

President's Message November 7, 2014

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Dear HLPOA Members

From: Jim Vondale

Re: President's Report/HLPOA Purpose, Mission Statement, Principles, Key Goals and Objectives for 2014/2015

It's customary for the President to reach out to Members at the start of the term to lay out the Purpose and Mission for the organization, describe the principles that will form a guide to achieving the Purpose and Mission and to list some of the key Goals and Objectives for the year ahead. With a month and a half under my belt, and one board meeting, it's time for my report so you know how I plan to lead this board and the HLPOA membership forward to the next annual meeting.

HLPOA Purpose, Mission Statement

The HLPOA has a long and rich history of achievement. Formed in 1935, it remains one of the oldest (most likely the oldest) continuing lake association in Michigan. Since its inception, the HLPOA has had great leadership, including its most recent Presidents, Bob Frye, Ken Dennings and Pat Springstead. Those are some large shoes to fill. Each of them provided the organization with strong leadership, stability and a long record of achievements that benefited the lake and its riparian Members. Those leaders were supported by boards whose list of Members is too long to provide here. But again, our boards have provided great service over these many years.

To help guide our efforts during the coming year we should review our Purpose and Mission. The HLPOA Purpose is spelled out in the Articles of Incorporation as follows: To promote the general welfare of the owners of property on the shores of Higgins Lake. The Mission Statement contained in the Bylaws is: To protect, preserve and enhance the quality of Higgins Lake. I believe that a balanced approach is necessary to meet the purpose of promoting the general welfare of owners of property while protecting, preserving and enhancing the quality of Higgins Lake. I also understand that your confidence, respect and support is not assumed and it must be earned. I will work hard to earn your confidence, respect and support during the coming year.

Principles Listed below are some principles we will strive to meet.

1) Continue to ensure the HLPOA is a Member driven organization which provides opportunities for Members to participate and contribute.

Our first step is the Member Survey which you recently received. We urge you to fill out the survey and return it to us. The board is listening and we want your input. Next, we will work together to designate the board committees for 2014/2015. When you fill out the survey, please let us know if you are willing to serve on a committee. It's a great opportunity to participate and contribute.

2) Treat others with courtesy and respect.

We face a number of challenging issues and there are a variety of views on how to address those issues. We all are more effective and people are more willing to listen to our views when we treat them with courtesy and respect. This is especially true when we do not agree on the best way to achieve our purpose and mission.

3) Work as a team.

We can accomplish much more when we work together. We need to reach out to the various associations and organizations around the lake to cooperate on issues we agree on, like swimmer's itch. We will work to communicate openly on those issues where there are differing points of view and ensure that the various views are fairly reported.

4) Share knowledge

We have tremendous resources in our Members and we need to find ways to share that knowledge.

5) Keep it simple.

Members want information that is efficient, focused on the key issues and easily understood.

6) Demonstrate leadership

Whether a board member, a committee chair or a member of a committee, we all need to provide effective leadership.

7) Be a good listener

Listening is much more important than talking when you are a leader in an organization.

8) Have fun.

We all bought our cottages because we want to enjoy the lake with our friends and families. We need to make sure we bring that same spirit of fun to our work with the HLPOA.

Key Goals and Objectives

1) Make progress on the important problem of swimmer's itch.

During the past month, we have been working with leaders of local government and organizations around the lake to reduce the problem of swimmer's itch on Higgins Lake. We have met with Dr. Curt Blankespoor, Dr. Harvey Blankespoor and Ron Reimink, three key experts on swimmer's itch and will review a proposed Comprehensive Swimmer's Itch Control Plan for Higgins Lake focusing on Mergansers, snails and humans (preventive creams.) If we can reach a consensus on a plan and budget we will share it with members and work to obtain funding. We also have led the effort to form a statewide Michigan Swimmer's Itch Partnership that includes 10 lake associations (Burt, Mullett, Torch, Glen, Crystal, Long, Higgins, Margrethe, Walloon and Leelenau.) We had a successful first meeting on Nov 6 at Walloon Lake. We believe our fight against swimmer's itch will be enhanced if we all work together to share information, identify areas for research, pool our resources, educate legislators state wide about the problem and work together with government agencies.

2) Continue to protect the rights of riparians on Higgins Lake.

Consistent with our Articles, the HLPOA is a riparian organization. We have led the effort over many years to obtain favorable court decisions and legislation that address important riparian issues like road end use. Going forward, we will continue to be vigilant in protecting the rights of riparians on Higgins Lake.

3) Support the efforts of the independent Bylaw Committee.

All of you should have received the June 2014 report of the Bylaw Committee. By a Member resolution passed at the last annual meeting, a new Bylaw Committee is forming consisting of two board representatives, three at large representatives from the Membership and other supporting Members. They will continue the work of last year's Committee. A key focus will be on the definition of Member contained in the current bylaws. The Committee will begin meeting shortly and the board will provide whatever support they need.

4) Upgrade HLPOA data systems, website and overall Member communications.

Progress has been made and we intend to accelerate that progress in the coming year. Our new committee structure should aid in our efforts and volunteer members will be sought to help. We hope to begin greater use of email to provide information and get input from members who want to participate. We can significantly reduce our office overhead costs by using email so that we can concentrate our resources on important matters.

5) Support the 2013 member resolution.

We will support the member resolution passed at the 2013 annual meeting which states: IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED that the HIGGINS LAKE PROPERTY OWNERS ASSOCIATION is not in favor of removal of the dam, which controls the water level of Higgins Lake, or any change in the lake levels established by the Roscommon County Circuit Court in 1926 and 1982 and that in the event the MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES (DNR): MUSKEGON WATERSHED COUNCIL or any other attempts are taken to remove or alter the dam or those lake levels in any manner we will oppose same. Following completion of the current study and after the results are analyzed, the Board further resolves to take no action of any nature toward removal of the dam, or any changes in those lake levels other than to oppose any changes to those lake levels, unless otherwise instructed by its members in a formal vote which must take place in accordance with the requirements of the Higgins Lake Property Association Bylaws at the next Annual Meeting.

One of the most important roles we can play as a board is to ensure Members get good and balanced information on important issues like lake levels, winter draw down and the upcoming Hydrological Study consistent with the resolution. The board will play a key role in representing Member interests and acting as a conduit for information. It is likely that a committee of the board could assist in ensuring Member access to information about these important issues. That committee also could play a key role in the analysis of the Study results as called for in the resolution.

6) Replacement of the Nominating Committee

The current bylaws specify the only method for nominating new board members is through the Nominating Committee which is comprised of 3 board members nominated by the President. Even though floor nominations have been permitted in the past, they are not guaranteed by the bylaws. There also are no election-related procedures spelled out in the bylaws. The board will work with the Bylaws Committee on the concept of an Elections Committee that will provide a transparent and open process for nominating board candidates and spelling out election procedures. The proposal will be presented to Members for their review and, if appropriate, ratification at or before the next annual meeting.

7) Others

This is just a small list of our key goals and objectives and is not meant to be a complete listing. Your input on the survey will help guide this board and help us establish our priorities for the coming year. We will need the entire Membership pulling together to accomplish our key Goals and Objectives. We look forward to serving your interests in the coming year.

In Closing...

Concerns as well as support for board decisions will be voiced because the HLPOA includes directors and Members with differing views on how to accomplish our Purpose and Mission. All organizations, including governments, have these issues. We respect differing views both on the board and within the Membership and take them into consideration when we make our decisions. However, after considering all views, we make our decisions after due deliberation and consideration of our authority for making decisions. We recognize that some will agree with our decisions and some will disagree with our decisions. Members have a right to voice their concerns as well as their support for our decisions and we appreciate and listen to those differing viewpoints.

Sincerely, Jim Vondale, President