

# Gem Lake News

Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Newsletter Editor

## Special Interest Articles:

- 2020 Census Results
- City Budget for 2021
- City News, Page 4

## Upcoming Recycling Dates:

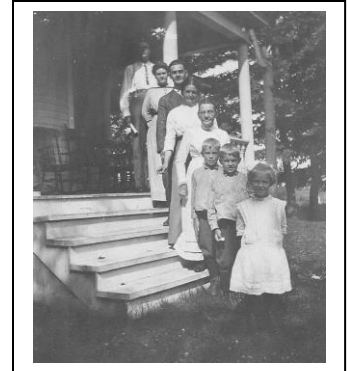
- September 8
- September 22
- October 6
- *Tip: put out your bin the night before for 7 a.m. pick-up.*

## Gem Lake Population Surges to 528

Gem Lake population grew by a whopping one third between 2010 and 2020, according to recently released results of the most current federal census. A total of 528 people make Gem Lake their home, as of April 1 of last year, compared to 393 in 2010. Much of the increase comes from completion of the Gem Lake Villas project, which added 30 new homes to the city.

There are now 208 households, compared to 161 ten years ago, an increase of 47. Persons per households also increased from 2.54 to 2.65.

In terms of racial diversity, 91.7% of people living here are white, non-Latino. The census shows that 8.3% of our population is defined as BIPOC (Black/Indigenous/people of color). This compares with 31.2 % for the seven county Twin Cities region. In terms of age, a total of 111 of city residents are under 18 years of age, with the remaining 417 being over age 18. (Sources: U.S. Federal Census, 2020 and Metropolitan Council.)



## Attempted Carjacking Thwarted

Darlene Birkeland, whose family owns White Bear Floral, was prepared for just another day at the “office” when she arrived around 7 a.m. on July 21. Things were about to get chaotic and very real. The front door was still locked and the backdoor had just been opened when a man came sprinting along the outside of the building. “My first thought was, ‘boy that guy must need flowers really badly,’” said Darlene.

The person shoved his way into the back room and began making demands. He was agitated and loud. “He kept demanding the keys and reaching for his pants. I thought he had a gun.”

Little did she know that the person, we can call him the suspect, had stolen a car from a day care center in North Branch, where a father was dropping off his kids. The suspect led the police (Highway Patrol and multiple other agencies) on a high-speed chase down 35 E Southbound and onto

**(continued on page 5)**



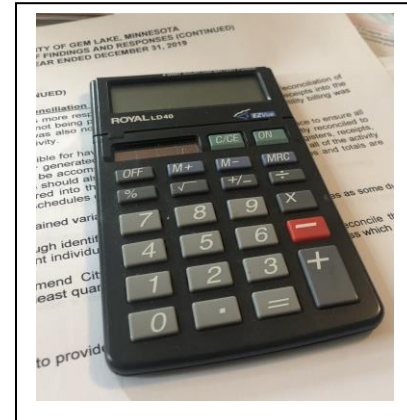
## Gem Lake Proposed Budget for 2021

State statutes require Cities to certify their preliminary property tax levies by September 30<sup>th</sup> this year. Once the preliminary property tax levy is approved and certified to the County Auditor, the City can lower the levy during the remaining budget process but cannot exceed the certified preliminary levy. For this reason, most Cities certify a preliminary levy using worst-case budget scenarios, which is the case with the 2022 preliminary property levy and budget.

The 2022 preliminary property tax levy is proposed at \$588,063, which is a 9.24% increase over 2021 certified preliminary property tax levy. The 2022 preliminary property tax levy consists of a debt levy of \$87,285.00 (a decrease from 2021 preliminary debt levy of \$2,656.00) and the general operating levy of \$500,778.00 (an increase of 11.69% over 2021 preliminary tax levy).

The following changes were made from the 2021 adopted budget as a basis for the 2022 proposed preliminary property tax levy:

- Based on the 2015 Refunding Bond schedule the debt levy for 2022 is set for \$79,480.00. In addition, in 2018, the City issued bonds for the improvements on Scheuneman Road and the 2022 debt levy for this issue is \$7,805. The two of these debt levies makes up the City's 2022 debt levy of \$87,285.
- Licenses and Permits decreased \$1,400 for less building activity.
- Added \$7,000 for small cities aid from the state.
- City Council contingency was left at \$10,000.
- Clerk/General Government increased 8.45% to reflect added expenditures on new city clerk, includes the City's PRA contribution (\$2,145) and additional training (conference registrations \$1,500).
- Police budget was increased 10.85% to \$95,000 based on the City of White Bear Lake's budget.
- The cost of fire services could increase 14.40% to \$29,343.00.
- Road Maintenance budget includes \$20,000 for trimming boulevard trees.



- Salt/sand remain at \$17,000 and snow plowing contract increased from \$18,500 to \$20,000.
- Included a park maintenance budget of \$5,000 for maintaining the park area of the Villas of Gem Lake.
- The 2020 budget includes \$25,000.00 for future improvements.
- Revenue and other expenditure line items adjusted based on past history.
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These changes result in the City proposed preliminary tax levy of \$588,063 for 2022. This compares to 2021 preliminary levy of \$538,308.00 and 2021 final levy of \$535,476.00.

Using a 2022 property tax levy of \$588,063.00 and the City's 2022 tax capacity (\$1,426,695.00) and median valued home (\$335,850.00) for Gem Lake, that median valued home, that property would pay 2022 City property taxes of \$1,255.66 compared to 2021 preliminary levy of \$1,136.94 (an increase of \$118.72) and the 2021 final levy amount of \$1,130.79 (an increase of \$124.87).

The preliminary budget will be voted on at the next Gem Lake City Council Meeting on September 21. The final budget will be approved at the December council meeting. Due to the City having just passed 500 in population, we are now required to hold a "Truth in Taxation" hearing between November 24-December 28. That hearing will be held at the December City Council Meeting.

## Eight Wells in Gem Lake Show Traces of 1,4 Dioxane

As you may know, Water Gremlin, a White Bear Township manufacturer on Otter Lake Road, has had ongoing issues with the release of more potentially harmful chemicals, such as TCE, above the allowable limits in the past few years. They are working with the Minnesota Department of Health to test wells in the area to determine potential pollution affects.

In 2020, 6 private wells in Gem Lake, out of a total of 54 sampled had detectable levels of the chemical 1,4 -dioxane (1,4-Dx). Concentrations in all six wells were below the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) Health Risk Limit (HRL) for drinking water of 1 part per billion (ppb) and were not of health concern.

Follow up sampling began in July 2021. Initial results of the sampling have shown that 8 wells have 1,4-Dx slightly above the MDH HRL, ranging from 1.1 to 3 ppb. All wells are located in a cluster along the western part of Goose Lake Road. Affected residents have been contacted and will receive bottled water for drinking and cooking. The addresses of affected homeowners is not public information.

In December 2020, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) directed Water Gremlin to submit a work plan to sample additional private wells within a one-mile radius of their facility, including wells that had previous detections of trace amounts of 1,4-Dx. Water Gremlin's environmental consultant, Wenck, sent letters to 129 residents, requesting access to collect and test their well water, including some homes that went beyond the one-mile radius. As a result, they tested 49 wells on 48 properties.

The 1,4-Dx HRL of 1 ppb represents an amount of a contaminant that poses little or no health risk to those drinking the water daily for a lifetime, including sensitive or highly exposed people. 1,4-Dx is considered a likely human carcinogen, based on studies of animals exposed to very high amounts. Concentrations detected in well water in Gem Lake are just above the HRL and present a low health risk. 1,4-Dx breaks down quickly in the body and is eliminated within several days. For more information about 1,4-Dx exposure and health in Gem Lake, see 1,4-Dioxane in Private wells- Gem Lake and the White Bear Area (PDF) (<https://www.health.state.mn.us/communities/environment/hazardous/docs/sites/ramsey/wgprtwellgemlake.pdf>).

The distribution of the 1,4-Dx detections in the private wells makes the source unclear. Additional sampling efforts to identify the source are ongoing. Samples of shallow ground water (less than 100 feet below the ground surface) were collected from borings drilled on the Water Gremlin property as part of required monitoring in December 2019 and the summer of 2020. This monitoring showed 1,4-Dx at concentrations greater than the HRL.

In January and February 2020, MDH sampled 11 private wells, detecting 1,4-Dx below the HRL in 3 wells. Water Gremlin sampled 44 more private wells in July 2020, but detected 1,4-Dx in only 3 additional wells, also below the HRL. To better understand the occurrence, movement, and the source of 1,4-Dx in the area, additional data collection and analysis is required. White Bear Lake City water was tested in March 2020 and no 1,4 DX was detected.

After results from additional sampling are in, the MPCA/MDH will determine the locations of any additional residential well sampling. Water Gremlin is currently drilling additional monitoring wells near their facility to evaluate the water quality and flow direction in the deeper sand aquifer. This is the aquifer from which most nearby private wells appear to be getting their water (based on the few available well logs for the private wells in the area).

The chemical 1,4-Dx is thought to pose no health risk when used for washing, household tasks, etc. and presents what they call a low health risk in drinking water. Nevertheless, it should be monitored.

If you have questions regarding this important matter, contact the Minnesota Department of Health by calling 651-201-4897 and leaving a message or emailing [health.hazard@state.mn.us](mailto:health.hazard@state.mn.us). To contact the MPCA, call 651-757-2998

## City News

### Charitable Gambling Funds Donated

Willow Lane Elementary School and the White Bear Lake Emergency Food Shelf were the recipients of \$2500 in charitable gambling funds awarded to them by the Gem Lake City Council on August 17.

Willow Lane Elementary School received two separate contributions from the city. A check for \$500 was provided to the school to use at their discretion for children in need. Another \$500 was used to buy school supplies, based on a list provided to our City Clerk Melissa Lawrence by school officials. After a shopping trip to Walmart, Medelivered a large car-load of supplies to a grateful staff. (See photo below).



The school requested everything from facial tissues and disinfecting wipes, to crayons and folders. And we delivered!

The remaining \$1500 was sent to the White Bear Lake Emergency Food Shelf to help provide much needed food and supplies to those in our area.

### Pick up Your Dog Poop

Gem Lake's animal control ordinance makes the owner of a dog responsible for immediately cleaning up any feces your dog decides to gift to the world. Basically, any owner having custody of a dog on public property, such as a trail or street, has to pick up and dispose of dog poop and has to carry in their possession means for doing so. The same applies if your dog decides to give your neighbor a special gift.

### After Hour Emergency Number for Public Works

In the event of a public works emergency after our normal business hours, there is a number you should call. Gem Lake's normal business hours are 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday. A public works emergency is defined as a threat to public safety or critical infrastructure. (Not a pothole, or something that can wait.) Examples of an emergency would be a water main break, (please don't call City of Vadnais Heights), a city sewer line back up or the collapse of a manhole. The phone number to call after business hours is 651-755-9828. The City of Gem Lake has a cooperative agreement with White Bear Township to handle these emergencies.

### Workshop on Stormwater Scheduled for October 12

After epic snowfall several years ago caused some flooding issues on Scheuneman Road, the Gem Lake City Council decided to hire the engineering firm SEH to study the matter. The goal was to determine if anything could be done to easier improve water flow in the future.

The firm SEH did fairly extensive mapping of the area and took into account that the streets are semi-rural, mostly without curbs and gutter systems, some houses are older and are at grade level and the topography of generations ago generally still exists.

They presented an extensive and detailed report at the July and August City Council meetings. Various solutions for optimum storm water flow were presented from the simple to the over the top expensive, involving the construction of swales, driveway and road culverts. It is unclear what course of action, if any, should be taken.

A next step that was determined to be potentially very useful involves more communication. To facilitate information flow, the city will sponsor a workshop on the Scheuneman Road Stormwater report on October 12 at Heritage Hall at 7:00 p.m. Refreshments will be served. Those living in the area of the Golf course are especially encouraged to attend.



## Carjacker Thwarted in Gem Lake (continued from pg.1)

Highway 61. Speeds apparently reached 80-100 miles per hour at morning rush hour. At some point after the car left the freeway, the suspect crashed into a highway guardrail at the Northwest corner of Highway 61 and County Road E.

As he ditched his car and started running, the entire incident was caught on highway cameras. He darted across County Road E going south and then across Highway 61 going east (during heavy traffic!) He dodged multiple cars and semi-trucks and then tried to



grab a car at the used car dealership. No luck. He is then seen darting for the White Bear Floral delivery truck or the other vehicle parked outside the back door/service entrance.

Darlene was confused about what exactly he wanted. He kept shouting "Give me the keys!" and Darlene kept responding "Which keys?"

At this point, five foot nothing and over 70 years old, Darlene was scared for her own safety. The suspect confronted another employee who was in the garage area and got within several inches of her face. A White Bear Floral delivery driver named Kurt was shouting at him to get the \$\$\$@ out and leave them alone. He was in the back at the time, making boxes for his deliveries.

Another White Bear Floral employee named Bill, had seen the whole incident unfold from outside, where he was watering plants. Police were in hot pursuit and initially shouted to him to stay out of the building. He responded that his boss and fellow employees were inside and ran down to grab the guy and shove him out of the building, which he was able to do successfully. He just happened to get there first.

The Highway Patrol and another law enforcement agency were right there and arrested the suspect

Whew. By now, Darlene and other staff members were starting to realize the gravity of the situation and watched from inside the building as police handcuffed the suspect, just outside the back door. It felt surreal. It was still early morning! Multiple law enforcement agencies, including Highway Patrol, had been on this person's tail almost from the beginning and he wasn't going anywhere!

As it turned out, the suspect wasn't armed and had been reaching repeatedly to pull up his pants. It also emerged that this person had multiple felony warrants out for his arrest.

As the day wore on and she was able to exhale, Darlene says she was extremely grateful to her employees and to the wonderful response from law enforcement. The Highway Patrol stopped in to check on them multiple times during the afternoon and the following day. They wanted to make sure she was okay and had not been physically harmed by the suspect. "I was so impressed and touched by their follow up and concern about me. Anyone who doesn't think these guys do a great job, should come and talk to me."

## Hoffman Road Project Completed!

A much-needed mill and overlay project was recently completed in the Hoffman Road business district. The section of road from near Highway 61 to the south, up to County Road E on the north side, was in need of a facelift.

The road had been in need of repair for several years. Rather than starting over with a completely new road surface, the Gem Lake City Council opted for the less expensive mill and overlay approach. This was done in anticipation of future development in this area someday. The mill and overlay is expected to last approximately 7 years.

## 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](mailto:City@gemlakemn.org)

Newsletter e-mail:  
[gretchenas@comcast.net](mailto:gretchenas@comcast.net)

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

### 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)

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We're on the Web!

See us at:  
[www.gemlakemn.org](http://www.gemlakemn.org)

## Meetings: September and October, 2021

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

### September 21, 2021

City Council Meeting  
Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

### October 5, 2021

Planning Commission  
Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

### October 12, 2021

City Council Workshop at  
7:00 p.m.

Subject: Scheuneman  
Road Stormwater Report

### October 19, 2021

City Council Meeting at  
7:00 p.m. at Heritage Hall.

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

## Your Gem Lake City Council

### Gretchen Artig- Swomley-Mayor

Email: [gretchen.artig-swomley@gemlakemn.org](mailto:gretchen.artig-swomley@gemlakemn.org)

### City Council Members:

#### Laurel Amlee

Email: [rebelneil12@gmail.com](mailto:rebelneil12@gmail.com)

#### Len Cacioppo

Email: [len.cacioppo@gemlakemn.org](mailto:len.cacioppo@gemlakemn.org)

#### Ben Johnson

Email: [ben.johnson@gemlakemn.org](mailto:ben.johnson@gemlakemn.org)

#### Jim Lindner

Email: [jim.lindner@gemlakemn.org](mailto: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**  
4200 Otter Lake Road  
Gem Lake, MN 55110

