



Gem Lake News



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Gretchen Artig-Swomley, Newsletter Editor

Special Interest Articles:

- **New Environmental Center Opening**
- **Get Your NOAA Radio at 50% Discount**
- **MPCA to Visit in March**
- **Importance of Stormwater Management Part One**
- **Keeping Your Septic Healthy**
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Scheduled Recycling Dates:

- **March 12**
- **March 26**
- **April 9**
- **April 23**
- **May 7**
- **May 21**

New Cannabis Ordinance Established

The rules regulating cannabis businesses in Gem Lake were the subject of a new ordinance established on January 21 at the Gem Lake City Council meeting. Ordinance #147 covers the how, when, where of cannabis sales within city boundaries.

Gem Lake’s new ordinance is based almost entirely on the sample ordinance provided by the State of Minnesota, with some small variations in language suggested by other surrounding cities and legal advice from Gem Lake’s City Attorney.

As the rules about cannabis have emerged over the last year or so, it has become clear that cities have limited but important powers regarding the treatment of cannabis products. For instance, cities can regulate where cannabis businesses are located.

(Continued on Page 2)

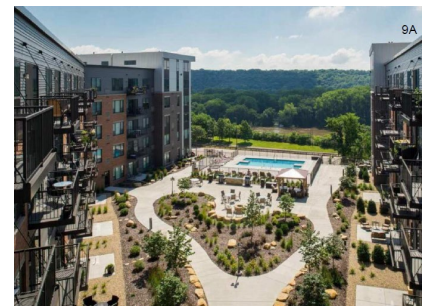


Apartment Complex Proposed for Land Adjacent to Gem Lake

A five-story apartment complex has been proposed for a nine-acre plot of land just west of Gem Lake on Labore Road. Chase Real Estate, a Burnsville based housing developer and builder has presented initial concept plans to the City of Vadnais Heights for a parcel across from Little Fox Lane in Gem Lake. The land has been vacant for years (with the exception of a garage structure), and is just north of the Allina Clinic on Labore and County Road E.

The complex would be called Gallery Vadnais Heights and would feature market-rate rental housing with upscale, condo-level apartment home finishes and various amenities. Gallery Vadnais Heights is proposed to be constructed in two phases, covering two buildings and including a total of 360 units, ranging from 1-3 bedrooms. Residents would access the complex from City Center Drive, which outlets on Labore on the east and County Road E on the South.

(Continued on Page 2)



New Cannabis Ordinance Established (continued from page 1)

Zoning powers are important to keep these businesses away from areas where children are routinely located, such as parks and schools. Gem Lake's small business district is already located in an area with no such facilities. Cities can also regulate the hours that cannabis businesses are open. Gem Lake decided to mirror the City of White Bear Lake, establishing permissible hours as 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily as the maximum. Businesses that establish themselves in Gem Lake can also decide to be open fewer hours or fewer than 7 days a week.



Cities can also mandate that every cannabis business within its borders must register with the city, can be subjected to another background check and will be subjected to at least one "sting" each year to be sure age verification is being properly done. Gem Lake established the registration fee as \$500, modeling itself after surrounding cities. A copy of the full ordinance is available on the city website.

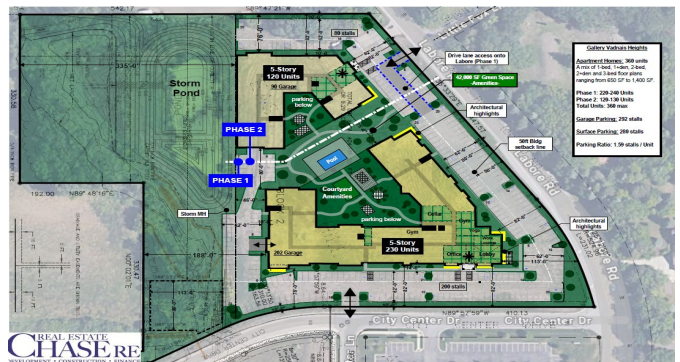
Over the coming months, the Gem Lake Planning Commission will work to combine this ordinance with the existing ordinance that covers Cannabis edibles.



Apartment Complex Proposed for Land Adjacent to Gem Lake (continued from page 1)

Conceptual plans were presented at an Open House on January 22 at the Vadnais Heights City Hall. The Open House was attended by eight residents of the City of Gem Lake. Residents had the chance to express a variety of questions and concerns, chiefly about traffic safety. An initial review by the Vadnais Heights Planning Commission occurred on January 28, followed by the same type of review by the Vadnais City Council on February 4. Neither body votes on the plans at this point.

Initial plans have also reviewed by the Vadnais Heights Fire Department, the city's public works and engineering departments, the Vadnais Lake Area Watershed Management Organization (VLAWMO) and the Ramsey County Public Works Department. Feedback received from these groups concerned things like access, drainage, utilities, easements and traffic flow. All feedback must be considered when drafting the final plans, which the developer acknowledges may change based on staff recommendations, public feedback and approval by the various agencies that must weigh in on a large project like this one.



The next steps will be to present a final Planned Unit Development (PUD) application to the City of Vadnais Heights, which is expected to happen sometime this Spring.

Chase Real Estate is a well-known and experienced player in the field of apartment complex development. They have built approximately 3,000 apartment units and 3,000 single family homes in the Twin Cities area. These include similar projects to the one being proposed currently in cities such as Prior Lake, Chaska and Eagan. Based on the review and approval process, Chase Real Estate hopes to begin construction later this year, with initial opening projected for early 2027. The second phase of the project would begin based on market demand. For more information on this project, consult the City of Vadnais Heights website, city government section.

Gem Lake Hills Junior League Now Enrolling Kids!

Registration is now open for Junior League participants at the Gem Lake Hills Golf Course for the coming golf season. Last year hundreds of kids ages 9-16 enjoyed months of golf instruction and summer fun. There is also a four-hole league for kids 6-10. Pizza parties, prizes, t-shirts and other treats are in-store for one and all. For more information, contact Matt Greer or Steve Nasvik at 651-429-8715, or see the Gem Lake Hills Golf Course website.



New Environmental Center Opening April 1

It's no joke—Ramsey County's Environmental Center is opening **April 1!** This new facility will make it easier for residents to reduce, reuse, repair and recycle. Features include:

- A household hazardous waste drop off.
- Electronics, food scraps and general recycling.
- A free product reuse room.

The Environmental Center is located at 1700 Kent Street in Roseville. It will be open year-round, Tuesdays through Fridays, 11 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and closed on county holidays.

You are invited to join the county's celebrations during Earth week! The first 200 participants dropping off household hazardous waste or electronics on Tuesday, April 22 will receive free giveaways. On Thursday, April 24, there will be an open house from 6 to 8 p.m. And on Saturday, April 26, the county will host a Fix-It Clinic at the facility from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Learn more at RamseyRecycles.com/EC.



MPCA Presentation at March City Council Meeting

The Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) will make a special presentation on March 18 at 7:00 p.m. during the Gem Lake City Council meeting at Heritage Hall. During this presentation they will update members of the public on this year's well testing results for wells within city limits.

Recently, contamination from Per and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) was detected in several local wells. PFAS are a family of human-made chemicals that have been widely used for decades. PFAS are extremely stable and do not breakdown in the environment. They have been found in ground water and surface water all over Minnesota.

Officials from the MPCA will update the public on Gem Lake's issues and will suggest mitigation strategies. After some routine business, their presentation will be generally first on the agenda. All are welcome and encouraged to attend.



Metropolitan Council Visits

One of Gem Lake's representatives on the Metropolitan Council paid a visit to the Gem Lake City Council on January 21. Gail Cederberg, PhD, who represents District 11 on the Met Council, gave a presentation during the monthly Gem Lake City Council meeting. During this presentation she reviewed the vision and core values of the Met Council's 2050 development guide, which is an overall plan for what the metro area is projected to look like in the decades ahead. She also gave updates on several current projects.

The Metropolitan Council was created in 1967 as a regional solution to regional problems such as sprawl into sensitive natural areas, uncoordinated planning and economic development, water quality concerns, wastewater treatment and fiscal inequality between local governments.

The Twin Cities Metropolitan Region covers 7 council, 16 Met Council Districts, 182 cities and townships, people from 11 federal recognized Tribal Nations and other indigenous communities, just over 3.2 million people as of 2023 and projected growth of 610,000 people by 2050.

Every 10 years the council is required by State Law to prepare and adopt a regional development guide and is now in the process of working on what they call **Imagine 2050**. This includes system plans for land use, parks, water resources and transportation. It also adopts policies for housing and water supply. The goal is to help facilitate orderly development of the metropolitan region through convening and bringing together communities to develop a shared vision. In this proposed plan, Gem Lake remains classified as "Suburban" with a minimum density target of 7 units per acre. This means when larger plots of land become available for residential or mixed-use development, the Met Council ideally wants to see the city target projects that provide at least an average of 7 housing units per acre.

Cederberg also reviewed current transportation projects. Metro Transit is the largest regional transit provider and serves as the region's federally required planning agency. It performs long-range transportation system planning. Recent accomplishments include increased ridership and declining crime between 2023 and 2024 and a new contract for transit fare collection system improvements. Upcoming activities include reopening the bus route between Maplewood and Rosedale Malls, the ongoing construction of the METRO Gold line in Woodbury, which will open in 2025 and a Micro Transit Pilot Program, which will operate between Woodbury and Roseville.

Get your NOAA Radio at 50% Discount!

April 7-11 is Severe Weather Awareness Week in Minnesota. To mark this important event, 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 also 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 alerts 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. They will be ordered in bulk, and you will be alerted when they are ready to be picked up. The radios cost \$40.00 each, of which the city will pick up \$20.00 and the homeowner will pay \$20.00.

Please note: As part of Severe Weather Awareness Week in Minnesota, the tornado siren systems will be activated and tested throughout the state on April 10 at both 1:45 p.m. and 6:45 p.m.



The Importance of Stormwater Management, Part One

Jim Lindner, Gem Lake City Council (portions of this article were generated by AI)

Preserving Our Environment and Protecting Public Health

To comply with the public education requirements contained in Gem Lake’s Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) permit, begin a new five-part series on the importance of stormwater management. This first part introduces water quality protection and flood prevention and control.

Stormwater management is a critical aspect of urban planning and environmental preservation. As urban areas expand and impervious surfaces like roads, rooftops, and parking lots increase, the natural infiltration of rainwater into the ground is significantly reduced. This leads to a rise in surface runoff, which, if not properly managed, can have severe environmental, economic, and public health consequences. In this comprehensive discourse, we will explore the various dimensions of stormwater management, including its impact on water quality, ecosystem health, flood prevention, and public safety.



Water Quality Protection

One of the foremost reasons for effective stormwater management is the protection of water quality. When rainwater flows over impervious surfaces, it picks up pollutants such as oil, chemicals, heavy metals, and debris. This contaminated runoff eventually makes its way into streams, rivers, lakes, and coastal waters, posing a substantial threat to water quality.

Pollutant Reduction

Stormwater management practices, such as green infrastructure, permeable pavements, and vegetated swales, help filter and reduce these pollutants before they reach water bodies. By allowing water to infiltrate the ground, these practices promote natural filtration processes that remove contaminants, thereby safeguarding drinking water sources and aquatic habitats.

Ecosystem Preservation

Healthy ecosystems rely on clean water to support diverse plant and animal life. Excessive pollutants in stormwater can disrupt these ecosystems, leading to the decline of fish populations, the destruction of wetlands, and the impairment of recreational water bodies. Effective stormwater management practices help maintain the natural balance of these ecosystems, ensuring their resilience and sustainability.

Stay tuned for Part Two on Flood Prevention and Control in the next newsletter.

Why do we care about stormwater?



Keeping Your Septic System Healthy from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

More than 600,000 Minnesota homes and businesses use septic systems, treating an estimated 42 billion gallons of wastewater per year. Maintaining these systems is critical to protecting our groundwater, lakes, and streams, as well as human health. A poorly functioning septic system may not remove pathogens, nutrients and other chemicals from the sewage.

Understand Your system

A septic system has three parts, all of which must be working to provide effective sewage treatment. These parts are:

- Household plumbing
- A tank to collect sewage and solids
- A soil treatment area (also called a drain field)

Maintain Your System

Many septic system owners assume as long as their used water “goes away,” their system must be working properly. Septic systems must be designed specifically for your site’s conditions and installed correctly. Only regular maintenance and evaluation of the system can ensure that it is actually treating your sewage.

Look for signs of a faulty or poorly functioning septic system. These include a pipe that goes directly to the lake or ground (even laundry water!), sewage surfacing in the yard or a ditch, sewage odors, high levels of nitrates or cold form bacteria in well water tests, or algae blooms and excessive plant growth in nearby ponds or lakes.

Septic system maintenance will increase system life. The MPCA suggests that septic tanks be evaluated at least every three years and pumped out when sludge and scum accumulate to the point of endangering the soil treatment system. For some homes, the accumulation can take many years; in other homes this process may take less than a year. The accumulation depends entirely on how the system is used. For example, routine garbage disposal use will increase accumulation of material in the tank. Septic tank additives are not an alternative to pumping the accumulated solids from the tank.

Manage Your System

Operation and maintenance guidelines listed in the link below will prevent costly repairs or premature replacement of your septic system. Go to the link and then see the specific article listed below it.

<https://www.pca.state.mn.us/news-and-stories/keep-your-septic-system-healthy>

Septic system DO’s and DON’T’s

Household Plumbing Tips

- Conserve water, repair leaks and use low-flow fixtures.
- Spread water usage through the day and week. If you have periods of high use, talk to a septic professional about options that will help your system manage your lifestyle.
- Minimize use of harsh cleaners, bleach, antibacterial soaps and detergents.
- Do not dispose of paints, medications or chemicals through your septic system.
- Keep grease, lint, food and feminine hygiene products and plastics out of the system.

Septic Tank

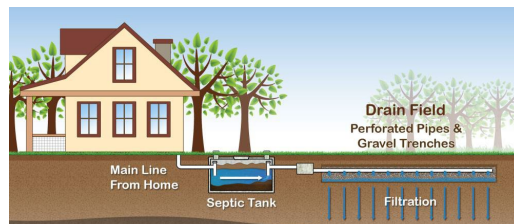
- Pump solids through tank’s maintenance hole regularly, at least every three years.
- Do not remove solids through inspection pipes.
- Install and insulate risers to maintenance hold for improved management access.
- Have baggies inspected when tank is pumped.
- Install an effluent screen and service as necessary
- Do not use tank additives or cleaners.

Soil treatment Area

- Maintain grass, native grasses or flowers over the treatment area. Mow, but do not fertilize, water or burn the area.
- Do not plant trees, shrubs or deep-rooted plants on or near the area.
- Do not grow vegetables or locate playgrounds above the area.
- Keep heavy vehicles off area. (Such as cars, tractors, snowmobiles or boats)
- Help prevent the system from freezing. (See www.pca link above for more information)

Hire a Licensed Professional

The MPCA maintains a list of professionals currently licensed by the state to conduct this specialized work. (See website list) Interview your septic system professional and learn about how they do business. Make sure they are licensed, reputable and reliable by asking for and checking references



City News

Gem Lake Scholarship Program

Applications are due April 30 for the Gem Lake Scholarship Program. To qualify, you must be graduating from high school this year, and a resident of the City of Gem Lake. The scholarship program began 16 years ago and has provided an average of \$1000 per winner each year. The program is funded through charitable gambling receipts received by the city that result from pull-tab and bingo sales within city limits.

Applicants must fill out the application form, which is available through high school guidance counselors and/or by stopping by Heritage Hall and picking up a copy. The completed form must be returned by April 30 with at least two letters of reference from school staff. Awards are typically made in May.

Have You Licensed Your Dog?

Dog license renewals were due by January 1, 2025. 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.

You can mail in the form with payment or call the office to arrange for credit card payment. Call the Acting City Clerk at 651-747-2790.

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.

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 January and February 2025 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.



Scheduled Office Closures

Heritage Hall will be closed the following days in March.

- 03/19/2025 – Clerk Training
- 03/20/2025 – Clerk Training
- 03/21/2025 – Clerk Training

All other hours remain the same.



The City of Gem Lake

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city@gemlakemn.org

Newsletter E-mail:
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

**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: March and April 2025

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

March 10, 2025

City Council Workshop is **CANCELED**

March 11, 2025

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

March 18, 2025

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

April 8, 2025

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

April 14, 2025

City Council Workshop is **CANCELED**

April 16, 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.

CITY OF GEM LAKE
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