



Gem Lake News



January 2025 | Volume 19 | Issue 1

Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Newsletter Editor

Special Interest Articles:

- 2025 Budget Approved
- New Member to City Council
- Planning Commission Vacancy
- Plastic-Free Challenge
- Online Payment Portal
- City News, Page 7

Scheduled Recycling Dates:

- January 2
- January 15
- January 29
- February 12
- February 26

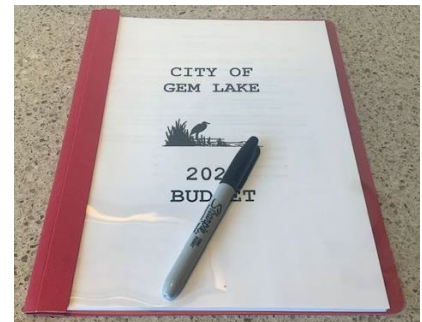
Gem Lake Approves 2025 Budget

Minnesota State Statutes require all cities to certify their final property tax levy by December 31. That levy funds each city’s operating budget (General Fund) and any debt payments. If a final levy is not approved by the deadline, then whatever a city approved as their preliminary budget number in September becomes the official budget.

The Gem Lake City Council held its “Truth in Taxation” public hearing on December 17, approving a final property tax levy of \$718,736, which is a 3.11% increase from the 2024 final tax levy. The tax levy consists of a debt levy of \$83,736 (an increase of \$2,182 over 2024) and a general operating levy of \$635,000 (an increase of 3.16% over 2024).

The final tax levy of \$718,736 is down \$15,021 from the preliminary budget estimate, which is somewhat typical in the budgeting cycle. By state law, the final budget cannot exceed the preliminary estimate, which is used for truth in taxation notices to citizens. This means that most cities do worst case scenario budgeting while they gather final budget numbers.

(Continued on Page 2)



City Council Gains New Member

Joshua Patrick was elected to the Gem Lake City Council on November 5 and will be assuming office as of January 1, 2025. He has been a resident of the city since 2020 but has been working in the city since 2011. Joshua is a building/boiler engineer currently working as a caretaker for an estate owner within the city.

He describes himself as an “avid outdoorsman who loves bow hunting and fishing.” Joshua has been a member of the Gem Lake Planning Commission for four years, two of those serving as Chairman. “I thoroughly enjoyed working with my other commissioners, helping to shape and fine tune our city’s land use ordinances. I feel my time on the Planning Commission has prepared me for serving on the City Council.”

(Continued on Page 2)



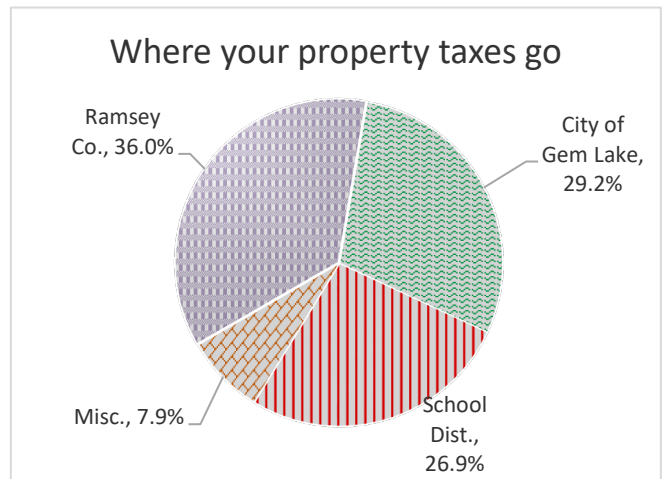
Gem Lake Approves 2025 Budget (continued from page 1)

Here are some changes that were made between the 2024 and 2025 Gem Lake Budget:

1. Based on the 2015 Refunding Bond schedule, the debt levy for 2025 is set for \$79,711. In addition, in 2018, the City issued bonds for the improvements on Scheuneman Road and the 2025 debt levy for this issue was \$4,025. The two of these debt levies makes up the city's 2025 debt levy of \$83,736.
2. City Council wages increased \$9,000 to reflect a stipend increase approved earlier this year.
3. The City Council contingency was left at \$9,000.
4. City Clerk/General Government budget includes \$63,000 for wages and \$11,550 for health insurance coverage.
5. The Planning and Zoning budget was increased to \$6,950, based on past expenditures.
6. The Police budget was increased 13.85% to \$147,402, based on the budget provided by the City of White Bear Lake. It includes \$133,089 for police services and \$14,313 for the new public safety building.
7. The cost of fire services has increased 8.54% to \$52,827. It includes \$8,181 for fire marshal service, and \$9,346 for the new public safety building.
 - a. Overall, the City of White Bear Lake is asking the City of Gem Lake to pay \$23,659 per year for the next 19 years to cover the cost of the new public safety building.
8. The Road Maintenance budget includes \$20,000 for road maintenance and repair and \$8,000 for trimming boulevard trees.
9. The budget for salt/sand was reduced \$4,000 to \$8,000, and the snow plowing budget was left at \$14,000. Both these numbers were based on past expenditures.
10. The Heritage Hall budget includes \$10,000 for building improvements and repairs and \$10,000 for other improvements.
11. A budget of \$7,000 has been set aside for maintenance of Gem Lake's walking trail in the southwestern area of the city.

12. The 2025 budget includes \$20,000 for future improvements.
13. Revenue and other expenditure line items were adjusted based on past history.

These changes result in the City proposed final tax levy of \$718,736.00 for 2025. This compares to 2025 preliminary levy of \$733,757.00 and 2024 final levy of \$697,081.00. Using a 2025 property tax levy of \$718,736.00 and the City's 2025 tax capacity (\$1,809,157.00) and median valued home (\$443,750.00) for Gem Lake, that median valued home, would pay City property taxes of \$1,680.37 in 2025 compared to 2025 preliminary levy of \$1,725.55 (a decrease of \$45.18) and the 2024 final levy amount of \$1,529.81 (an increase of \$150.56).



A complete copy of the 2025 City of Gem Lake budget is available at Heritage Hall or on the City website.

City Council Gains New Member (continued from page 1)

Joshua says "It was a tough decision on my part to run for the council, but I want to continue serving our community in a more hands on role. My goal on the council is to help lead Gem Lake to a positive, sustainable future, while ensuring that our heritage and small-town feel is not forgotten. I am a huge advocate in the preservation of our natural spaces, that seem to be disappearing all around us at an alarming rate."

Joshua will be sworn in, along with the several others, at the next Gem Lake City Council meeting on January 21, 2025. Welcome, Joshua!

Become a 2025 Plastic-Free Challenge Partner

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

With so many single-use plastic items in our lives, avoiding them may feel overwhelming! Fortunately, there is a lot we can do to help create a world with less plastic. Are you up for the challenge? Join the Plastic-Free Challenge (tcplasticfree.ecochallenge.org) to explore what's possible.

During the one-month challenge, you can focus on learning about plastic recycling, making plastic-free swaps, and advocating for changes in your community. As part of a community acting together, see how our individual actions add up to a big impact!



The problem with plastics

Worldwide, plastic production has skyrocketed since the 1970s, and a lot of the growth has come in the form of packaging and single-use plastics.

Most plastics are made from oil and gas – fossil fuels that contribute to climate change. About 4% to 8% of the world's oil production is for plastics, and most plastics are thrown away after a single use.

Since packaging and single-use plastics are used for a short period of time and then discarded, they contribute significantly to the increasing amounts of plastic waste and litter. Recycling can be a good option for certain plastic items. However, many types of plastics are hard to recycle.

Unlike items made from natural materials like plants that can be composted and returned to the soil, plastics don't go away. Instead, they break down into smaller pieces of plastic. These microplastic pieces are now found almost everywhere, including in our air, water, soil, and our bodies.

Joining the Plastic-Free Challenge helps you be part of the solution. You will increase your understanding of plastics and plastic waste, uncover opportunities to bring less plastic into your home, and be connected with opportunities to advocate for change in your community.

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.

The challenge has over 80 actions to choose from in eight categories. Sign up opens on January 1, and the challenge runs during the month of February. Once you sign up and create your profile, you can browse the categories and actions, check off the actions you already take, and select up to five one-time actions and five daily actions to make progress on during the four-week challenge.

You can also create a team to take the challenge along with your family, friends, neighbors, and colleagues. Or encourage an organization, business, or community group you are a part of to become a [Plastic-Free Challenge partner](#).

Once the challenge starts, you will report what actions you take, see the impact of your actions add up, connect with others, and support your team members to keep them motivated and accountable.

Hennepin, Ramsey, and Washington counties are working together to reduce plastic waste as part of their efforts to increase recycling, reduce waste, and achieve their climate action goals. Encouraging residents to take action is critical to success. The online Plastic-Free Challenge is hosted on the EcoChallenge platform.

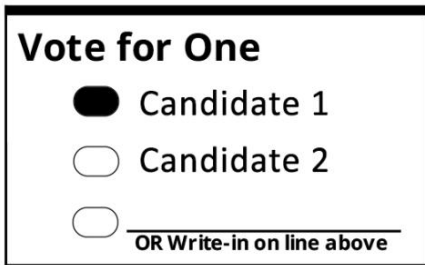
Learn more, sign up, and get ready to kickstart your plastic-free journey at tcplasticfree.ecochallenge.org.



Gem Lake Election Results

An impressive 94% of registered voters in Gem Lake cast their vote on or before Election Day this year (November 5, 2024). Of the 401 registered voters as of 7:00 a.m. on Election Day, 376 voted, including 91 absentees, mail-in and military ballots. A total of 21 registered to vote on Election Day.

There were three positions open on the City Council, including Mayor and two regular city council positions. For each of these three spots, there was only one candidate. For the office of Mayor, Gretchen Artig-Swomley received 260 votes. There were 16 write-ins. For the positions of City Council Members, Ben Johnson received 230 votes and Joshua Patrick received 217 votes. There were 5 write-ins for these positions. The election results were certified at a special City Council meeting on November 14.



Vacancy on the Gem Lake Planning Commission

Are you interested in serving your community? If so, take note. There is at least one position open on the Gem Lake Planning Commission starting on January 1, 2025. Being a planning commissioner involves tasks such as evaluating development requests that come before the city, helping to draft new or improve existing city ordinances, and generally all matters pertaining to planning and zoning.

The Planning Commission relies on expert help from a professional city planner and has staff support from the city clerk. Duties involve attending monthly meetings and reading a monthly meeting packet in advance of the meeting. To serve on the commission you must be a resident of Gem Lake.

If you are interested in serving on the Planning Commission, contact Melissa Lawrence at Heritage Hall or download an application from the Gem Lake website.

See page 8 of the newsletter for contact information.

Get your NOAA Radio at 50% Discount!

Gem Lake residents can get a high-quality NOAA weather radio for 50% off through a new program approved by the Gem Lake City Council in November. This program is the result of an initiative happening at the county level to help citizens be more prepared for emergencies. Ramsey County recently completed work on a draft of an encompassing plan to identify and prepare for various emergencies, such as flooding, severe weather, pandemics, etc. The Ramsey County Hazard Mitigation Plan assigns each city with several goals to do their share of preparation. For Gem Lake two of these goals are to consider installing a whole building power generation system (such as a Generac), and to encourage the widespread use of NOAA weather radios in Gem Lake households.

NOAA stands for National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency. NOAA is a science based federal agency within the Department of Commerce that works to understand and predict changes in weather, oceans, coasts and climate. The NOAA weather radio is an automated 24-hour network of FM and VHF weather stations in the U.S. that broadcasts weather information directly from nearby National Weather Service stations. Each radio is then programmed by the owners to provide urgent weather alert that are relevant only to the owner's living area. NOAA weather radios are invaluable for alerting residents to approaching severe weather.

If you are interested in getting one of these radios, simply call Melissa Lawrence at Heritage Hall and put your name on the list by **JANUARY 31**. They will be ordered in bulk, and you will be alerted when they are ready to be picked up. The radios cost \$40.00, of which the city will pick up \$20.00 and the homeowner will pay \$20.00.



Thank You to Laurel Hynes-Amlee

The Gem Lake City Council wishes to thank departing council member Laurel Hynes-Amlee for her years of service to the City of Gem Lake. Her current term ends this year.

Laurel was first appointed to the council in 2020 to fill a vacancy that happened when the late Bob Uzpen, then Mayor, died and another council member, Gretchen Artig-Swomley automatically became Acting Mayor. Later that year, Laurel ran for election and won a seat on the City Council for a four-year term.

Prior to this, Laurel had spent a year serving on the Gem Lake Planning Commission. She is a long-term resident of the City and has worked in various capacities at White Bear Floral for many years. As a member of Gem Lake's business community, she brought a unique and important perspective to matters pertaining to business owners.

Thank you, Laurel!



Scheduled Office Closures

Heritage Hall will be closed the following days in January and February.

January

- 01/01/2025 – New Years Day (Wednesday)
- 01/13/2025 – City Clerk Training (Monday)
- 01/20/2025 – Martin Luther King Jr. Day (Monday)

February

- 02/12/2025 – City Clerk Training (Wednesday)
- 02/13/2025 – City Clerk Training (Thursday)
- 02/17/2025 – President's Day (Monday)

All other hours remain the same.

Recycling Reminders for 2025

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



By now you all should have received the 2025 Recycling Collection Schedule from Republic Services. This schedule can also be found on Gem Lake's website under Resources & Information → Trash and Recycling.

2025 Blue Week Recycling Collection Schedule

■ Holiday – Service is delayed one day ■ Recycling

| January | | | | | | | February | | | | | | | |
|---------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|
| 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 | | |

| March | | | | | | | April | | | | | | |
|-------|----|----|----|----|----|----|-------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| | | | | | | 1 | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | | | |
| 30 | 31 | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| May | | | | | | | June | | | | | | |
|-----|----|----|----|----|----|----|------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| | | | | | | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 29 | 30 | | | | | |

| July | | | | | | | August | | | | | | |
|------|----|----|----|----|----|----|--------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | | | 1 | 2 | |
| 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |
| | | | | | | | 31 | | | | | | |

| September | | | | | | | October | | | | | | |
|-----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|---------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | | | | | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | |

| November | | | | | | | December | | | | | | | |
|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----------|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|
| S | M | T | W | T | F | S | S | M | T | W | T | F | S | |
| | | | | | | 1 | | | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | |
| 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | | | | |
| 30 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

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 infiltrates 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.



City News

Online Payment Portal is Here

Gem Lake's online payment portal, InvoiceCloud, is now available. This online payment portal can be used to pay quarterly utility bills, annual septic maintenance inspection bills and for homeowners and contractors to pay for permits online!

More information will be sent out in a letter to all residents and business owners with directions on how to make your utility payments online or how to setup automatic payment each quarter. You will need your account number to do this. If you need help finding your account number reach out to Melissa Lawrence at Heritage Hall.

You can find the online payment portal by going to the City of Gem Lake website and clicking on the Utility Billing tab or by clicking on the Permits tab.

At this time the city has decided not to charge residents or contractors any fees related to the use of InvoiceCloud to help encourage the use of online payments. The City Council will revisit the topic on fees in June 2025.



Liquor and Tobacco Licenses Approved

Annual Liquor and Tobacco Licenses were approved for 2025 by the Gem Lake City Council at their council meeting on December 17. This included the following:

1. Tobacco licenses were approved for the Country Lounge (3590 Hoffman Road West) and for the Smoke Den Tobacco and Vape (1599 county Road E East) for 2025.
2. Liquor Licenses were approved for the Country Lounge (for off-sale, on-sale, optional 2 a.m. closing, and Sunday liquor sales) and for the Gem Lake Hills Golf Course (for on-sale and Sunday liquor sales.) Gem Lake Hills is located at 4039 Scheuneman Road.
3. An edible cannabinoid license was approved for the Smoke Den Tobacco and Vape.

The licensing process follows state mandated rules that include an application and background check.

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

Donations of \$1500 were approved by the Gem Lake City Council in October, November, and December 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.

The City's regular donations help fund the food shelf's daily war on food-insecurity in the community. The city has also helped fund operations at the Food Shelf's new Community Market, which is located at the intersection of County Road F and Bellaire Avenue in White Bear Lake.



Winter Parking Regulations Now in Effect

Winter Parking Regulations are in effect November 1 through April 1.

- 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 until plowing and snow removal is complete
- On trash & recycling days, place containers 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.

The City of Gem Lake

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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: January and February 2025

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

January 13, 2025

City Council Workshop is **CANCELED**

January 14, 2025

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

January 21, 2025

City Council Meeting is at 7:00 p.m.

February 10, 2025

City Council Workshop is **CANCELED**

February 11, 2025

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

February 18, 2025

City Council Meeting is at 7:00 p.m.

See also the Gem Lake website for more information.

Your Gem Lake City Council

Mayor:

Gretchen Artig-Swomley
Email: gretchen.artig-swomley@gemlakemn.org

City Council Members:

Joshua Patrick
Email: joshua.patrick@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.

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