



Gem Lake News



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Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Newsletter Editor

Special Interest Articles:

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Nuisance Ordinance Revisions Underway

During the past year there has been a significant increase in the number of complaints by residents about a problem that is hard to tackle but needs to be addressed. Although the vast majority of people who live here like to keep their property looking fine, there are a number of neighbors who feel like they are living next door to the local junkyard. This is where a city's nuisance ordinance comes into play.

Gem Lake's current nuisance ordinance covers all the basics, such as junk cars, uncut grass, garbage, even meth labs. Increasingly, the city has had to deal with folks who are doing things like storing large amounts of junk and clutter in a manner that affects neighbors, running commercial businesses in their front yard, renting out their home without a rental license, parking an unusual number of cars on the street, burning their garbage in the backyard, etc.



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Gem Lake Applies for Water System Grants

The City of Gem Lake is seeking funding from the State of Minnesota for a proposed new water supply system. It is needed to provide potable water to residents and a local golf course because of recently discovered contamination of 22 local private wells. With the majority of the City's residents served by private wells, a new water distribution system to be supplied by neighboring communities is proposed to ensure that those affected by the recently discovered water quality issue can be provided a safe, reliable potable water service.

Sampling performed recently by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) and the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) detected 1,4-dioxane, a likely human carcinogen, in some private wells in Gem Lake. Results of the sampling showed levels in 22 wells exceeded the MDH health-based guidance for 1,4-dioxane. Due to these higher levels, and the associated health concerns, the City of Gem Lake decided to explore the feasibility of a municipal water system to supply safe drinking water to affected properties.



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Scheduled Recycling Dates:

- March 29
- April 12
- April 26

Nuisance Ordinance to Get Overhaul

(Continued from page 1)

Clearly one man’s junk is another man’s treasure, as they say, but out of respect for people who live here, it is time to more clearly define who constitutes junk and other wise expand our nuisance ordinance. To start the process, the City Council asked the Planning Commission to study the current nuisance ordinance and recommend changes.

Some suggestions that have already come up include things like banning all on-street parking on Scheuneman Road, except by a free permit for special events, banning camouflage fencing, limiting the number of unlicensed cars that can be parked on a property, etc. The public’s help is needed on this project. If you have suggestions, you input is needed. You can provide feedback by:

1. Attending the March, April or May Planning Commission Meetings (see schedule on page 6)
2. Emailing any City Council member with your ideas
3. Contacting City Clerk Melissa Lawrence to get the phone number for the Planning Commission Chair and talking to him personally.

This effort will be led by Joshua Patrick, who chairs the Planning Commission. The group is currently studying nuisance ordinances from cities around Gem Lake. Gem Lake’s current nuisance ordinance is available on-line under the ordinances section of the city web-site.

City Applies for Water System Grants

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Since Gem Lake does not intend on having their own water supply source, the city must rely on surrounding communities to provide water to the proposed Gem Lake water distribution system. The City contracted with the engineering firm SEH to evaluate options for a system serving the entirety of Gem Lake, with water supplied solely from one of the neighboring communities, as well as options for smaller, localized water supply projects that could be phased to provide service to portions of the City with known well quality concerns.

These smaller, localized water systems would be fed by the nearest surrounding community’s distribution system, in order to limit costs and complexities. Options were evaluated with a goal of prioritizing those areas of the City with known well water contamination and areas with a higher likelihood for potential future well water quality issues. SEH identified priority level service areas within the City to be served by a new water supply connection. Priority level 1 represents areas needing a new water supply as soon as possible due to existing 1,4-dioxane levels above the MDH health-based guidance value, and priority level 2 represents areas likely needing a new water supply in the near future due to existing detected 1,4-dioxane levels.

The chosen new water supply system option will serve properties within both priority level 1 and priority level 2. The water system will consist of two service areas with the City of White Bear Lake, and White Bear Township each serving one area. The water system will serve 72 households and the golf course and has an estimated average day demand (ADD) of 22,100 gallons per day (gpd), and a maximum day demand (MDD) of 66,300 gpd. Based on hydraulic modeling of the proposed system, the water system is designed to have adequate pressures with the lowest pressure being 41 psi at the highest elevation household, and the proposed water mains are sized so that velocities do not exceed 0.75 feet per second and provide adequate fire flows.

The proposed pipe routes primarily go through already existing roads and developments. Cost estimates were developed for installation of the proposed water distribution service areas. These cost estimates include conceptual level estimates for construction of the proposed system, including removals and restorations, e.g. pavement removal and repair, required for water main installation. These costs are conceptual, order-of-magnitude estimates. The estimated construction cost is \$5,720,000. Including Engineering and administrative costs, the estimated project cost is \$6,860,000.

Item Description	Opinion of Probable Cost	
New Watermain		\$3,142,382.59
New Service Lines and Connections		\$701,453.00
Hydrants and Gate Valve Assemblies		\$328,440.00
New Interconnections and Metering Stations (2)		\$401,120.00
	Subtotal	\$4,573,695.59
Contingency	25%	\$1,143,423.90
	Subtotal	\$5,717,119.49
Engineering	20%	\$1,143,423.90
Total (Including Contingency & Engineering)		\$6,860,543.39

Railroad Crossing Safety

Gem Lake may be small, but it has three railroad crossings on or near its borders. None of these crossings represent mainline tracks, so no freight train will be running at full power through them, but drivers still need to be alert for trains. It's important to remember that just the locomotive can weigh over 120 tons and a train pulling even just five or six cars can take hundreds of feet to stop completely.



Operation Lifesaver is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting rail safety, and goals include awareness of rail crossings. While it may seem obvious that a 120 ton locomotive will destroy a passenger vehicle in a collision, there were over 2140 car-train collisions in 2021 resulting in 234 fatalities. To bring safety awareness to rail crossings, Operation Lifesaver provides important information.

- When crossing railroad tracks, always think there may be a train coming
- Locomotives do not have steering wheels, they cannot swerve to avoid a vehicle on the tracks
- A train traveling at 55 mph can take up to 1.5 miles to come to a stop

To help promote railroad safety crossing safety, the City of Gem Lake reminds its residents of some general information. Railroad tracks are private property and there are posted "no trespassing" signs at the Otter Lake Road crossing. The Minnesota Department of Transportation reminds people that whether there is a "no trespassing" sign or not, walking along railroad tracks is illegal. Additionally, of the rail crossings near Gem Lake only the one along Otter Lake Road has signals and crossing gates, and as many of us who live along Otter Lake Road know, these are often not working. Minnesota Commercial Railway often uses a person with flags to warn drivers of the train's presence.

Per Minnesota statute, a rail flagger is the same as a rail crossing gate, it is illegal to ignore the flagger (plus, take pity on the poor soul whose job it is to walk into on-coming traffic).

While the tracks near Gem Lake are only used on certain days, drivers should always look as they drive through the crossings. Also, listen for train horns. Modern vehicles have excellent soundproofing and radios or fan blowers that can further reduce your ability to hear train horns. Keep this in mind as you approach rail crossings. Rail crossings are serious business. Never try to outrun a train to a crossing. Always obey crossing signals. And remember, if you see train tracks, think train.



Article written by Gem Lake Council Member Jim Lindner

Gem Lake Scholarship Deadline is April 30

Any Gem Lake resident who is graduating from High School in 2023 should consider applying for the Gem Lake Scholarship Program. This program is funded by charitable gambling receipts in the city and has been in existence for over 10 years.

To apply, contact your school's counselor. An application should be in to school officials by the third Friday in April and a copy should be brought to Heritage Hall by April 30 of the graduation year.

For more information, contact Melissa Lawrence at Heritage Hall. See contact information on page 6.



City News

Snow Etiquette

With record breaking snowfall this year, snow disposal has become an issue. Please keep in mind that there are several state statues that come into play when it comes to “snow rearrangement.”

According to Minnesota Statute 160.2715, it is illegal to dump your snow in any public street or right-of-way. The law prohibits the plowing, blowing, shoveling or otherwise placing snow on public roads. This includes the ditches and right-of-way areas along roads.

Violations are considered misdemeanors, but civil penalties also apply if the placement of snow creates a hazard, such as a slippery area, frozen rut, or bump that contributes to a motor vehicle or pedestrian crash. It is also not kosher to snow blow that white stuff onto your neighbor’s property. White Bear Township Public Works officials have reported several incidents of creative snow disposal in public streets from overwhelmed home-owners. This will all melt soon, maybe.

Prevent Spring Flooding – Check Your Culverts

Because Gem Lake does not have an extensive stormwater system, we rely on other ways to make sure water flows properly in our city. Most of our roads lack curbs and gutters and we have a lot of driveway culverts.

In most cases, the care and maintenance of the culverts are the homeowner’s responsibility. First, what is a culvert? It is a ditch that runs along or under a road or a driveway. Keeping an eye on that culvert is really important. When they aren’t maintained, they can cause problems that can cause havoc on roads and driveways nearby.

Over time, those culverts get clogged up with twigs, leaves, weeds, grass clippings, you name it. It is sometimes called “yard lint.” It is going to build up, but it is important to make sure the culvert doesn’t get plugged up with all this stuff. The general rule of thumb is to make sure that yard lint doesn’t reduce water flow in your culvert more than 20%.

It’s time to take a look at your driveway culvert, if you can see it through all the snow. Once the melt starts in June or July, will water be able to flow through it? It might be as simple as raking it out a bit when the culvert is finally more accessible.

If things are really clogged and no maintenance has been done for years, more extensive work might be needed

Several years ago, during the winter of 2018-2019, there was also an unusually heavy snowfall. This event clashed with several very clogged culverts in one area of the city. As a result, it complicated the spring snow melt and resulted in flooding issues.

Be a good neighbor and just go check that culvert when you can. It isn’t glamorous. It isn’t even fun, but it’s needed.



Charitable Gambling Donations

A donation of \$1,250 was approved by the Gem Lake City Council in February to be given to the White Bear Area Food Shelf. This donation comes from charitable gambling receipts that result from pull-tab and bingo sales within city limits. The council also voted to give \$250 to the Northern Fusion Synchronized Skating Program, which is a youth group made up of skaters from the northeast metro area.



Gem Lake Has a Facebook Page

Acting City Clerk Melissa Lawrence has designed and published a Facebook page for the City of Gem Lake. The address is: www.facebook.com/CityofGemLakeMN The Facebook pages focuses primarily on special announcements and news items, events, etc. It is intended to compliment rather than replace the city web-site. Please check it out and “like” and “follow” the page. We are also looking for a few appropriate Gem Lake photos. Your feedback is welcome!

How Does Charitable Gambling Work in Minnesota?

Charitable gambling is big business in Minnesota, resulting in over \$4 Billion in sales in fiscal year 2022. (The State of Minnesota has a fiscal year that runs from July 1 to June 30 each year.) Charitable gambling, or lawful gambling, is a sub-set of general gambling, and is conducted by four types of organizations in Minnesota, including fraternal, religious, veteran and other non-profits. These organizations hold official licenses to allow types of gambling at bars, restaurants, veteran's halls, bingo halls, and other public places. The types of gambling allowed include bingo, pull-tab sales, raffles, tip boards and paddle wheels. Casino gambling is a whole different animal and isn't considered charitable gambling.

It all started with the 1945 Minnesota Bingo Law so that bingo could be conducted by non-profit organizations. The law prohibited profits from going to individuals. The many regulations have been revised and expanded over the years, but the overall purpose remains the same - to make charitable gambling into a fund raising device, rather than a commercial activity.

In Gem Lake, there is one location where charitable gambling is conducted - the Country Lounge. The license holder that conducts the operations is called Merrick, Inc. Merrick is a non-profit organization that provides life enrichment activities and meaningful work to adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities. It has been in existence in the northeast metro area since 1964. The organization's work center and main offices are located in Vadnais Heights.

Based on gross receipts, Merrick, Inc. operates the largest charitable gambling organization in the State of Minnesota, for both paper pull tabs and electronic pull tabs. In Fiscal Year 2022, their gross receipts were \$50,000,948. (The current number is now over \$60M.) After prizes in the amount of \$42,147,938 (84.3%) were paid to customers, the net receipts before taxes and operating costs was \$7,853,010.

The State of Minnesota regulates license holders like Merrick, who then set up sites where charitable gambling can be conducted. Cities in Minnesota then provide the license to the bar or restaurant, such as the Country Lounge.

In addition to providing a license, the city can conduct an annual investigation or overview of operations and has some regulatory authority.

Most cities in Minnesota are able to get up 10% of gross revenues from the charitable gambling that happens within city limits. They then have to contribute all of these funds to charitable organizations or use it for very specific public safety or educational purposes.

Gem Lake received over \$16,223.34 in charitable gambling funds in calendar year 2022. The city donated these funds primarily to the White Bear Area Emergency Food Shelf, Willow Lake Elementary School, or to the City's post-secondary scholarship fund.

Charitable gambling is highly regulated by the Minnesota Gambling Control Board. It is also growing by leaps and bounds. Total sales were \$4.3B in Fiscal Year 2022. This is up 38% over FY 2021 and a 104% increase over FY 2020. Net profits were \$325 Million in Fiscal Year 2022, up 33.5% over 2021.

Charitable gambling in Fiscal Year 2022 resulted in \$131.5 M going to non-profit license holders, such as Merrick, Inc. and \$180M going to the state's general fund, through applicable taxes.

All things to consider when you are out there playing bingo or opening those pull tabs!



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This newsletter is also posted on the city's website under the "Documents" section and the "News and Updates" section.
www.gemlakemn.org

**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)

Meetings: February and March 2023

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

April 10, 2023

City Council Workshop is **CANCELED**

April 11, 2023

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

April 18, 2023

City Council meeting at 7:00 p.m.

May 8, 2023

City Council Workshop is **CANCELED**

May 9, 2023

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00p.m.

May 16, 2023

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

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

Your Gem Lake City Council

Mayor:

Gretchen Artig-Swomley
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City Council Members:

Laurel Amlee
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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.

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