



# Gem Lake News



February 2024 | Volume 18 | Issue 1

Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Newsletter Editor

## Special Interest Articles:

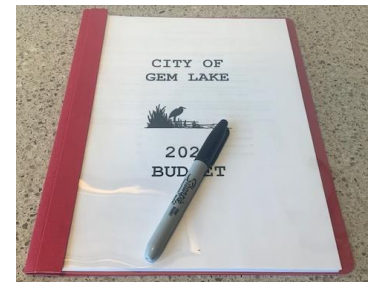
- Gem Lake Final 2024 Budget Approved
- Gem Lake MS4 Permit Audited
- Recycling in Gem Lake
- White Bear Lake Annual Report
- Smart Salting
- City News, Page 7

## Scheduled Recycling Dates:

- February 14
- February 28
- March 13
- March 27

## Gem Lake Final 2024 Budget Approved

The 2024 Final Gem Lake Budget was approved on December 19, following the city's required "Truth in Taxation" hearing. The city council approved a final property tax levy of \$697,081, which is a 7.042% increase from the 2023 final property tax levy. However, it is a decrease of almost \$20,000 from the 2024 preliminary budget of \$717,742 that was approved in September. By State law, cities must establish a preliminary budget by the end of September, while final figures are being worked out. Cities can decrease the final budget numbers, but can't go over whatever they establish in September as their preliminary budget. State law also mandates that the final property tax levy must be established by each city by December 29.



Gem Lake's final levy of \$697,081 consists of a debt levy of \$84,418 (an increase from the 2023 debt levy of \$2,094) and the general operating levy of \$612,663 (an increase of 7.693% from the 2023 tax levy).

(Continued on Page 2)

## Gem Lake's MS4 Permit Audited

Gem Lake's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit was recently audited by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA). The MPCA routinely audits every MS4 throughout the state on a random basis, so it was not a matter of if, but when, Gem Lake would have its turn.

The audit consisted of a review of the approximately 75 items identified on the permit. Most items concern various "best practices" intended to safeguard against discharging chemicals or other toxins into the public water system. Since storm drains transport storm water directly into rivers and lakes, there is no treatment process involved. The permit emphasizes preventive measures such as construction site inspections, or physical berms or retention ponds that are designed to filter water before it enters the main storm sewer network.



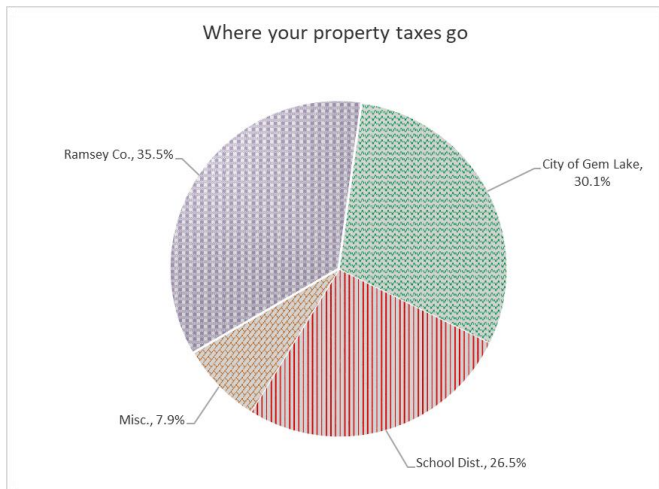
(Continued on Page 2)

## Gem Lake Final 2024 Budget Approved (Continued from page 1)

Here are several notable items in the 2024 budget:

- The budget includes \$20,000 for road maintenance and repairs and \$10,000 for trimming boulevard trees.
- Based on 2023 expenditures, the salt/sand budget was reduced \$3,000 and the snow plowing contract was decreased \$3,000.
- The City does no longer qualifies for small government aid, which reduces revenues by \$7,000.
- The police budget from the City of White Bear Lake was increased 12.38% to \$129,466. This includes \$115,877 for police services and \$13,589 for debt payments on their new public facilities building.
- The fire service budget from the City of White Bear Lake increased 43.04% to \$48,669. It includes \$31,982 for fire services, \$7,746 for fire marshal services and \$8,941 for debt payments on their new public facilities building.
- It is notable that the City of White Bear Lake is asking the City of Gem Lake to pay \$22,530 for the next 20 years for their new facility.
- The Heritage Hall budget includes \$12,000 for building improvements and \$12,000 for an irrigation system.
- The City Council contingency budget item was left at \$9,000.

Using the 2024 property tax levy of \$697,081 and the city's tax capacity (\$1,760,258), combined with the median valued home (\$429,600) for Gem Lake, that median valued home would pay city property taxes of \$1,530.99. This is an increase of \$80.04 from the 2023 final levy amount.

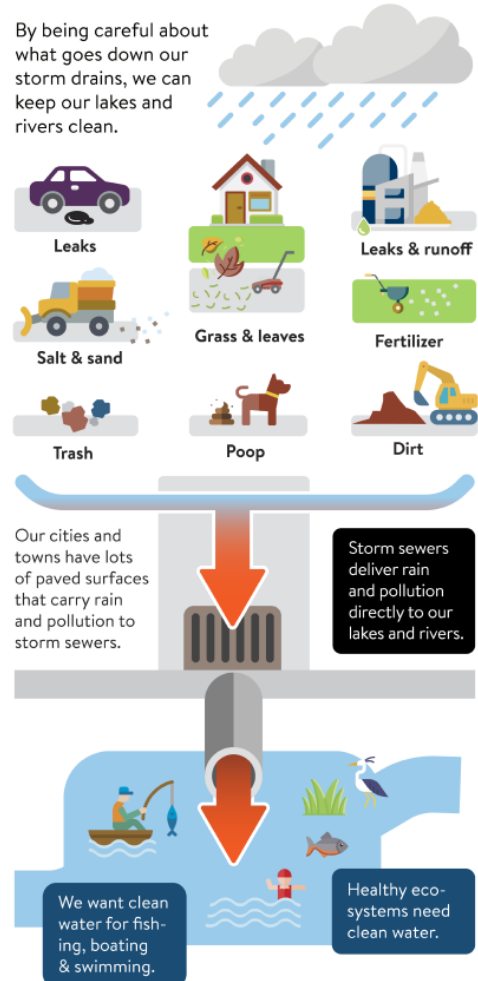


## Gem Lake's MS4 Permit Audited (Continued from page 1)

Gem Lake's city engineers, representatives from the firm Short Elliott Hendrickson (SEH), along with councilmember Jim Lindner, the city's designated MS4 contact, met with two members from MPCA and reviewed several pieces of documentation submitted prior to the audit. While Gem Lake did not have a flawless audit, the deficiencies cited were limited to cases of staff training documentation and the need for a formal snow and ice policy, a draft of which is already scheduled for the upcoming January city council meeting.

While audits are never fun, and can be a bit intimidating, Gem Lake's first-ever MS4 audit was relatively painless and all participants managed to remain awake throughout the process. Now that the city knows what to expect, it's anticipated that future audits will proceed without anxiety.

### Why do we care about stormwater?



# Recycling in Gem Lake

An online challenge is being hosted by Hennepin, Ramsey and Washington counties to engage residents in learning about plastic and committing to actions that help reduce plastic use. This year's challenge will take place during the month of February 2024 and registration opened in January.

## Kickstart your plastic-free journey: Take the Plastic-Free Challenge

Plastics can be a hassle – they create clutter and can be confusing to recycle – plus they contribute to litter, harm water and wildlife, and have largely unknown health impacts for us. Fortunately, there's a lot we can do to help create a plastic-free world, from learning more about plastic waste and recycling to making simple swaps to advocating for changes in your community and sharing your story with others.

Be part of the solution to reduce waste, protect water and wildlife, address climate change, and look after the health of ourselves and future generations by joining the Plastic-Free Challenge ([tcplasticfree.ecochallenge.org](http://tcplasticfree.ecochallenge.org)).

## About the Plastic-Free Challenge

The Plastic-Free Challenge is a month-long effort starting February 1 to reduce plastic consumption, especially single-use plastics, in ways that fit best in your lifestyle and have the most impact on reducing your footprint. Businesses, organizations, and community groups can also join the challenge as Plastic-Free Challenge partners.

The challenge runs during the month of February 2024. Sign up opened on January 1.



A reminder from Republic Services regarding the proper placement of carts in the winter.



By now you all should have received the 2024 Recycling Collection Schedule from Republic Services. This schedule can also be found on Gem Lake's website under Resources & Information → Trash and Recycling.

2024 Recycling Collection Schedule

JANUARY 2024							FEBRUARY 2024								
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S		
		1	2	3	4	5	6					1	2	3	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	18	19	20	21	22	23	24		
28	29	30	31				25	26	27	28	29				
MARCH 2024							APRIL 2024								
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S		
					1	2				1	2	3	4	5	6
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	7	8	9	10	11	12	13		
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	14	15	16	17	18	19	20		
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	21	22	23	24	25	26	27		
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	28	29	30						
31															
MAY 2024							JUNE 2024								
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S		
					1	2	3	4							1
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	9	10	11	12	13	14	15		
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	16	17	18	19	20	21	22		
26	27	28	29	30	31		23	24	25	26	27	28	29		
							30								
JULY 2024							AUGUST 2024								
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S		
		1	2	3	4	5	6					1	2	3	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	11	12	13	14	15	16	17		
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	18	19	20	21	22	23	24		
28	29	30	31				25	26	27	28	29	30	31		
SEPTEMBER 2024							OCTOBER 2024								
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7									
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	13	14	15	16	17	18	19		
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	20	21	22	23	24	25	26		
29	30						27	28	29	30	31				
NOVEMBER 2024							DECEMBER 2024								
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S		
					1	2	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	8	9	10	11	12	13	14		
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	15	16	17	18	19	20	21		
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	22	23	24	25	26	27	28		
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	29	30	31						

■ Holiday – Service is delayed   ■ Recycling

## **White Bear Lake Fire Department Presents Annual Report**

Key representatives from the City of White Bear Lake provided the Gem Lake City Council with a comprehensive overview of fire services and related matters for 2022-23 at the Gem Lake City Council Meeting on November 21.

Gem Lake contracts through White Bear Lake for both fire protection and law enforcement services. According to Fire Chief Greg Peterson, 80% of Calls for Service from Gem Lake to the fire department are medical related and 20% are fire/rescue related. In 2022 the fifty calls broke down as follows:

- Emergency Medical Service (Ambulance) 40
- Lift Assist 3
- Alarm Sounding 3
- Commercial Building Fire 1
- Brush Fire 1
- Rubbish Fire 1
- Natural Gas Odor 1

For all their contract cities, the top five types of medical call, in order of occurrence, are sick person in general, falls, breathing problems, unconscious person, and psychiatric issues. The call volume for White Bear Lake's Fire Department service area has grown substantially since 2017, when they responded to 3,599 requests for service. In 2022, that call volume had grown to 5,283.

The Department serves a 35 square mile area, encompassing not only the City of White Bear Lake, but also Dellwood, Birchwood, White Bear Township and the City of Gem Lake. The total population of this area is over 40,000.

The White Bear Lake Fire department has 16 full-time Firefighters/paramedics and 19 part-time employees, although they feel they need 21 part-timers.



White Bear's Fire and Police Departments are currently engaged in a major building project at their new and remodeled Public Safety Facility, located on Highway 61 next to the White Bear Lake City Hall. This multi-million dollar project includes the replacement of the fire apparatus bay, addition of a police garage, interior remodeling to support current and future operations, addition of secure staff parking and needed building updates. Phase One of the renovation is complete, with final completion expected in late summer of 2024.

## **Cadillac Dealership Holds Ribbon Cutting Ceremony**

Luther Cadillac of Vadnais Heights and Gem Lake held its official ribbon cutting ceremony on December 7. The open house gave the public the chance to view the Cadillac dealership's new showroom, which opened its doors on August 7 of last year.

The project is unique for several reasons. First, the dealership has rolled out a beautiful new template for their dealership buildings that features a spacious service area, and comfortable waiting and car preparation areas. This showroom design will be gradually rolled out across the nation. Second, the project is unique because this dealership spans the borders of two cities. The bulk of the property, including the building itself, is located in the City of Vadnais Heights. The northern portion of the parking lot is located in the City of Gem Lake. The Dealership's general manager Perry Feavel says he is looking forward to working with the surrounding community in the years ahead.



## Smart Salting Tips for Gem Lake Residents and Businesses

Smart salting is a concept that refers to being thoughtful about your use of winter salting in order to maintain groundwater quality and help the environment.

According to the Vadnais Lakes Area Water Management Organization (VLAWMO), one teaspoon of rock salt is enough to pollute 5 gallons of water! Once salt is introduced into our lakes and wetlands, it's stuck in that water as it moves along to larger rivers and lakes. This changes the aquatic environment and harms our water resources over time. In addition to posing threats to water quality, salt causes damage to concrete and asphalt, potentially causing it to heave or crack.

What can you do to create smart salting good habits?

- Use tools first: Shovel, scraper, or broom.



- Disperse salt or other de-icers evenly without piles. The goal is not to form a blanket, but to break the bonds of ice/compacted snow.



- Once salt crystal infiltrate the ice/compacted snow, a scraper can chop and scrape the surface. Shoveling off the ice chunks reduces the need to re-apply.

Salt that's diluted with meltwater becomes less effective: refreezing occurs and raises the risk for falls.



- More product doesn't mean faster results: The chemical reaction depends on temperature.



- Excess product remains in meltwater and runoff
- Never apply de-icers to dry pavement or loose snow
- Sweep up extra salt and sand.



## Fee Schedule Changes

Minimal changes were made to the Gem Lake fee schedule for 2024. These changes were made at the December 19 Gem Lake City Council meeting.

Changes included the following types and categories:

- The commercial rate for demolition of a structure was changed from a flat rate to a fee based on valuation
- A Fire Protection section was added
- Sewer and water connection fees were updated for consistency
- City sewer charges were increased by \$5.00 per quarter to match metered rates
- An edible cannabinoid license fee was added
- The staffing/cleaning rental fee for Heritage Hall was changed from a flat fee of \$30 to a per hour fee of \$20 per hour for residents and \$25 per hour for non-residents, with a two hour minimum.

A copy of the complete fee schedule is available on the Gem Lake web-site.



You can mail in the form with payment, or call the office to arrange for credit card payment. Call Melissa Lawrence at 651-747-2790.

Just a reminder: if you are keeping chickens, driving a golf cart along city streets or have a rental property, you also need a license. Call for more information.



## Pet Ordinance to be Updated

Gem Lake's Domestic Animal Ordinance Number 140 is undergoing an update. The city council plans to look at subjects such as the number of domestic animals that any city household can have, whether cats should be licensed, how commercial kennels might be handled, and related topics.

A first draft of a revised ordinance will be presented at the February 20 City Council meeting, which will begin at 7:00 p.m. The public is encouraged to be present to provide feedback. It is expected that the revision of this ordinance will take place over a number of months.

## Have You Licensed Your Dog?

Dog license renewals were due by January 1, 2024. Gem Lake Ordinance No. 140 requires the licensing of all dogs who reside within city limits. All residents were sent a letter outlining the requirements and provided the application form to get the job done. It's quick and easy and costs \$10. You will need to include your current rabies certificate. In return you will get a dog tag with a number on it. This could come in handy if your dog ever relocates itself.



## City News

### Edible Cannabis Products License Approved

Gem Lake's first license for the sale of edible cannabis products (also known as cannabis gummies) was approved by the city council at the December 19 City Council meeting. This license went to C & C Enterprises, DBA Smoke Den, located at 1599 County Road E. East in Gem Lake for 2024.

The City is authorized to issue such a license due to changes in State Law and after establishing an interim city ordinance on the sale of edible cannabis products at the November City Council meeting. The licensee then filled out a city license application form, submitted to a background check and otherwise met all the requirements set forth by the City and the State of Minnesota.



### Winter Parking Regulations Now in Effect

Winter Parking Regulations are in effect November 1, 2023 through April 1, 2024.

- No parking on any road or street between the hours of 2:00 a.m. and 6:00 a.m.
- No parking after a snowfall of 1" (one inch) or more
- No vehicles shall be parked on the streets and boulevards until plowing and snow removal is complete
- On trash & recycling days, place garbage cans at the end of the driveway and behind the street edge, not in the street
- Keep your mailbox clear of snow
- Please keep a clear path to the fire hydrants in your neighborhood

Your neighbors, Public Works Department, Mail Carriers, and Trash and Recycling Haulers appreciate your cooperation this winter.

### 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](https://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

Donations of \$1500 were approved by the Gem Lake City Council in December 2023 and January 2024 to be given to the White Bear Area Food Shelf. These donations come from charitable gambling receipts that result from pull-tab and bingo sales within city limits.



### Heritage Hall Holiday Office Closures

Heritage Hall will be closed February 19 for President's Day.

All other hours remain the same. Have a safe holiday!



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

Newsletter E-mail:  
[Gretchen.artig-swomley@gemlakemn.org](mailto: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](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: February and March 2024

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

### February 12, 2024

City Council Workshop is **CANCELED**

### February 13, 2024

Planning Commission Meeting is at 7:00 p.m.

### February 20, 2024

City Council Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

### March 11, 2024

City Council Workshop is **CANCELED**

### March 12, 2024

Planning Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

### March 19, 2024

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