



Gem Lake News



September 2023 | Volume 17 | Issue 5

Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Newsletter Editor

Special Interest Articles:

- Temporary Moratorium on Cannabis
- Luther Cadillac Grand Opening
- Donuts with a Cop
- School Supply Donation
- City News, Page 7

Scheduled Recycling Dates:

- September 13
- September 27
- October 11
- October 25

Temporary Moratorium Placed on Cannabis Sales in Gem Lake

A new ordinance was adopted by the City Council on July 18, placing a moratorium on the retail sale of cannabis products in Gem Lake until January 1, 2025. The motion followed a public hearing on the subject in which members of the public were invited to participate.

Many cities in Minnesota have adopted a similar moratorium, in order to allow time for the state agency that will monitor and oversee cannabis sales to be up and running. The new State law enabling cannabis sales, set the January 1, 2025 deadline for the agency to be fully functional. In the meantime, the State of Minnesota intends to provide model ordinances to cities that they can adopt pertaining to aspects of retail sales, and other issues surrounding cannabis usage.



(Continued on Page 2)

Luther Cadillac Grand Opening

Luther Cadillac of Vadnais Heights/Gem Lake is now open. The beautiful new showroom opened its doors on August 7 and is now fully functional for sales and service, according to General Manager Perry Feavel. "We are looking forward to working with the surrounding community to fulfill their transportation needs."

A grand opening event will be held sometime in the near future. The new facility includes a sleek showroom, new car preparation area, sales and finance offices, a large service area and a very comfortable and attractive service waiting area. The modern design of this new dealership is one that Cadillac is rolling out nationwide, and it's the first Cadillac store with this design in Minnesota. This business was previously located in Roseville.

(Continued on Page 2)



Temporary Moratorium on Cannabis (Continued from page 1)

The new state law gives cities limited power when it comes to the enforcement of the state rules. This limited power is mainly tied to zoning issues. In other words, cities can decide where retail sales can happen and how many licenses can be issued. Retail cannabis businesses must be a regulated distance away from schools, playgrounds and areas where children would routinely be found. Cities cannot override the state law that now says cannabis usage is legal, although there is some thought being given to how cannabis usage in public spaces within cities should be handled.

At least one retailer in Gem Lake has expressed their intention to sell cannabis products as soon as the moratorium is lifted and the rest of the rules are worked out.

Luther Cadillac Grand Opening (Continued from page 1)

Later this fall there will be an area devoted to Electric Vehicle Charging that will be open to the public. This Luther Cadillac is unique in that the dealership space spans two cities. The facility is fully in the City of Vadnais Heights, while the northern side of the parking lot is located in the City of Gem Lake. Both cities worked cooperatively to get keep the project rolling to completion. "We appreciated the hard work everyone did to get the job done," said Feavel.

Check out our newest business!



Donuts with a Cop

The White Bear Lake Police Department sponsored "Donuts with a Cop" on Friday morning July 14 at the Gem Lake Hills Golf Course. This popular event showcases police efforts to be involved with the community on a regular basis. Donuts donated by Kowalski's in Shoreview were handed out all morning to kids who were involved in junior league golfing events. It also represented an opportunity for many in the community to express their thanks to retiring White Bear Police Chief Julie Swanson, who will be leaving the department at the end of August.



According to White Bear Lake Police Chief, Julie Swanson, "this event is primarily the junior golfers and their parents, and the kids really enjoy starting their Friday golf round off with a free donut! I believe we had 300 kids come through and approximately 20 residents."



Metro Deer Management Meeting

By Jim Lindner

On a warm, humid summer morning, approximately 90 people from across the metro gathered at Silverwood Park in St. Anthony to discuss the Twin Cities' urban deer population. Much of the conversation was centered on deer population management and how best to control the amount of deer in the city.

Per Steven Hogg, wildlife supervisor with Three Rivers Park District, the primary source of deer control is, unfortunately, car/deer collisions. In 2020, in Hennepin County alone, there were nearly 900 car deer collisions. Hunters cannot keep pace with that rate.

Deer studies are helpful in learning migration habits which may include deer crossing from park space onto private property. Helicopters make deer surveys possible, but remember, a survey is only a moment in time. People like to challenge the accuracy of surveys, but care is taken by the survey team to be as accurate as possible. The University of Minnesota also studies deer movement, primarily to better understand how diseased deer may be part of the population that traverses onto private property.



Using Elm Creek Park Reserve in Maple Grove as a base, researchers Meggan Craft and James Forrester are studying movement habits. While deer typically do not make long migrations (it's unlikely a deer from say Chanhassen will travel over 20 miles to Maple Grove), they will migrate from one end of large parks like Elm Creek to other areas, and perhaps wander onto private back yards. Deer tend to congregate more in winter and disperse in summer, but their movement is limited to areas of a few square miles. Craft and Forrester use tracking collars on deer so people may observe such deer in or around their property. It's unlikely that these deer will find their way to Gem Lake, but if such a deer is seen, know that it defied common knowledge and wandered far from where it was first collared.

While it's always exciting to see deer in your yard, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources recommends not feeding deer. Deer are like other animals, once they know where food sources are, they'll hang around. They may stick around and eat your plants or cause other damage to your yard. The answer may not be increased regulatory actions, some of the burden falls upon residents to understand deer habits. Deer have been around for a lot longer than humans, and a lot longer than human settlement, they're programmed to survive so they do what they feel is necessary.



The focus of the presentations was clear, deer are a problem throughout the metro area, and they want to control populations in safe, efficient manners. Reducing the chances of car/deer accidents is one goal. Hunting is a last resort after other options have been exhausted. Understanding deer habits, knowing their movements, and developing management plans are all part of the process.

Gem Lake often hosts an annual deer hunt but is not required to do so. The City Council will be discussing the 2023 deer population and deer herd management at a future meeting.

According to Ramsey County's survey taken in March for Gem Lake 23 deer were counted, one of the highest in the area.



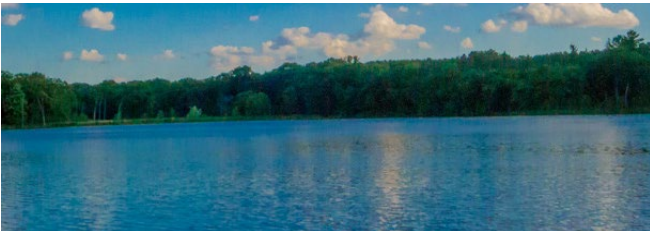
Of Lakes and Dishwashers: A Fun Look at Preventing Illicit Discharge in Gem Lake

By Nick Voss, VLAWMO Education and Outreach Coordinator

Here's a question I'm sure you've reflected upon frequently: what do a lake and a dishwasher have in common? Any guesses? Though it seems like a trick question or an inside joke, it's not an abstract connection.

Both dishwashers and lakes work best with a thorough pre-rinse. This small preventative care task helps each stay clean, avoid costly repairs, and operate smoothly. Instead of placing dishes full of crumbs and food directly into the dishwasher, the machine will perform much better if those dishes are first wiped or rinsed off. As a kid you may remember your parents telling you to first clear off the dishes before placing them in the dishwasher.

Lakes work in much the same way. The more debris that enters a lake, the harder that lake will have to work to process it all. Too much sediment buildup will require costly maintenance to keep the lake water clear and supportive of aquatic life. If that sediment is prevented from first entering the lake, the entire aquatic eco-system will function far more effectively.



An important common denominator dishwashers and lakes share is us, the people who use them. While we wipe and rinse dishes that we put into our dishwashers, we also need to be mindful of what we allow into our lakes. Storm drains, ditches, dry creeks, and wetlands all direct storm water runoff into lakes and whatever we allow into these conveyances eventually enters the lakes (and rivers). Chemicals, pesticides, automotive fluids, pet waste, road salt, and even natural items like leaves and grass clippings all have the potential to choke out the lake or river making them unsafe for wildlife and human recreation.

Dumping any of the above listed items into stormwater conveyance systems is known as "illicit discharge" and is illegal. Returning to the dishwasher analogy, a broken dishwasher is an inconvenience; we must now take the time to wash our dishes by hand. When waterbodies are contaminated public health is negatively impacted, especially if people recreate in the water or it's part of a public drinking water network.

Waterbodies with excessive amounts of pollutants are known as "impaired" and the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) maintains a list of impaired waters. In 2018 Gem Lake's namesake lake was removed from the Minnesota list of impaired waterbodies, something we all can be proud of. To keep Gem Lake from being relisted, or to help other lakes and rivers, here are some best practices to follow:

- **Lawn care:** Sweep grass clippings away from pavement; mulch them back into the grass for free fertilizer.
- **Yard waste:** Mulch leaves with a mower at 50-75% coverage on the lawn, depending on the texture and moisture. If there's extra, dispose of leaves through a curbside yard waste service or at a Ramsey County yard waste site.
- **Winter maintenance:** Use salt sparingly and maintain 3" between crystals – erring on more salt doesn't make ice melt any faster and often leads to leftover excess when the ice is gone. Instead of salt, grit is the ideal product for creating that satisfying "crunch" when walked on, and it can be swept up and reused for later.
- **Hazardous waste:** Plan ahead for responsible disposal. Visit <https://www.ramseycounty.us/residents/recycling-waste/a-z-disposal-guide> for insight on how to dispose of paints, water softener salt, concrete mix, and more.

More information can be found at the city's website at <https://www.gemlakemn.com/vlawmo/>

For more tips on how to help Gem Lake be squeaky clean visit <https://www.vlawmo.org/residents/>



Storms Hammer Gem Lake - Twice

Massive summer thunderstorms on July 19 and July 24 knocked out power in Gem Lake and resulted in significant storm damage. On both occasions, many Gem Lake residents lost power for hours. The two storms dropped trees on Goose Lake Road, Otter Lake Road and Highway 96. Each of these events resulted in traffic challenges and significant clean up.

Tree and branch damage was evident throughout the city. Over 30 trees were lost to the two events, with 9 of these happening on the Gem Lake Hills Golf Course. The grounds crew at the course worked late into the evening on July 19 to clean up as much damage as possible, due to a junior league event that was scheduled for the following day. Although there were early reports that a tree fell on Heritage Hall, this was later shown to be not quite true. A large tree fell parallel to the structure and completely missed doing anything but backyard damage. Both White Bear Township and Gem Lake municipal buildings lost power and had to close temporarily. For the next two weeks, the sound of chain saws in action filled the summer air. Some folks are still cleaning up the storm damage.



Here is what Gem Lake Council Member Jim Linder had to say:

Up until July 19, the summer of 2023 had been mostly free of violent weather in Gem Lake. That was until approximately 5:30PM on Wednesday, July 19 when strong winds and heavy rain blew through town. Winds in excess of 30mph were accompanied by about a half inch of rain all within a span of about 30 minutes. Branches and trees fell, and power was out for roughly 4 hours in the eastern part of town.

Later that same evening, while waiting for power to be restored, residents began the cleanup. People surveyed the damage, picked up smaller branches from their yards, returned lawn and patio furniture to their proper places and used chainsaws for the larger branches and trees.

Some resident joked it sounded like they were in an episode of the old *Red Green Show*, where a cacophony of chainsaws frequently provided background noise for many episodes. Other areas of neighboring White Bear Lake were hit even harder as several large trees fell across streets creating cleanup headaches for public works staff. But things slowly returned to normal over the following days. County Road F and parts of downtown were hit particularly hard.



But mother nature was not done yet. Sometime after 2:00PM on Monday, July 24, round two happened, hitting nearly the same area as the previous storm.

More trees were toppled and branches that did not fall during earlier event were subjected to new wind gusts. This time nearly 1.5 inches of rain fell in eastern Gem Lake and power was out for over four hours. Two tall trees along Otter Lake Road in White Bear Township fell across power lines forcing Xcel Energy crews to close the road to all traffic, automobiles as well as walkers, until the lines could be returned to service.

Residents who've lived in Gem Lake for over 35 years were hard pressed to recall two powerful storms just five days apart. Hopefully the odds are now in Gem Lake's favor and the next storm will strike somewhere else, but never underestimate nature and summertime in Minnesota.



Gem Lake Makes Huge School Supply Donation

For the third year in a row, Gem Lake donated a huge assortment of school supplies to the Willow Lane Elementary School. Typically, the city waits for a list from the school of what they consider most needed supplies. The goal is to stock the school's supply pantry and help the most number of children possible with basic needs.



Once the list is received city staff goes on a shopping spree at Walmart, using charitable gambling funds and tries to find all or most of the necessary items in the quantity desired. This year's shopping list filled two carts at Walmart and included enough materials for several months. Items purchased included everything from crayons and markers to folders, notebooks and Kleenex. The City also authorized \$500 for the school to spend at their own discretion for children in need.

MPCA to Provide Well Update

Key representatives from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency will provide Gem Lake with an update on well contamination at the September City Council Meeting. This meeting will take place September 19 at 7:00 p.m.

Several months ago, the MPCA reported to the City Council that a possible source for the 1,4-dioxane found in 22 Gem Lake wells had been located. The agency outlined a plan to do further well testing in the city and surrounding areas and to report back on the results. One of the key goals in collecting this data is to see if well contamination has increased or decreased and whether it has moved to new areas.

Please feel free to attend this important meeting.

Archery Deer Hunting Licenses Approved for the Fall

Two archery deer hunting licenses were approved by the Gem Lake City Council on August 15 for organized hunts that will take place on private property in the South and Western areas of the city. Each will take place on large lots located near the water body of Gem Lake. The areas where hunting will take place are tightly controlled by city regulation, with deer stands located at least 300 feet from a property line. Each property owner had to present a list of deer hunters who will be involved and demonstrate that they have state hunting licenses and proper training. Each will take place this fall on three preplanned sets of dates so as to allow for notification of immediate neighbors.

Property One
September 16-18
October 27-29
November 3-5

Property Two
September 22-24
November 10-12
November 17-19

The archery deer stands are typically deep within the property in both cases, so the hunts should go unnoticed by the general public.

Gem Lake has licensed these private deer hunting events for over 7 years without a problem, due to the number of rules and regulations each property owner must follow. The hunts are done to cull the very large deer populations with city limits. (see story on page 3).

Nuisance Ordinance Update

After months of work by Gem Lake's Planning Commission, the city council voted to approve a newly revised Nuisance Ordinance. Gem Lake Ordinance #86 defines public nuisances in more detail than the previous ordinance and also expands the language surrounding abatement and penalties for violations.

This ordinance deals with things, acts, or use of property in Gem Lake that endangers health, safety, comfort or "repose" of the public, offends public decency, interferes with the use, or obstructs public areas, depreciates the value of property, etc.

For the purpose of clarity and ease of use of the ordinance, the Planning Commission suggested creating totally separate ordinances for two subject areas that were previously part of the Nuisance Ordinance. These subjects are Clandestine Drug Labs (now ordinance #143) and Traffic, Parking, Vehicles and Use of Streets and Highways (now ordinance #144).

City News

Signage to Illustrate Gem Lake's Wildflower Area

Beautiful new signage will be installed shortly that will illustrate the many plants and butterflies that are present in Gem Lake's small wild flower area. This area was planted along Gem Lake's only public space, a short trail in the Southern part of our city. The trail borders the Gem Lake Villas housing development. The wildflower area was planted several years ago in an effort to create a butterfly and bee friendly space in our community.

The signs were designed by Master Gardener Dr. Kim Anderson-Uzpen to educate the public on the native grasses and plants that are so important to our local eco-system. Anderson-Uzpen retired several year ago and has played a key role in helping foster the wildflower area.

Please see below for some examples of what the signage will look like. The cost of the signage comes out of the city's park fund and was primarily financed through a park dedication contribution made by Luther Cadillac when they embarked recently on their dealership construction project.

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 focus 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!

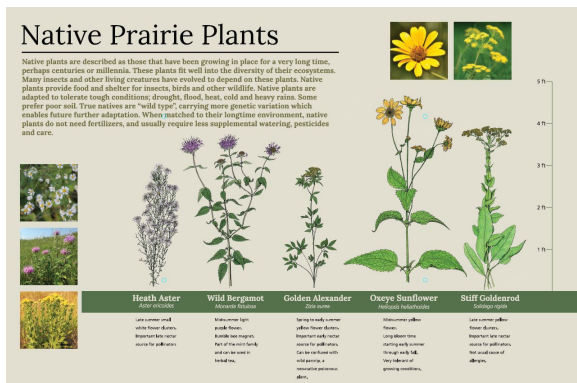
Charitable Gambling Donations

Willow Lane Elementary School and the White Bear Lake Emergency Food Shelf were the recipients of \$2000 in charitable gambling funds awarded to them by the Gem Lake City Council on August 15.

A donation of \$1000 was approved by the Gem Lake City Council in July 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.



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 Acting City Clerk Melissa Lawrence by school officials. After a shopping trip to Walmart, Melissa delivered a large car-load of supplies to a grateful staff.



The City of Gem Lake

Phone:
(651) 747-2790

Fax
(651)-747-2795

City Hall Address:
4200 Otter Lake Road
Gem Lake, MN 55110

General E-mail:
city@gemlakemn.org

Newsletter E-mail:
Gretchen.artig-swomley@gemlakemn.org

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: September and October 2023

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

September 11, 2023

City Council Workshop is **CANCELED**

September 12, 2023

Planning Commission Meeting is **CANCELED**

September 19, 2023

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

October 9, 2023

City Council Workshop is **CANCELED**

October 10, 2023

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

October 17, 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
Email: gretchen.artig-swomley@gemlakemn.org

City Council Members:

Laurel Amlee
Email: laurel.hynes-amlee@gemlakemn.org

Len Cacioppo

Email: len.cacioppo@gemlakemn.org

Ben Johnson

Email: ben.johnson@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.

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