



# Gem Lake News



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Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Newsletter Editor

## Special Interest Articles:

- **MPCA Gives Update**
- **City Clean-Up Day is May 20**
- **City News, Page 4**

## Scheduled Recycling Dates:

- **May 10**
- **May 24**
- **June 7**
- **June 21**

## MPCA Presents Well Update

Recently, a potential responsible party for well contamination in Gem Lake was identified by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). Concentrations of 1,4-dioxane, the chemical found in 23 Gem Lake wells, has been found in wastewater at a manufacturing company near Gem Lake's northwestern border. The Cortec Corporation is a specialty chemical company located in White Bear Township that focuses on corrosion solutions for metal working, construction, shipping, electronics and other industries. They have over 400 products and have garnered 60 patents for their products since 1977. Since the discovery of 1,4-dioxane on their property, they have been cooperating fully with the MPCA to identify where the contamination originated. It has not been fully determined that this contamination is linked to Gem Lake's problem; however, the concentrations are higher than those found in our city. The company is also uphill from the private well contamination and is a flow pattern that potentially makes sense to the experts involved.



This news was part of the update that was conveyed to Gem Lake citizens at a special presentation during the April 21 City Council meeting. The presentation was led by representatives of the MPCA and the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and included about 30 members of the Gem Lake Community.

**(Continued on page 2)**

## Joint Clean-Up Day, Take Advantage!

Take advantage of the first ever Joint White Bear Township and Gem Lake Spring Clean-Up Day on May 20. This is your chance to drop off a variety of unwanted items free of charge to residents of the Township and the City. The spring clean-up event will take place Saturday, May 20 from 7:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Otter Lake Elementary School. The address is 1401 County Road H2, White Bear Township, MN 55110. You may be asked to provide I.D. to verify you live in one of these municipalities.

Accepted items include: appliances, automotive batteries, tires, mattresses, furniture, carpeting, household fixtures, TVs, electronics, lawn mowers (fluids drained), building materials (small quantities only), tree limbs and brush. There will be paper shredding available from 8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Take advantage of this unique, free chance to get rid of unwanted items and get your household ready for summer! For more information, call Melissa Lawrence at 651-747-2790.

## Spring Clean-up



### MPCA Presents Well Update (continued from page 1)

Hydrologist Michael Ginsbach from the MPCA explained the science behind how 1,4-dioxane was found at Cortec, as well as the significant testing that was done at sites surrounding this facility. No other traces of the offending chemical have been found nearby as of yet. He also explained how the chemical might travel through the layers of sand, dirt, gravel and other materials below ground, slowly making its way to some wells in the area. Ginsbach and Tim Grape, Supervisor of the Superfund Unit at MPCA, also made it clear that more testing in the area would be required and that sites in Gem Lake would be monitored this summer, as well as wells that are near the contamination. "We cannot yet make a definitive link between Cortec and Gem Lake, we are also not ready to say this is the only source of the contamination", according to Grape.

During the presentation, the MPCA and the MDH answered numerous questions about the contamination, possible health impacts, possible mitigation strategies and what is expected to happen this year with another round of well test monitoring.

Citizens of Gem Lake expressed concerns about why the investigation and monitoring process takes so long and when definitive answers might be available. There were also many concerns about the health risks involved and how long those with a contaminated well might have to rely on bottled water. To these types of questions, Emily Hansen, Environmental Health Assessor for the MDH provided a good deal of information. The Minnesota Health Risk Limit (HRL) of 1 part per billion is very protective of human health, so the MDH does not expect health effects from drinking water that contains 1,4-dioxane just above the HRL, like has been found in Gem Lake wells. However, because 1,4-dioxane is considered a likely carcinogen, MDH recommends drinking alternative water if well water is above the HRL. Currently no studies on humans have linked the chemical to cancer. There are, however, animal studies that have shown that ingestion of high concentrations of the chemical can cause cancer in animals.

Citizens asked if there was a way to attribute future cancers to the 1,4-dioxane in well water. Hansen said that there isn't a lot of information about 1,4-dioxane and cancer but that there could be a slight increased risk of cancer from drinking the water over a lifetime. The risk is theoretical and one would not be able to connect the 1,4-dioxane to any one cancer in the community. According to Hansen, "cancer is very common - 4 out of 10 people who live in Minnesota are likely to get cancer in their lifetimes. Information known about risk factors and causes vary with different types of cancer."

The concern is for the ingestion of the water. Other household water uses like showering, doing laundry, washing dishes, and brushing teeth is considered safe.

Ginsbach also added that Iowa and Wisconsin have much higher limits on the acceptable amount of 1,4-dioxane that is considered safe to drink, and that North and South Dakota have no standards at all when it comes to this chemical. Gem Lake's 23 affected wells are showing readings of 1 to 3 parts per billion, which is considered very small. However, the amounts are over the limits in Minnesota and have to be investigated, tracked and dealt with.

He stated that additional well testing will take place in the next few months and that more answers and information should be available at that time. The City of Gem Lake has invited the MPCA to make its next presentation and update report at the August City Council meeting.

The solution to the well contamination problem has to be arrived at by the City of Gem Lake in consultation with its citizens. Possible strategies would be to put in a full or partial municipal water system in which water is brought from a nearby city, the digging of new private wells, advanced filtration systems installed at private residences, or a combination of these ideas.

The original problem was discovered in Fall of 2021, when testing was being conducted in the area as a result of pollution at the Water Gremlin facility in White Bear Township. When the MPCA mandated well testing was conducted in the surrounding area, the 1,4-dioxane showed up in wells located 1-1.5 miles away in Gem Lake. The MPCA is requiring Water Gremlin to investigate the extent and magnitude of the 1,4-dioxane release from their facility and based on their investigation to date, it appears that the source of elevated levels of 1,4-dioxane in Gem Lake may be associated with another source.

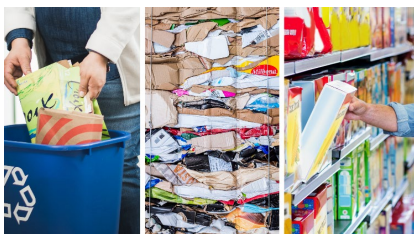
What is 1,4-dioxane? The main use of this chemical was as a stabilizer for the chlorinated solvent 1,1,1-trichloroethane, which is often used for many industrial purposes. 1,4-dioxane can also be an unintended contaminate in the production of certain products, including some cleaners, detergents, adhesives, inks, automotive fluids, etc. Groundwater contaminated with 1,4-dioxane is largely caused by the historical use and disposal of chlorinated solvents.

## Recycling in Minnesota – How Does it Work?

Have you ever questioned if recycling is worth it? Short answer: yes. Beyond saving energy and protecting natural resources, recycling also supports vital industries.

Recycling is the process of collecting materials that would otherwise be thrown away and turning them into new products. Our cans, bottles and paper are dropped off at a local facility where people and machines sort the recycling into material types which are sent to many different companies:

- **Paper and Cardboard** are made into newspapers, toilet paper rolls and cereal boxes at five paper mills in Minnesota
- **Cartons** like juice boxes are sent to a company in Wisconsin that make a material for new paper products
- **Aluminum Cans** get turned into new cans, wire, siding and more at plants in the South.
- **Steel cans** like those used for soup are made into steel beams in Chicago.
- **Plastic bottles with a number 1 like water and soda bottles** are shipped to other states to be made into new bottles, deli food containers and carpet.
- **Plastic containers with a number 2 like milk jugs** are transformed into low-maintenance lumber by companies like Avon Plastics in Paynesville. They are also made into more bottles or irrigation tubing for farmers.
- **Cottage Cheese and other plastic tubs with a number 5** are used to create food containers, car parts, paint cans and more by companies in other states
- **Glass bottles and jars** are sorted by color in Saint Paul. Clear glass goes to Anchor Glass in Shakopee to make condiment bottles. Brown glass is sent to Illinois to make beer bottles.



Our recycling is wanted by many companies in our state and across the country. Help support local recycling business:

- **Stick to the basics:** Recycle the items listed on the left.
- **Keep it loose:** Empty recycling into your bin – no plastic bags.
- **Check with your recycling hauler or Ramsey County** (RamseyRecycles.com/AtoZ or 651-633-3279) for everything else.

## Don't Feed The Deer That Hang Around Your Yard

Okay, sometimes they are cute and gentle, but those deer are also wild animals. The Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has feeding and attractant bans in place across the state to prevent concentrations of wild deer in areas with a higher risk of disease. This includes Ramsey County. These bans are precautionary steps the DNR took when deer that tested positive for chronic wasting disease (CWD) were found in both wild and on deer farms. Feeding bans encompass wider areas because food sources can concentrate deer and allow for close contact—one of the mechanisms for CWD.

Deer feeding includes placement or distribution of grains, fruits, vegetables, hay and other food capable of attracting deer.

Deer attractants are natural or manufactured products that are capable of attracting or enticing deer, including salt or food scents.

People who feed birds and small mammals must do so in a manner that prevents deer access, such as placing food at least six feet above ground level. Food placed as a result of normal agricultural practices is generally exempt from the feeding ban. For more information go to: [www.dnr.state.mn.us/cwd/feedban.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/cwd/feedban.html)



## City News

### Sealcoating of Roads

Streets in Gem Lake are getting a sealcoat this summer, as part of our overall street maintenance plan. The target start date is July 17 and the target completion date is August 18, subject to weather delays, of course.

By proactively treating road surface with sealcoat (an oil and rock application) on regularly scheduled intervals (3-5 years), a street's useful life can be extended. This recommendation by our Public Works experts at White Bear Township is based on current road research.

Temporary no parking signs will be posted at least 24 hours before operations begin. Included in this project are Summit Farm Lane, Big Fox Road, Little Fox Road, Haven Lane, Scheuneman Road (North and South) and Hoffman Road.

### Water System Funding Update

The City of Gem Lake's application for federal funding for a partial municipal water system has been selected to advance to the next stage in the U.S. House appropriations process. The City received the official notice of nomination on April 11 from the office of U.S. Representative Betty McCollum.

Under the rules designated by the Republican Majority, each member of the U.S. House of Representatives was limited to nominating 15 projects for funding this year.

This year, McCollum's office nominated projects that appear to have the highest probability of being chosen for funding based on the criteria previously outlined. There is significant competition for limited dollars available for Community Project Funding and this nomination to advance is not a guarantee of funding. More information will be shared when it is available as the City's application progresses through the process.

### 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 \$1500 was approved by the Gem Lake City Council in April 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.

### 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](http://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 website. 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!



# Two Noteworthy Souls Leave Us

Two very noteworthy people who had an impact on Gem Lake have passed away. One was a long-time resident who served on the Gem Lake Planning Commission, another was an individual who worked at a Gem Lake business for over 60 years.

## Dick Garner

White Bear Floral recently lost a beloved member of their team with the passing of Richard "Dick" Garner. Dick started his career with the floral shop when they were looking for help in 1958. In his 65-year career there, Dick did literally everything, rarely missed a day of work and helped build the shop into what it is today, according to owner John Birkeland. He was still working every day almost until the day he died at age 86.

Dick was born in 1936 and grew up on a farm in the White Bear area. He was the oldest of nine children. Dick began working at the age of 14 for Gem Lake's first mayor, Henry Hoffman, doing construction work. When he began his job at White Bear Floral, he became a much needed "jack-of-all-trades." Dick did everything from flocking Christmas trees, starting bedding plants, making holiday wreaths, waiting on customers, and taking charge of "back-room operations."



He loved to work and almost never deviated from his full work-day. This February, he apologized profusely for missing out on some of the Valentine's Day work. Few realized how ill he was.

According to John Birkeland, "Dick was a godsend. Just what we needed at the time.

Along with my Mom and Dad and my Aunt Esther, he helped to build the operation into what you see around you today. He was a fixture, a teacher, and such a hard worker."

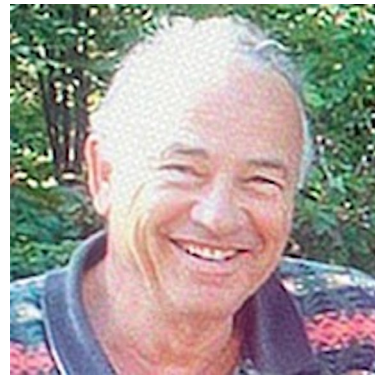
Dick died of natural causes on February 17. He is survived by a son and two daughters, as well as two brothers and two sisters, nine nieces and nephews, three grandchildren, three great grandchildren and many friends. A very well attended Celebration of Life was held in his honor at White Bear Floral. He will be greatly missed.

## David Kenneth Gardner

David Gardner was a resident of Gem Lake for decades and also had a home in Tucson, Arizona, where he spent most winters in recent years.

David was born in 1940 in Huron, South Dakota and graduated from Harvard College in 1962. He was known as a brilliant man and enjoyed a 31 year career in Institutional Equity Sales for Merrill Lynch, where he demonstrated a passion for financial investments.

He was also known as an avid outdoorsman and lover of nature. He enjoyed roaming the outdoors with his beloved dogs. He had an innate curiosity and was a student of everything, according to friend and former Gem Lake city clerk, Fritz Magnuson. "I am proud to have had him as a friend."



David was the chairman of Gem Lake's Planning Commission in the 1990's. He came in after Judson Bemis and before Jack Hoeschler, both of whom also chaired the Planning Commission, according to Fritz. He provided much needed guidance on beginning to plan for future growth.

Dick passed away last September and is survived by his wife of 61 years, Leslie Gardner, as well as a son and daughter and two grandchildren. Neighbors remember him as a warm and wonderful person, full of interesting knowledge and a love of nature.

## The City of Gem Lake

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Newsletter E-mail:  
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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](http://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: May and June 2023

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

### May 8, 2023

City Council Workshop is **CANCELED**

### May 9, 2023

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

### May 16, 2023

City Council meeting at 7:00 p.m.

### June 12, 2023

City Council Workshop is **CANCELED**

### June 13, 2023

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00p.m.

### June 20, 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:

### Len Cacioppo

Email: len.cacioppo@gemlakemn.org

### Gretchen Artig-Swomley

Email: gretchen.artig-swomley@gemlakemn.org

### Ben Johnson

Email: ben.johnson@gemlakemn.org

### City Council Members:

### Laurel Amlee

Email: laurel.hynes-amlee@gemlakemn.org

### Jim Lindner

Email: 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.

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**CITY OF GEM LAKE**  
4200 Otter Lake Road  
Gem Lake, MN 55110