

**City of Gem Lake
City Council Meeting – March 18, 2025
Meeting Minutes**

Mayor Gretchen Artig-Swomley called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Councilmembers Jim Lindner, Len Cacioppo, Ben Johnson and Joshua Patrick were present. Also present: City Attorney Martin Norder, MPCA Representatives Michael Ginsbach, Drew Bahl and Time Grape, Gem Lake Hills Golf Course Representatives Matt Greet and Steve Nasvik, Acting City Clerk Melissa Lawrence, and residents Ken and Jodi Lorenz, Pat Ryan, Jim Wilson, Ken Defiel, Carol Schacht, Callie Donaghue, Paul Emeott, Brad Naylor, Dustin Marks, Sarah Ernhart, Melissa Rottach, Sherrie O'Malley, Jon Reigstad, Tom Bolfing, Rich and Roberta Pientka, Kristen Hoeschler O'Brien, and Isaac Nelson.

March 18, 2025, 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 February 18, 2025, City Council Meeting minutes. Motion carried 5-0.

A motion was introduced by Councilmember Lindner, seconded by Councilmember Cacioppo to accept the March 11, 2025, Planning Commission Meeting minutes. Motion carried 5-0.

Special Presentations/Public Hearings

MPCA Well Testing Updates

Representative from the MPCA shared some information on the recent well samplings and a new contamination detected in 27 properties. Drew Bahl spoke about the latest well sampling results. He shared that some residents were not asked if their wells could be sampled and they only found out when they received a report from the MPCA. This is not the norm for the MPCA, and consent will be asked for before the next round of sampling. Guidelines on PFAS recently changed so the MPCA decided to add that test to the samples as well. Of the 28 homes sampled in the fall of 2024, 27 of those homes showed contamination of PFAS, based on the new guidelines by the state. There are more sampling events scheduled in the coming weeks, which will tell the MPCA if the sampling should be expanded to look at all wells in Gem Lake.

Treatment options are available to help with the PFAS contamination, such as installing carbon filter systems in homes. While this helps remove the PFAS contamination, it will not remove the 1,4 Dioxane. PFAS is the primary point of concern to the MPCA now as the numbers for 1,4 Dioxane have started to dwindle. Bottled water is still being supplied to all those with the contamination and will not be supplied to those with the PFAS contamination. Michael Ginsbach shared that PFAS is found all over Minnesota with the main source of the contamination being from 3M products. There is a current lawsuit against 3M regarding the contamination. This is an ongoing investigation for the MPCA. Residents should consult the MPCA website to see what standards any carbon filter system needs to adhere to in order to be effective.

Residents in attendance asked questions regarding the new contaminant to which the MPCA representatives reiterated what they had already said regarding it. The MPCA is going to update their website that talks about the contamination in Gem Lake to include information on PFAS as well.

Consent Agenda

**Resolution #2025-007 March 2025 Donation to White Bear Lake Area Food Shelf
2025 Garden Overlay Interim Use Permit – Bryan Hansen County Road E Property
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, seconded by Councilmember Cacioppo. Motion carried 5-0.

Committee Reports

No representative from the Planning Commission was in attendance. Mayor Artig-Swomley shared with the Council that she would like to encourage the Planning Commission to assign someone as a swing person in the case that there will be no quorum, and one is needed to hold a necessary meeting. The mayor will have a conversation with Planning Commission Chair Don Cummings regarding the suggestions.

Old Business

Newsletter Updates / Topics / Suggestions

Some topics for the next newsletter would include the MPCA presentation, news on the work the golf course and KIA dealership are doing, scholarship recipients and the 2nd stormwater article written by Councilmember Jim Lindner.

Code Enforcement Issues Discussion

A letter was sent to the owner of the rental property on Scheuneman Road informing them that their property would need to be reinspected after a list of items was corrected. The inspection has still not been scheduled at this point.

Barnett KIA Developers Agreement Draft

A draft agreement has been created but is still being reviewed by staff. The Mayor asked the council if she could be given authority to approve it after the review has been completed instead of waiting until the next City Council meeting. This will help to keep the project on schedule.

Councilmember Lindner introduced a motion authorizing the Mayor the authority to approve the agreement after legal has finalized it, seconded by Councilmember Cacioppo. Motion carried 5-0.

New Business

Conditional Use Permit – 4039 Scheuneman Road – Gem Lake Hills Golf Course

Graduate Community Planner CJ Sycks from TKDA summarized the request in a memo to the City Council. The applicant is requesting an amendment to an existing Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for the Gem Lake Hills Golf Course at 4039 Scheuneman Road. The applicant is proposing to add a miniature golf putting course (putting course) and an ambient outdoor speaker system (speaker system) to the property. The proposed putting course will be constructed in the location of the old hitting cages, located on the east side of the property, near the primary building (the clubhouse) and parking lot. The hitting cages were removed in the spring of 2024.

The clubhouse includes an open space with a bar, customer seating space, three bathrooms, and an office. There is also a maintenance department with an office, lawn mower and utility vehicle parking, and a large walk-in refrigerator.

The active CUP was originally approved on March 14, 1964, and has been amended four (4) times since then. The most recent amendment was approved on February 20, 1989. CUPs were formerly referred to as Special Use Permits (SUPs).

In a narrative provided by the applicant and included in the Meeting Packet, the applicant states that the addition of a putting course will provide a recreational option for all ages and will increase the appeal of their facility. They state that the putting course will be designed to minimize any potential impact on the environment and will adhere to all zoning regulations. The site area is approximately 19,000 square feet in size. The landscaping within the putting course will be artificial turf, with areas of turf designed to look like sand. In addition, a new deck is planned to be built on the west side of the building, near the putting course.

The applicants anticipate an additional 30% increase in golf “rounds” played on the property (putting course and golf rounds). They anticipate an increase in visitors for the putting course, however, putting course visitors tend to arrive together in one vehicle compared to golfers arriving alone in individual vehicles, due to the nature of the games and the audiences.

The proposed speaker system will be used to provide background music and announcements. The applicant states that it will maintain appropriate volume levels and will abide by all noise ordinances. There will be between 12 and 18 speakers installed on the putting course. The speakers will be placed in a way that allows contained volume for patrons to hear music, while maintaining a quiet environment for the nearby neighborhoods. While the applicant is uncertain of the exact decibel levels at this time, they anticipate that it could reach 60-70 decibels. The system will allow the operators to set a maximum volume that cannot be exceeded.

Ordinance No. 131 regulates conditional use permits in section 17.5. The criteria that need to be reviewed and measured are: 1) Adjacent Uses, 2) Air and Water Quality, 3) Traffic Generations, 4) Public Safety and Health, 5) Area Aesthetics, 6) Economic Impact on the Entire Area, 7) Consistency with the Comprehensive Municipal Plan, and 8) Anticipated Duration of the Conditional or Interim Use. These criteria were discussed and the notes on the topics can be found on the City Planner memo available. One of the concerns of the Commission Members was the noise. They were reassured that it would not be a problem.

Resolution #2025-008 Approving CUP for Gem Lake Hills Golf Course

Councilmember Lindner introduced a motion to approve the CUP amendment request with the conditions listed, seconded by Council member Cacioppo. Motion carried 5-0.

Resolution #2025-009 Adoption of the 2025 Ramsey County Hazard Mitigation Plan

The 2025 Ramsey County Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) update provides a framework to enhance the general well-being, safety and resilience of residents and communities across Ramsey County. This plan considers the impact of natural hazards across the planning area, reviews current levels of capability relevant to hazard mitigation, and identifies a comprehensive hazard mitigation strategy to buy down levels of risk.

Councilmember Lindner introduced a motion to adopt the 2025 Ramsey County Hazard Mitigation Plan, seconded by Councilmember Cacioppo. Motion carried 5-0.

Resolution #2025-010 2026-2030 Joint Powers Agreement with the RCGISUG

The Ramsey County GIS Users Group (RCGISUG) is an alliance and partnership of municipal governments and watershed management units who make use of Geographic Information Systems operating within Ramsey County, Minnesota. Gem Lake signed a JPA in 2018 but missed renewing the JPA in 2021.

Councilmember Lindner introduced a motion to approve the Joint Powers Agreement with the RCGISUG, seconded by Councilmember Cacioppo. Motion carried 5-0.

Prairie Restoration Quote

Pete Tholen of White Bear Township Public Works submitted a quote to the Gem Lake Clerk regarding summer 2025 services from Prairie Restoration. This service would include an overspray to manage invasive or aggressive species in the public land along the Gem Lake Trail.

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

Updated Generator Quotes for Heritage Hall

The city received updated comparable quotes for generators at Heritage Hall. NEI quoted a 45-KVA 3-phase natural gas generator for \$77,900.00 which includes the cost of the generator, materials, gas hook up, labor, rental equipment, concrete pad and site restoration. Lucas Electric quoted a 48KW commercial grade

liquid cooled 120/208 volt 3 phase generator for \$52,800.00. This includes the generator, transfer switch, labor and site restoration only. All other items such as the concrete pad and natural gas line will need to be completed by other contractors. The Council discussed the cost difference and work to be done and felt that a 48KW generator would be better than a 45KVA generator. This will be a shared cost with White Bear Township.

Councilmember Patrick introduced a motion to approve the quote from Lucas Electric in the amount of \$52,800.00, seconded by Councilmember Johnson. Motion carried 5-0.

Website Format Discussion

Mayor Artig-Swomley shared with the Council that for the website it might be a good idea to have someone come and take professional headshots for the website of each Councilmember. Some recommendations have been made to the City Clerk by the person handling the City's website remodel.

Future Charitable Gambling Donations

White Bear Lake Emergency Food Shelf

Mayor Artig-Swomley suggested that the Council donate in April \$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 her recent meeting with Vadnais Heights went well. During the meeting Vadnais Heights proposed a way to bring the water bill down at the Villas. Progress is being made. There was even talk about dropping the meter fee completely, but that won't help as much as the City would like. With the apartment building going up on Labore Road, Vadnais Heights may want to work jointly with Gem Lake as a future water supplier. No detailed discussion has occurred yet.

The White Bear Lake Fire Chief would like to attend the May City Council meeting to give a report. Councilmember Lindner shared that he was again voted chair of the VLAWMO board.

Presentation from the Public, 2 Minutes Maximum

None.

Open Items for Council Members to Bring Up

None

Future Council Meetings

City Council, Tuesday, April 15, 2025. City Council Workshop, Monday, April 14, 2025, is CANCELED.

Attendance Inquiry

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

Adjournment

Being there no further business, following a motion from Councilmember Lindner, seconded by Councilmember Cacioppo, the meeting adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, Melissa Lawrence