trail is public and is open to anyone who wishes to enjoy the area. The park bench will receive an official dedication ceremony next Spring, date and time to be determined.

Price Reduction in Business Licenses for 2021

The Gem Lake City Council approved a reduction in the cost of a business license for Gem Lake businesses in the year ahead. The license cost will be reduced from \$100 to \$75, as a small gesture towards business recovery in our community. Business licenses are required for folks doing business here in our city and run from January 1 to December 31. Contact Gloria Tessier for more information.

Final Budget for 2021 Set for Approval at November 17 Meeting

By State Law, the City of Gem Lake needed to certify a preliminary budget for 2021 by the end of September, which it did. This preliminary budget number was used to send out preliminary property tax notices to city residents. The City began with a preliminary general fund budget of \$495,217 and a preliminary property tax levy of \$538,308.

Then cities get several months to refine their figures. The total bottom line budget number can go down but cannot exceed the preliminary number. On November 17, the Gem Lake City Council is set to vote on the final budget number for next year.

There will be a full budget presentation at the November 17 City Council meeting, which will be held virtually. The meeting will start at 7:00 p.m. At that meeting, City Treasurer Tom Kelly will provide complete details on the final budget numbers being presented. The final general fund operating budget is expected to be \$445,535, The final property tax levy for 2021 is expected to be \$535,476.



Typical rush hour traffic in Gem Lake

The City of Gem Lake

PHONE:
(651) 747-2792

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 and the "News and Updates" section.

We're on the Web!

See us at:
www.gemlakemn.org

Meetings: November and December, 2020

The following Gem Lake Meetings will be held in November and December of 2020. All meetings are planned for Heritage Hall, unless noted. Masks are required at present for live meetings.

November 12, 2020

Special Meeting for Purposes of Election Results Certification

7:00 p.m. **Please note that this will be a virtual meeting. Call Heritage Hall to make sure you obtain the call-in details.**

November 17, 2020

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m. VIRTUAL MEETING-see above.

December 1, 2020

Planning Commission

Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

December 15, 2020

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

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

Faith Kuny

Phone: 612-718-4316

Jim Lindner

Phone: 651-262-6678

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
4200 Otter Lake Road
Gem Lake, MN
55110



Dear Gem Lake Resident:

For several days I have been trying figure out a way to make culverts sound exciting. I decided to give up and just tell you that they are important.

Because Gem Lake does not have an extensive stormwater system, we rely on other ways to make sure water flows properly in our city such as ditches and culverts. Most of our roads lack curbs and gutters which are used for conveyance of storm water. We have a lot of driveway culverts that are used to convey water under driveways or roadways.

In most cases the care and maintenance of the culverts are the homeowners responsibility. First, what is a culvert? It's a pipe that conveys water under a road or a driveway from the ditches. This water is being convey via the ditches to the low lying land such as ponds or wetlands.

Keeping an eye on that culvert is really important. When they aren't maintained, they can cause problems that create havoc on roads and driveways nearby.

Over time, those culverts get clogged up with twigs, leaves, weeds, grass clippings, you name it. I called it "yard lint." It's going to build up, but it's important to make sure the culvert doesn't get plugged with all this stuff. The general rule of thumb is to make sure that yard lint doesn't reduce water flow in your culvert.

It's time to take a look at your driveway culvert and make sure water flows through it and it isn't clogged. It might be as simple as raking it out a bit. If things are really clogged and no maintenance has been done for years, more extensive work might be needed. Additionally, do not plow snow into the ditches near the ends of the culverts, which will also cause them to get plugged or clogged.

Several years ago, during the winter of 2018-2019, unusually heavy snowfall clashed with several very clogged culverts. As a result, it complicated the Spring snow melt with flooding issues.

Be a good neighbor and just go check that culvert. It isn't glamorous, it isn't even fun—but its needed. Best to make it an annual fall job. If you need help or advice, call us at Heritage Hall.