



# 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  
August 19, 2024, Board Meeting Minutes  
Zoom Virtual Meeting

The meeting was called to order by President Charlene Cornell at 9:00 A.M.

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

**Agenda:** No changes.

**President's Comments:** Charlene thanked everyone for their help and participation in setting up our annual meeting, adding that the committee reports were very informative.

**June Minutes:** The June 17, 2024, Minutes were accepted as written.

**July Special Meeting Minutes:** The July 13, 2024, Special Meeting Minutes were accepted as written.

**July 13, 2024, Annual Minutes:** Charlene noted that the Annual Meeting Minutes are not yet completed.

## **Committee Reports:**

**Secretary/Office:** Herb was thanked for reserving the High School location and for ordering the refreshments for the annual meeting. Thank you, Herb!

**Treasurer's Report:** The June 30 and July 31, 2024, financial statements were presented. Bruce commented on the July Statement of Income, noting that the slightly lower than budget membership dues were offset by the higher than budget directory advertisement income resulting in a near wash, while the legal and environmental funds revenue remains under budget. He noted that both Environmental income and expenses have historically run below budget and Fred noted that he is anticipating \$8,000.00 from grants to be received soon for the environmental fund. Bruce added that the Sips/Chips and Dips fundraiser income was almost double vs last year and thanked the Cornell family for hosting this very popular event!

**Membership & Communication:** Becky stated that articles for the Fall newsletter are due September 13, 2024. Charlene noted that the directory cost increased \$1.00, from \$9.03 each this year vs \$8.01 last year.

**Riparian Committee:** John reported the following:

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Charlene, Greg and I met with the DNR on August 13. Vicki Springstead was unable to attend and the HLF was not represented. This was a Teams meeting and replaced our spring meeting which had been postponed by the DNR. We expect to meet again in the fall, hopefully in November. The DNR was represented by Josh Pellow, Regional Manager; Rachel Roberts, South State Park Manager, Logan Graff, North State Park and West Access Manger, Christina Baugher, AIS (Aquatic Invasive Species) Specialist and Lt. DePew, Regional Conservation Officer.

Rachel Roberts reported on chemical and DASH (Diver Assisted Suction Harvesting) boat harvesting at the DNR accesses. The South State Park lagoon was chemically treated with ProcellaCOR for Eurasian Water Milfoil. No EWM was found at the North and West Accesses, and they were not treated. The MTT dash boat is currently harvesting the lagoon for starry stonewort. So far, 200 bags with starry stonewort have been harvested compared to 400 total in 2023. The DNR representatives are quite satisfied with the condition of the accesses with respect to AIS.

Charistina Baugher is primarily involved in the various DNR campaigns to inform boat users of AIS risks. She said that her boat wash demonstration team will visit 30 locations this summer (none at Higgins Lake) in this their second year of five that have been funded. She also announced that a newly hired AIS specialist will focus on using social media for informing about AIS risks. She said that most of the funding for AIS work is federal. All of the DNR efforts to prevent new AIS risks are communication programs, signs and printed handouts. The DNR does not get involved in on-site boat inspections.

Lt. DePew said that there are two Conservation Officers per county and two hours per week are allocated for AIS work at the Higgins Lake boat accesses. He reported writing one ticket so far this summer which included driving with visible weeds.

John's take on the DNR reaction to our data collection efforts was "interesting but do not see how it affects them." Our data collection over the past couple of years has discovered the following:

- In 2023 we interview arriving boat operators at all three DNR sites. From checking arriving visiting boats for visible weeds, we determined that the South State Park with the lagoon creates 84% of the entry risk of new AIS.
- Checking parked trailers for visible weeds after launch in 2023 provided the relative usage between the three access (and between the four other non-DNR accesses.) It also provided the ratios of visible weeds upon arrival and after launch. That ratio doubles after launching into the lagoon.
- Based on that the 2023 results, we focused our 2024 efforts at the South State Park. HLF hired temporary employees to interview and inspect arriving boat operators. The interviews are conducted on most busy Saturday and Sunday mornings from 9 AM to Noon at the boat wash. Most boat operators cooperate and a high percentage of boats with weeds have been washed before entering the lagoon.
- The inspection of parked trailers for visible weeds in 2024 has proven to be remarkably consistent with the results from 2023. This confirms our decision to focus our efforts at the South State Park.
- Our big learning for 2024 is the effectiveness of the interviews at the boat wash station to reduce risk of new AIS by simply asking operators with weeds to wash boats. Our path forward looks to be extending the working hours (perhaps two shifts 9-Noon and Noon-3 PM) and adding holidays and some expected busy Fridays. We will work with HLF to make these 2025 decisions. This should reduce the new AIS risk by over 50%.
- We will also continue to encourage the DNR to continue their chemical and DASH boat treatment of the lagoon while advocating for the eventual elimination of the lagoon.

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

### **High School Sampling and Analysis of Higgins Lake Waters**

The student sampling and analysis project report for July is very interesting, in a most negative way. In the July cycle of testing and reporting, the generic coliform bacteria counts went off scale! All thirteen of the generic coliform bacteria plate counts topped out at the maximum recordable value of 1011 MPN (most probable colony counts). The actual bacterial counts are likely higher, but if so, unknown.

This is the first time we have seen bacteria levels this uniformly high in our seven years of testing!

In this test, normally a 100 ml sample is spread uniformly over a plate of specifically coliform nourishing media at 25 degrees C. This inoculated plate is allowed to incubate for 24 hours, and any bacteria that can bloom will produce a visible colony. This plate has 1011 cells in which any coliform bacterial blooms can be seen. If every cell is filled with a colony, the total of 1011 is recorded. The actual MPN of bacteria may well be higher, but without more cells available or a lower concentration of the sample applied, that amount will be unknown

In the August cycle, the samples will be diluted to raise the limits of detection.

### **Flow Rate Measurements in the Cut River**

On August 15<sup>th</sup>, with the assistance of Nick Newman, the water flow rate was measured to be approximately 29 cubic feet per second. The algae growth was noted to be extremely profuse.

### **GLUA (Gerrish Lyon Utility Authority) Support Activities**

There has been some public discussion lately raised concerning the likely amount of Phosphorous leaving Higgins Lake via the Cut River, thus contributing to the nutrient pollution of the Muskegon River watershed downstream.

The student sampling and analysis program has measured the Phosphorous level in the Cut River below the County Road 100 bridge for the past six and a half years. The methodology and the procedures followed by the students are supervised by Raven Laboratory personnel and are in accord with EPA certification requirements.

Arbitrarily throwing out the highest reported number and taking into account the missed collection efforts in 2019 and 2020 due to restrictions due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, the average of these analyses shows a concentration of 0.172 mg/l leaving the lake during the months of May, June, July, August and September. This data is all on the HLPOA Environmental, Water Quality website location.

In a complementary vein, the water flows in the Cut River have been measured about 100' below the County Road 100 bridge. A F111 Global Water Meter turbine meter donated by HLPOA member Jack Cornell was used in the manner recommended by Huron Pines water scientist, Nick Theisen. Measurements were taken monthly in 2023 and 2024. They range from about 60 cu.ft./sec. in the spring to about 30 cu.ft./sec. in the fall and winter. This data is on the HLPOA website, Lake Level History, Cut River Flow Rate website location.

Using these data averages the Phosphorous loads calculated rate range from a low of 4,000 lbs per year to high of 9,000lbs per year, using conversion ratios from Google.

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These figures are much higher than others have reported. Their methods and procedures have not been made public.

**HLSIO:** Greg reported the following: SIS (Swimmer's Itch Solutions) completed a bird survey on June 20 and found, captured and relocated one brood of 9 ducklings and one hen. It has been reported that a group of 8-20 adult mergansers have been spotted on the lake by multiple people. This also has occurred in the past. Adult birds cannot be relocated (because they cannot be captured) but are not expected to create significant issues. These birds are likely adolescents looking for nesting options for next summer. It was possible that this could produce a late season brood but thus far that has not been apparent.

Mike Purkey participated in the bird survey and had pictures and videos which he forwarded to Melanie for use on the web site.

SIS also collected 2,164 snails and reported only one infected snail, which is virtually 0%. In contrast, a similar survey by SIS on Crystal Lake reported a snail infection report of 1.1%.

Communications: Melanie reported that the web site was updated earlier with a revised home page and the flyer on the annual dinner posted. The web site will also have some other additions soon. Melanie will post Mike's pictures of SIS capturing a brood of mergansers earlier this year. The pictures will be posted under the heading "Identifying and Managing Merganser Ducks." She will also post Duncan Lawrence's update on swimmer's itch water study reporting. On the water study, Duncan reported that five swimmer's itch cases have been reported compared to two for the same time period of 2023. Reporting for the study is about on track with 2023.

Curt Blankespoor and his father Harvey attended the dinner on August 15, but Randy DeJong was unavailable. Curt commented on their recently published paper on relocation to the attendees and also announced their intention to publish a paper on the duckling parasite gestation rate that they have been working on for the past two seasons. This latest paper shows how critically important it is to trap and relocate broods prior to 3 weeks to prevent snail infection. In the past some lakes didn't see the value of relocation early enough to stop the additional infections. HLSIO continues to encourage SIS to publish research papers to help educate lakes on best practices to control SI.

**HLPAC:** Greg reported the following:

Much election news. The incumbent board in Lyon Township was defeated by the anti-sewer group and is now headed for the November general election.

Gerrish Township's board will likely see the addition Jim Anderson and Jim Ostling after the general election in November. Both won their primary elections and should bring years of experience to the GT board. Incumbents Mary Jo Oppy (trustee) and Michelle Squires (clerk) also won their primary races.

I believe that all of the township winners in the November election will be installed in late November.

In county news, Kim Morley won her commissioner Race and will be replacing Eric Ostergren as of the first meeting in January. Dave Russo narrowly beat Mark Schafer although Schafer had more votes in Lyon Township. Russo won in Markey township and Lake Township. The other three county incumbents all won, Marc Millburn, Darlene Sensor and Rex Wolfson.

SB 662 became PA 112 two weeks ago. The new law is being challenged in federal court on grounds of unconstitutionality.

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We have an opening on the HLPAC board, and we have a very qualified candidate to join our board. I want to add Tony McKerchie to the HLPAC Board and would like to make that motion. I've known Tony for a couple years and he has indicated to me consistently that he would have interest in serving on our HLPAC board. Tony has been an elected official being the Supervisor of Vienna Township (Clio) for 8 years (2000 to 2008).

Motion passed and Tony McKerchie was added to the HLPAC board.

**Sewer Project State and Federal Funding:** HLPOA Member Susan Semack reported she is working with the GLUA Board, specifically Jim Barnwell, Dave Hall and Phil Czech, for state and federal funding for the sewer project. Susan has extensive experience of working with state and federal agencies. She is pursuing three grant awards:

1. **Federal EPA Community Grant** - \$1M. This is for fiscal year 2024, expected to be finalized in September. Once approved, GLUA must follow federal procurement procedures to hire consultants. Funds are drawn down to pay contractors directly. The required cost share element was waived for GLUA.
2. **MDARD** (MI Department of Agriculture and Rural Development) Grant – \$100k grant is to support near term work required for obtaining a permit for the treatment plant location. It is a reimbursable grant with a 31% cost share. (Practically, GLUA will pay bills valued at \$145k, and get reimbursed \$100k). Once the grant agreement is finalized (est. Sep.), GLUA can submit invoices they have paid since April 2024 and begin getting reimbursed.
3. **EGLE** (MI Department of Environment, Great Lakes, and Energy) \$40,000.00 Grant– This is a reimbursable grant with no cost share. Expected to have final agreement late Sep.

A lengthy discussion was held, discussing possible opportunities and possible opposition. Susan was thanked by all Board members for her assistance and research!

**Ongoing Business:** Charlene stated that Jack resigned and asked for a motion to accept his resignation. Herb moved to accept the resignation of HLPOA Board member Jack Cornell, seconded by Wayne. Motion passed. Charlene asked Board members for help in recruiting a new Board member, adding this request should be published in the fall newsletter, should the vacancy not be filled by then.

**New Business:** The annual meeting was discussed, and two suggestions were made for next year. Bruce noted that slides would be helpful for his financial report. Becky added that we need to reserve the school's IT person for the set-up day, in addition to the day of the meeting.

Charlene commented that she had sent information on a Higgins Lake Roundtable document, submitted to her by HLPOA member Kevin Kessler, which is a community group focusing on the sewer project.

**Adjournment:** Herb moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Becky. Motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 11:39 A.M.

**The next meeting will be September 16, 2024, at 9:00 A.M.**

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