

**City of Gem Lake
City Council Meeting – February 20, 2024
Meeting Minutes**

Mayor Gretchen Artig-Swomley called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Councilmembers Jim Lindner, Len Cacioppo, and Laurel Amlee were present. Councilmember Ben Johnson was not present. Also present: City Attorney Kevin Beck, Acting City Clerk Melissa Lawrence, Planning Commission Chair Joshua Patrick, high school students Nolan Vonwalter, Charles Robideaux and Gem Lake resident Nick Cress.

February 20, 2024 Agenda

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

Minutes

A motion was introduced by Councilmember Lindner, seconded by Councilmember Cacioppo to approve the January 16, 2024, 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 February 13, 2024, Planning Commission Meeting Minutes. Voice vote taken, all voted yes, motion carried.

Special Presentations/Public Hearings

None

Consent Agenda

**Resolution #2024-003 February 2024 Donation to White Bear Lake Area Food Shelf
Monthly Financial Reports(s)
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 Amlee. Voice vote taken, all in favor, motion carried.

Committee Reports

Commission Chair Joshua Patrick shared with the Council that a rough final draft of the garbage ordinance and beekeeping ordinance should be ready to be presented to the council in the next month or so. The tree ordinance will stay as it is and a FAQ page will be created for the website. City Attorney Kevin Beck is in the process of putting together some FAQ's.

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 city clean-up day, domestic animal ordinance revisions, Gem Lake scholarship program, and garbage ordinance revisions.

Domestic Animal Ordinance Discussion

The suggested changes by the Acting City Clerk Melissa Lawrence were reviewed by the Council and City Attorney. The Council thought all the changes looked good. Councilmember Lindner introduced a motion to approve Ordinance No. 140 with the suggested changes, seconded by Councilmember Cacioppo. Voice vote taken, all voted yes, motion carried.

Code Violations Update

A property on Otter Lake road neighboring Heritage Hall has a dilapidated fence and a lot of commercial storage on the property being stored in the backyard. A notice has already been sent to the property with no response.

The two (2) properties along Highway 61 are running a business operation outside of the home. There is construction material all over the backyard. These properties are also rentals with the properties meeting the minimum lifesaving standards. A notice has already been sent to the properties and the owners have agreed to remove the construction storage. It appeared to be nearly done at the time of the inspection.

A property on Labore Road is storing commercial vehicles on the property and a fence was installed without a permit. A notice has already been sent to the property with no response.

A property on Scheuneman Road is a rental property with a long history of complaints and a history of trying to work on a resolution. The property meets the minimum lifesaving standards to operate as a rental. The property is running some sort of business out of the home, but each time an inspection is scheduled the mess gets cleaned up just enough to be able to pass. It looks like a pallet fence was also installed without a permit. The occupants also decided to clear out most of the trees in the backyard which is a violation of the tree preservation ordinance. Criminal prosecution could be taken on the brush pile, vehicles on the property and anything related to the home business operation. A notice has already been sent to the property owner with no response at this time.

Mayor Artig-Swomley asked city Attorney Kevin Beck what else the City can do about all of these properties. Mr. Beck responded that it is hard to prove someone is operating a home business. Building Official Mike Johnson will continue to work on these problem properties and give an update on the progress at a future meeting.

MS4 Audit Report

On January 5, 2024 Gem Lake had its first MS4 Audit. After the audit was completed, the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) had sufficient information to allege that the city of Gem Lake, (hereinafter Regulated Party) had violated nine (9) provisions of the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) General Permit in Gem Lake, Ramsey County, Minnesota. See attached report for specific violations.

The City is in the process of correcting these violations. There is some concern with being able to correct a concern related to training of public safety staff. Gem Lake does not have its own public safety staff, the job is contracted out to a neighboring city. The public safety department does not currently require the training from the MPCA. Mayor Artig-Swomley asked City Attorney Kevin Beck what the city can legally do to try and ensure this gets completed, to which Mr. Beck feels may be tricky to require them to do something they don't currently do. City Engineer SEH should be able to help out with correcting some of the other violations.

Gem Lake Clean-Up Day Discussion

Gem Lake is partnering with White Bear Township for the second year for the Town clean-up day scheduled for May 18. Based on Gem Lake resident participation in 2023 the Township is considering changing the participation fee from a flat rate to a per car rate. The Township will finalize their decision and a resolution will be ready for Council review at the March meeting.

New Business

VLAWMO Workshops March 7 & 14 at Heritage Hall

VLAWMO will be holding two (2) workshops at Heritage Hall. The first workshop featuring Grant Program 101 will be on March 7, 2024 from 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. The second workshop featuring Raingardens 101 will be on March 14, 2024 from 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. Councilmember Amlee will plan to attend the workshop on March 14.

Office Computer Replacement

The front office computer is at the 5 year mark and it scheduled to be replaced this year. Metro-INET sent Acting City Clerk Melissa Lawrence the specs and pricing for a new computer that is comparable to the current one. The computer has started to run a little slower compared to when Mrs. Lawrence started working for the City and things are starting to freeze. Mrs. Lawrence would also like to replace the old 23”

monitor in the office and upgrade it to the same 27” monitor that was purchased a year or two ago so that both monitors are the same size. The replacement computer would cost \$808.85 and a replacement monitor would cost \$185.59 for a total of \$994.44.

Councilmember Cacioppo suggested adding another \$100.00 to the total in the case that a larger monitor could be purchased. Councilmember Cacioppo introduced a motion to approve the purchase of a new computer and monitor not to exceed \$1,100.00, seconded by Mayor Artig-Swomley. Voice vote taken, all voted yes, motion carried.

Future Charitable Gambling Donations

White Bear Lake Emergency Food Shelf

Mayor Artig-Swomley suggested that the Council make a donation in March in the amount of \$500.00 to the White Bear Lake Emergency Food Shelf. Councilmember Lindner introduced a motion to request a donation in the amount of \$500.00 for the White Bear Lake Emergency Food Shelf, seconded by Councilmember Amlee. Voice vote taken, all voted yes, motion carried.

Community Outreach to Other Cities and Government Bodies

City Attorney Kevin Beck sent a letter to the City of White Bear Lake regarding the additional charges for the building upgrades and at this time he has not received a response. White Bear Township has also taken this action. Mr. Beck has also not heard anything from the City of Vadnais Heights at this time regarding the water rates for Summit Farm Lane. Vadnais is still waiting for the DNR to settle on the lawsuit before moving forward.

Presentations from the Public, 2 Minutes Maximum

Resident Nick Cress had a question regarding the water rate progress. Mayor Artig-Swomley reiterated what City Attorney Kevin Beck had just explained regarding the situation. Gem Lake will continue to work on this in hopes that a resolution will be coming in the next couple of months.

Open Items for Council Members to Bring Up

Mayor Artig-Swomley shared with the Council that the Acting City Clerks annual performance review will be due at the end of March and that a form will be sent to all Councilmembers for everyone to supply feedback if they would like to.

Future Council Meetings

City Council, Tuesday, March 19, 2024. City Council Workshop, Monday, March 11, 2024 is CANCELED.

Attendance Inquiry

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

Adjournment

Being there no further business, following a motion from Councilmember Lindner, seconded by Councilmember Cacioppo, the meeting adjourned at 7:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Melissa Lawrence