

**City of Gem Lake
City Council Meeting – October 15, 2024
Meeting Minutes**

Mayor Gretchen Artig-Swomley called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Councilmembers Len Cacioppo, Jim Lindner, Ben Johnson and Laurel Amlee were present. Also present: City Attorney Stand-In Chad Lemmons, City Treasurer Tom Kelly, City Building Official Mike Johnson, Planning Commission Chair Joshua Patrick, and Acting City Clerk Melissa Lawrence.

October 15, 2024, Agenda

A motion was introduced by Councilmember Linder to accept the agenda, seconded by Councilmember Cacioppo. Motion carried 5-0.

Minutes

A motion was introduced by Councilmember Lindner, seconded by Councilmember Cacioppo to approve the September 17, 2024, City Council Meeting Minutes. Motion carried 5-0.

Special Presentations/Public Hearings

None

Consent Agenda

Resolution #2024-0022 October 2024 Donation to White Bear Lake Area Food Shelf
Resolution #2024-0023 Certify to Tax Rolls – Utility Billing
Resolution #2024-0024 Certify to Tax Rolls – 2023 Annual Septic Maintenance Inspections
Corporate Mechanical Annual Maintenance Quote 2025 Rate
Monthly Financial Report(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 Cacioppo. Motion carried 5-0.

Committee Reports

None

Old Business

Newsletter Updates / Topics / Suggestions

Mayor Artig-Swomley presented ideas for the next edition of the City Newsletter to include pieces such as the approved 2025 final budget, Gem Lake deer hunts, 2024 annual septic maintenance inspections, 2024 election results and winter parking regulations. Councilmember Johnson shared that he may have an update he can put together regarding the County Road E Corridor Project.

White Bear Lake Public Safety Contract

Mayor Artig-Swomley and a representative of the City of Dellwood and City of Birchwood attended the White Bear Township Executive Board meeting on Friday, September 27, 2024. Among other things, the executive board discussed the 2025 contracts that White Bear Lake sent out to all the cities they service. In 2024, one line item being charged to the cities was categorized as debt service, and in 2025 it is being called depreciation and is showing an increase of roughly 8 to 10 million in charges. This increase is due to the principal and interest being combined into one item instead of separate items. The contract currently states that contracted cities are responsible for paying costs for operation and depreciation, however, it does not state interest or debt service anywhere in the contract. Next steps were discussed on how to tackle the issue at hand, and it was suggested that Gem Lake and White Bear Townships Treasurer Tom Kelly meet with White Bear Lakes Finance Director Kerri Kindsvater to help make sense of the charges. This meeting is set to take place on October 22.

Councilmember Lindner shared that he had reached out to the City of Vadnais Heights a little over a month ago to see if Vadnais Heights would consider taking on Gem Lake for fire services. Vadnais Heights response to the inquiry was that they would need to purchase additional equipment to take on Gem Lake and that Vadnais Heights does not even have its own ambulance service. A couple weeks later Councilmember Lindner heard back from Vadnais Heights again letting him know that the topic of taking on Gem Lake for fire services was discussed at a recent City Council meeting and the Council was not in favor of adding contract cities at this time.

Council Pay Discussion

The Council revisited the ongoing discussion of possibly increasing the pay rate for the Gem Lake City Council members. City Treasurer Tom Kelly reminded the Council that pay scale changes can only be made in election years, and because it is an election year the Council would have the authority to make a change. Councilmember Cacioppo was asked to do some more research on the topic at the September 17 meeting, but did not have a lot of luck finding information to help make the decision easier to make. There is not consistent data out there that could be found to help calculate the pay rate of Councilmembers. Councilmember Johnson stated that it has been a decade since this topic was discussed and he feels that there should be a 25% increase to Councilmember and Mayor pay per month. This would change the rate to \$125.00 per month for Councilmembers and \$250.00 per month for the mayor. The Council discussed this suggestion and found it to be fair and agreed that the topic should be revisited at least every four (4) years.

Councilmember Johnson introduced a motion to increase the monthly payment to the Gem Lake City Council by 25%, seconded by Councilmember Lindner. Motion carried 5-0.

2025 Utility Rate Discussion

City Treasurer Tom Kelly presented his suggested utility rate changes for 2025. The rates for the City of Vadnais Heights are based on current 2024 rates plus an 8% rate increase. The City of Vadnais Heights increased rates from 2023 to 2024 8%, which is why he is suggesting increasing rates 8% for 2025. Also, the City of Vadnais Heights lowered the meter (base) fee to reflect the actual meter size and started subtracting the irrigation meter usage from sewer usage in their bills to the City of Gem Lake. These changes are allowing the City of Gem Lake to lower the charges for water and sewer to those customers serviced by Vadnais Height. While the rates from those that receive water from Vadnais Heights are going down, those that receive water from White Bear Lake are going up. For both the base rate charge is lowered.

New Business

Archery Deer Hunting Application

1270 Goose Lake Road

A permit request for a hunt on private property located at 1270 Goose Lake Road was received. The requested dates of the hunt will be October 25 – 27 and November 8 - 10. The hunting party consists of 5 hunters, all of which have obtained their Bow Hunters Certification and a MN DNR Hunting License. Deer stand locations were given and consent of neighbors is not needed due to distance from property line.

Councilmember Lindner introduced a motion to approve the Archery Deer Hunting application at 5 Daniels Farm Road, seconded by Councilmember Cacioppo. Motion carried 5-0.

Resolution #2024-0025 – Ramsey County Municipal Concurring (CSAH Designation)

Ramsey County owns and operates over 290 miles of roadway. County Roads are classified as either County State Aid Highways or County Roads. Funding comes from various sources; a large source of funding comes from the gas tax that gets deposited in the County State Aid Highway Fund account. These funds can only be used on County State Aid Highways (CSAH). There are several variables that determine the amount of money that is allocated to each roadway, sometimes referred to as “needs”.

Ramsey County recently completed a countywide study to determine if any roadway classifications should be changed from CSAH or County Road (CR) status. The objective of this study was to maximize the needs of Ramsey County's CSAH system to maximize the funding allocated to Ramsey County's CSAH roadway network (which is over 85% of Ramsey County's miles). The study identified several short sections of roadway in Gem Lake that draw higher needs than other CSAH segments elsewhere in the county. The reallocation of Otter Lake Road, Scheuneman Road, and Labore Road from County roads to CSAHs will create more needs, and therefore bring in more annual funding to Ramsey County for roadway construction and maintenance.

The roadway classification does not impact how, or when, Ramsey County programs roadway improvements work happen – instead it simply identifies which pot of money is used to fund these improvements. This action is administrative in nature and requires impacted Cities to pass a resolution supporting/acknowledging the modifications. That is the resolution request that was sent to you along with Ramsey County's board action detailing all of the modifications throughout the county.

Councilmember Lindner introduced a motion to approve Resolution #2024-0025, seconded by Councilmember Cacioppo. Motion carried 5-0.

Gem Lake Road Construction Information

City Engineer Justin Gese asked that the mayor share during the meeting that Ramsey County is planning construction along Goose Lake Road in the future. The work is not expected to start for at least three (3) years, and it is safe to say Gem Lake would probably not be subject to a pavement experiment again. Ramsey County also suggested the city install a set of blinking crosswalk signs at one of the crossings for the golf course.

Code Enforcement Issues Discussion

Mayor Artig-Swomley shared that a meeting was held last night at Heritage Hall regarding code enforcement issues in Gem Lake. City Building Official Mike Johnson and White Bear Lake Police Chief Dale Hager came and heard from several concerned residents. There have been many complaints received and police calls for one property in general in Gem Lake. The general consensus of concerned residents and staff is that this property may be operating a sort of private homeless shelter due to the apparent number of transient individuals who appear to be coming and going on a regular basis, according to neighbors. City Building Official Mike Johnson has visited the property several times this year regarding ordinance violations and complaints from concerned residents and has recently issued a stop work order, abatement order, citation for nuisance violations and with the help of City Attorney Kevin Beck is requesting an administrative search warrant for the property.

City Building Official Mike Johnson suggested that Gem Lake make some changes to the nuisance ordinance and housing maintenance and occupancy code to tighten up the language on storage limits. Mayor Artig-Swomley would also like to see language allowing the number of code enforcement and police calls to be considered when renewing a rental license. The mayor asked that the Planning Commission review the Ordinances at their November meeting and see if there are any other suggestions to help tighten up the ordinances, especially having to do with camping and other types of trailers.

Laptop/Scanner Quote

Metro-INET supplied Acting City Clerk Melissa Lawrence with quotes for a laptop and scanner for the office for contractors and residents to use when applying for permits to help the city move towards going paperless. Two (2) quotes for laptops were received, (1) Dell Latitude 5550, 15", 10-key, Core ultra 5 125U processor, 16GB RAM, and 256 GB Hard Drive for \$980.30, and (2) Dell Latitude 5450, 14", Core Ultra 5 125U processor, 16 GB RAM, 256 GB Hard Drive for \$1,087.11. The scanner quote was for a Canon imageFORMULA DR-C230 Office for \$366.10.

Councilmember Lindner introduced a motion to approve up to \$1,500 to be spent on a laptop and scanner to help move the city to going paperless, seconded by Councilmember Cacioppo. Motion carried 5-0.

City Clerk Vacation

Acting City Clerk Melissa Lawrence submitted to the Council a list of requested vacation days for the remainder of the year. Also requested was to have four (4) days or 32 hours be added to the carryover limit for just this year so that the time is not lost. This request is necessary because the December requested vacation days will not be paid out until 2025 and will be considered part of 2025 hours worked.

Councilmember Lindner introduced a motion to approve the request, seconded by Councilmember Cacioppo. Motion carried 5-0.

Future Charitable Gambling Donations

White Bear Lake Emergency Food Shelf

Mayor Artig-Swomley suggested that the Council donate in November in the amount of \$1,500.00 to the White Bear Lake Emergency Food Shelf. Councilmember Lindner introduced a motion to request a donation in the amount of \$1,500.00 for the White Bear Lake Emergency Food Shelf, seconded by Councilmember Cacioppo. Motion carried 5-0.

Community Outreach to Other Cities and Government Bodies

Mayor Artig-Swomley shared that the Purple Line held a virtual meeting on Monday, September 16 which she attended. The regular monthly meeting was held a few weeks after the city of Maplewood withdrew support for the Purple Line, add to the list of sister cities, such as Gem Lake and White Bear Lake, that have done the same. It is unclear how, or if, this lack of support from all cities except St. Paul will affect the project timeline.

Open Items for Council Members to Bring Up

None

Future Council Meetings

City Council, Tuesday, November 19, 2024. City Council Workshop, Monday, November 11, 2024, is CANCELED. City Council Canvassing, Thursday, November 7, 2024.

Attendance Inquiry

At this time all in attendance will be at the November meeting and canvassing meeting

Adjournment

Being there no further business, following a motion from Councilmember Lindner, seconded by Councilmember Cacioppo, the meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Melissa Lawrence