

**City of Gem Lake
City Council Meeting – November 21, 2023
Meeting Minutes**

Mayor Gretchen Artig-Swomley called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Councilmembers Jim Lindner, Len Cacioppo, Ben Johnson and Laurel Amlee were present. Also present: City Attorney Kevin Beck, City Treasurer Tom Kelly, Planning Commission Chair Joshua Patrick, Commission Member Don Cummings, City of White Bear Lake Manager lindy Crawford, City of White Bear Lake Police Chief Dale Hager, City of White Bear Lake Fire Chief Greg Peterson, Gem Lake Business Owner Chris Bettis, and Gem Lake residents Lance Rustad, Valerie Hughes, Jim Wilson, Alex Doroff, Noah Driscoll, Andy Mudgett, and two others.

November 21, 2023 Agenda

A motion was introduced by Councilmember Linder to accept the agenda, seconded by Councilmember Cacioppo. Voice vote taken, all voted yes, motion carried.

Minutes

A motion was introduced by Councilmember Lindner, seconded by Councilmember Cacioppo to approve the October 17, 2023, City Council Meeting Minutes. Voice vote taken, all voted yes, motion carried.

A motion was introduced by Councilmember Lindner, seconded by Councilmember Cacioppo to accept the November 14, 2023, Planning Commission Meeting Minutes. Voice vote taken, all voted yes, motion carried.

Special Presentations

Guest Speakers from City of White Bear Lake – Dale Hager - Police Chief, Greg Peterson – Fire Chief, and Lindy Crawford – City Manager

Key representatives from the City of White Bear Lake presented an update on city business topics, such as the construction of the new public safety building and general operations of the fire and police departments. City Manager Crawford provided a detailed update on the major construction project, which is now underway. Phase One is essentially complete, Phase Two is underway and is expected to be substantially complete by June 2024. The public safety building will encompass operations for fire and police and will include more equipment space and indoor parking for police vehicles. A grand opening will be planned for some time in August or September 2024.

Fire Chief Peterson gave an overview of fire operations in the past year for the city’s coverage area, which includes the City of Gem Lake. He explained that the Fire Department is responsible for coverage in a 35 square mile area, and serves about 40,000 people. There were over 5,200 calls in 2022. About 50 of those calls came from Gem Lake, including a complex fire call in minus 20 degree weather. Overall, about 80% of calls to the department were EMS calls and about 20% were fire related calls. Mutual aid with surrounding cities such as Mahtomedi, Vadnais Heights and Hugo was provided on a variety of occasions. Peterson described his current staffing (16 full time staff and 19 part-time staff) and then went on to discuss a variety of significant fire incidents that occurred in 2022.

Police Chief Dale Hager gave an overview of general police operations for their coverage area, which again, involves Gem Lake. Hager has 9 years of experience with the White Bear Lake Police Department, but is fairly new to the position of Chief, having been appointed within the last few months. There are approximately 40 personnel in the department, including sworn officers and support staff. There were roughly 21,000 calls for service in 2022, including 652 from Gem Lake. This year there have been 14,000 calls as of the end of October, with a little over 400 coming from Gem Lake.

Consent Agenda

**Resolution #2023-0022 November 2023 Donation to White Bear Lake Area Food Shelf
Resolution #2023-0023 Designated Polling Places City of Gem Lake 2024
Resolution #2023-0024 SCORE Grant Funding 2024
Liquor Licenses**

**Resolution #2023-0025 Gem Lake Hills Golf Course Liquor Licenses 2024
Tobacco Licenses
Resolution #2023-0026 Country Lounge Tobacco License 2024
Monthly Financial Report(s)
Quarterly Financial Report
Claims**

All items on the consent agenda were reviewed by the Council. Councilmember Lindner introduced a motion to approve all the items listed on the consent agenda as is, seconded by Councilmember Cacioppo. Voice vote taken, all in favor, motion carried.

Committee Reports

Planning Commission Chairman Joshua Patrick provided a brief report on the commission's recent project to update the city's decades old garbage ordinance. He also reviewed the results of the city's recent garbage hauler survey, which was conducted last month to city residents and businesses. The survey had a fairly high participation rate and generally showed that residents and businesses were satisfied with their current haulers, were paying similar monthly rates, and would consider a city sponsored hauler only if rate reductions could be achieved. The Commission is seeking further guidance from the City Council before proceeding with more work on the garbage ordinance. The December Planning Commission has been canceled and the Commission will begin meeting again in January 2024.

Old Business

Newsletter Updates / Topics / Suggestions

Mayor Artig-Swomley presented ideas for the next edition of the City Newsletter to include pieces such as information on the 2024 City Budget, the presentations from the City of White Bear Lake, and other topics. A current newsletter will be going out next week, and the next edition, including the topics above, would be sent out in early January.

Garbage Hauler Survey Final Results

The Council reviewed the final results of the Garbage Hauler Survey and will take into consideration the comments from the residents and businesses. The Council will continue to discuss the topic and provide suggestions to the Planning Commission on what they would like to see within the garbage ordinance.

New Business

Cannabis Interim Ordinance

A draft of an interim ordinance involving edible cannabis products was presented. The draft is based on one currently in place at the City of White Bear Lake. Councilmember Lindner introduced a motion to approve the ordinance, seconded by Councilmember Amlee. Voice vote taken, all in favor, motion carried.

Records Retention Resolution #2023-0027

The City does not have a current records retention policy and the Acting City Clerk would like to begin following one. A sample resolution was supplied by the Municipal Clerks and Finance Officers Association of Minnesota (MCFOA) that the Acting City Clerk is presenting for adoption. This policy is based on the ordinance published by the State of Minnesota. Councilmember Lindner introduced a motion to approve the resolution, seconded by Councilmember Cacioppo. Voice vote taken, all in favor, motion carried.

Gem Lake Tree Policy Discussion

Although the city adopted a tree policy about a decade ago, this policy deals primarily with boulevard trees that overhang streets. Mayor Artig-Swomley feels the policy needs to be expanded to cover things like tree clearing after storms and assignment of responsibilities when trees fall unexpectedly. She asked the Planning Commission to take on this project and to consult with City Attorney Kevin Beck to find sample policies that other cities have adopted. The council expressed agreement with this idea.

Future Charitable Gambling Donations

White Bear Lake Emergency Food Shelf

Mayor Artig-Swomley suggested that the Council make a donation in December in the amount of \$1500.00 to the White Bear Lake Emergency Food Shelf. Councilmember Lindner introduced a motion to request a donation in the amount of \$1500.00 for the White Bear Lake Emergency Food Shelf, seconded by Councilmember Cacioppo. Voice vote taken, all voted yes, motion carried.

Community Outreach to Other Cities and Government Bodies

A new proposal for water billing between the Cities of Vadnais Heights and Gem Lake is still on the table. City Attorney Kevin Beck added that Vadnais is waiting on water guidelines to be agreed upon with the state DNR, and will report back next month.

Councilmember Johnson gave a brief report on the County Road E Corridor project and efforts to get funding for further work.

Presentations from the Public, 2 Minutes Maximum

Resident Valerie Hughes asked for clarification and assistance after Republic Services has stated they no longer wish to back down the private road she lives on to pick up the recycling bins. (Also known as Scotland Court.) Republic has asked that the three homes on this private road drag their recycling bins to the entrance at Otter Lake Road, which is not convenient for residents in her opinion. Options are being discussed. Acting City Clerk Melissa Lawrence will look into the matter further.

Open Items for Council Members to Bring Up

None

Future Council Meetings

City Council, Tuesday, December 19, 2023, which will involve two public hearings, one for the 2024 final budget and one for the MS4 report. The City Council Workshop, Monday, December 11, 2023 is CANCELED.

Attendance Inquiry

At this time all Councilmembers in attendance will be at the December meeting.

Adjournment

Being there no further business, following a motion from Councilmember Lindner, seconded by Councilmember Cacioppo, the meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Jim Linder and Gretchen Artig-Swomley