



# Higgins Lake Property Owners Association<sup>SM</sup>

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**President:** Charlene Cornell, **Vice Pres:** Greg Semack, **Secretary:** Herb Weatherly, **Treasurer:** Bruce Carleton  
**Directors:** Wayne Brooks, Jack Cornell, Curt DeVoe, Becky Gibson, Bob McKellar, John Ogren, Fred Swinehart

Higgins Lake Property Owners Association  
November 20, 2023, Board Meeting Minutes  
Zoom Virtual Meeting

The meeting was called to order by President Charlene Cornell at 9:01 A.M.

**Board Members Present:** Charlene Cornell, Greg Semack, Bruce Carleton, Herb Weatherly, Wayne Brooks, Becky Gibson, John Ogren, and Fred Swinehart. Curt DeVoe, Jack Cornell, and Bob McKellar were absent.

**Agenda:** No changes.

**President's Comments:** Charlene said she was grateful for the Board members' help and involvement in many areas and wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving! Charlene was also thanked for all she does!

**Minutes:** The September 18, 2023, Minutes were accepted as written.

**Committee Reports:**

**Secretary/Office:** None.

**Treasurer's Report:** The September 30 and October 31, 2023, financials were presented. Bruce said the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter financials will be posted on our website. Bruce also said we are in good shape with our income at nearly \$104,000.00, the highest amount since 2018.

Online payment options are still being reviewed.

Last, Bruce stated that he is working on the 2024 budget and asked committee chairs to send him their estimates for 2024 revenue and expenses. A preliminary budget will be presented at the December Board meeting.

**Membership & Communication:** Wayne said we have 511 members vs 523 last year. Also, it was decided to stuff 2024 membership envelopes on November 30<sup>th</sup> at 9:00 A.M. Becky added that she is preparing an email blast regarding the Intro to Lakes course and asked if anyone had news to add.

**Riparian Committee:** Roscommon County Safety Meeting, September 20, 2023: John distributed his notes on the meeting to the board prior to the meeting. He mentioned that the County Marine Patrol was limited to patrolling to 45 days during the summer because of funding restrictions. However, the patrols resulted in one citation and 33 warnings for careless/neg/reckless operation, 45 navigation rules warnings, 28 mandatory PDF

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wear warnings, 33 registration warnings and 14 boater safety warnings. Two boat wrecks with no serious injuries were investigated.

No new or additional PA 56 sign locations were requested by the police departments. The road ends will be surveyed again in the spring for winter damage.

### **2023 Data Collection Project-DNR Accesses on Higgins Lake:**

A report on the data collection process was distributed to the board members before the meeting. The report is based on 449 interviews of arriving boat operators, 2,166 inspections for visible weeds on parked boat trailers after boat launch and 210 inspections for visible weeds on boat/trailers leaving the accesses. Other boat accesses around the lake were also inspected to determine risks relative to the DNR boat accesses. The data indicates that the risk for new AIS plant entry at the DNR access is 75% at the South State Park, 21% at the North State Park and 4% at the West Access. The risk from the other boat accesses is de minimis relative to the DNR accesses. The risk of spreading existing AIS plants within Higgins Lake is 85% from the South State Park lagoon and 15% combined from the other two accesses. The risk of spreading Higgins Lake AIS to other lakes is primarily from the South State Park where about 50% of departing boats and/or trailers carry visible weeds.

Recommended actions are to replace the lagoon with direct access launching and peak period supervision at the South State Park, inspection for visible weeds of arriving boat as part of the existing check for state park vehicle registrations at the North State Park and staffing the hut at the West Boat Launch during peak periods for both state park registrations and visible weed inspections.

John reported that he distributed the report to Josh Pellow, Rachel Roberts, and Logan Graff of the DNR on October 11, 2023, and requested a single purpose meeting to discuss the findings. So far there has been no response and no response from follow-up telephone calls. Recommended actions to bring these results to the attention of more senior levels in the DNR were discussed.

### **Environmental Committee:** Fred reported the following:

The major development offering progress for the water quality environment of Higgins Lake has been the passage of resolutions in both Lyon and Gerrish Townships creating the Gerrish Lyon Utility Authority (GLUA) as an official Governmental agency, so conversations may now begin in earnest with the many Federal and State entities offering financial help in proceeding with the wastewater treatment plant and lake wide sewer project.

This project is very large and will, of necessity, proceed in several steps. The zero-phase funding was generously provided by the Higgins Lake Foundation who contributed approximately \$80,000 to cover the initial costs of launching the program. These funds have been spent down to less than \$20,000 in pursuing the successful effort to achieve approvals from both Gerrish and Lyon Townships to establish the Gerrish Lyon Utility Authority and to proceed with the project.

It turns out that the Federal and State agencies that traditionally provide funds for public health and public use infrastructure require the existence of a suitable property upon which to construct the waste treatment facility itself. Acquisition of this property constitutes Phase One of the project and is now well on the way. Very satisfactory results from initial test wells have proven advantageous to the approval of the chosen site for the waste treatment facility itself.

This portion of the project will involve approximately \$100,000 of new funding to secure EGLE approvals and a DNR official offering of sale to the GLUA. The actual purchase of the offered property might be that much or

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more, but a firm figure should be available in early 2024. I attach a private communication from Jim Barnwell, Chairman of the GLUA:

*Dear Fred*

*I am attaching the letter to David Walters of MDEQ, which outlines the work for the Hydro-geo plan submittal. This is necessary to insure the selected site is acceptable and permissible for the discharge of treated wastewater.*

*Also, the cost and timing and as provided by Fleis & Vandenbrink. They estimated the work to be \$129,000. As we discussed, the number of borings on the property has been reduced (per discussions with MDEQ) and will result in a savings of approx. 15-20 thousand. GLUA currently has commitments for some funding, but we are short approximately \$100,000 based on the estimate.*

*Any assistance would be greatly appreciated.*

*Contributions can be made to: Gerrish Lyon Utility Authority*

*and sent to the Authority at:*

*Gerrish Lyon Utility Authority  
c/o Gerrish Township  
2997 E. Higgins Lake Drive  
Roscommon, Michigan 48653*

*Thank you.*

*Jim*

(MDEQ = formerly Michigan Department of Environmental Quality, now EGLE)

Fund-raising activity is ongoing already, and we are suggesting that all members of HLPOA participate if they are able and willing to do so. Several points to consider are below:

1. It is important to show widespread support from true Higgins Lake Lovers that the sewer program is needed and widely supported. So even small contributions are very important, as contributor numbers will be noted for influencing Federal and State grant applications down the road. Supporter numbers are really important!
2. The first phase of the program is proceeding extremely well. The sampling and testing of the soils at the selected site is very positive. EGLE has agreed to many fewer borings than originally specified, saving a lot of money. However, additional funds are required to complete this portion of the project. Contributions to GLUA are tax exempt, as GLUA is now an official governmental agency whose spending is for the public good.

*“Any assistance would be greatly appreciated”.*

**HLSIO:** Greg reported the following:

We have received the 2022 and 2023 annual report from SIS and will be sending it to our HLPOA supporters and onto the HLPOA members shortly.

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We have met with Crystal Lake and Curt and Randy to discuss the potential of resuming relocation next year and are now trying to get a meeting with our DNR contacts to discuss what we have found while the program has been suspended and determine what our position will be to end the relocation suspension so we can resume the program next summer.

**HLPAC:** Greg reported the following:

Much has been going on regarding the Higgins Lake dam. Chase Schepke has been named Delegated Authority for Houghton Lake and his salary is being paid by the SAD (Special Assessment District) for the Houghton Lake dam. The position is not filled for the Higgins Lake dam because the SAD is not established, but Chase has been doing work behind the scenes anyway. Chase recently did a survey of the Higgins Lake dam that was paid for by the HLLC. Some of the commissioners will want to use it in order to get an EGLE permit to help make modifications to manage the dam better. Also, it has been determined that the area beneath with the 4.75 opening has been scoured lower and is probably now allowing twice the water to go into the cut river than was permitted by the original plans.

CHLLL (Citizens for Higgins Lake Legal Levels) lawsuit had a hearing last week where it was decided that the two sides would meet again to negotiate a settlement.

As regards the suit concerning the Higgins Lake Dam SAD, attorney Ellison has filed for appeal. The appeal will likely be heard in about 7 months. I am to meet this week with Phil Ellison to discuss the current situation and the impact, if any of recent events and any new news about the appeal itself.

#### **Ongoing Business:**

Sewer Project: A discussion was held about the recently established GLUA (Gerrish Lyon Utility Authority), as an official governmental agency, where conversations may now begin with Federal and State entities that offer financial assistance in proceeding with the wastewater plant and the lake wide sewer project. Fred noted that organizations, as well as individuals, can contribute to GLUA. HLF (Higgins Lake Foundation) has contributed to cover initial costs of launching the administration. After discussion, Fred moved that HLPOA contribute \$10,000.00 to GLUA, seconded by Becky. Motion passed with 6 ayes and 2 nays.

Lake Level: HLPOA received a letter in October from Roscommon Commissioners Darlene Sensor and Rex Wolfson, of the Lake Level Committee, requesting funding for an elevation survey of the Higgins Lake dam. Greg stated that HLLC (Higgins Lake Land Conservancy) had already announced they would pay for the survey and the survey was to have been completed already. The results of the survey should be published soon, and the county is likely to discuss these results in their next meetings.

**Adjournment:** Becky moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Fred. Motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 11:34 A.M.

**The next meeting will be December 18, 2023, at 9:00 A.M.**

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