



Higgins Lake Property Owners AssociationSM

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Higgins Lake Property Owners Association

Board Meeting Minutes

May 19, 2025

The meeting was called to order by President Charlene Cornell at 9:02 A.M.

Board Members Present: Charlene Cornell, Greg Semack, Bruce Carleton, Herb Weatherly, Wayne Brooks, Patty Dennis, Curt DeVoe, Becky Gibson, John Ogren, and Fred Swinehart.

Agenda: No changes.

President's Comments: Charlene thanked John for conducting the Roscommon County Safety Meeting, and thanked John, Greg, and Fred for participating in the DNR semi-annual meeting. She also thanked the fellow Board members for their help and support on all our various programs.

April Minutes: The April 21, 2025, Minutes were accepted as written.

Committee Reports:

Secretary/Office: None.

Treasurer's Report: The April direct interim financials were presented and there were no questions. Bruce then addressed our 2024 fiscal CPA compiled financial statements prepared by CBIZ, that were sent to Board members last week. Bruce stated that the 2024 net assets grew to \$146,000 from \$131,000 in 2023, resulting in our financial position becoming stronger this past fiscal period. Curt moved to accept the 2024 compilation report, seconded by Fred. Motion passed.

Membership & Communication: Wayne thanked everyone for contacting those members that have not renewed from 2024. Patty suggested we send another postcard reminder and everyone agreed. Wayne then led a discussion about the various methods to accommodate online payments, starting with the Clover platform from Huntington Bank. Alternative options, such as PayPal and Zelle, were discussed, along with the fees associated with them. Bruce stressed the importance of retrieving the correct information and how to have it complement the current accounting process we have in place at the office. It was decided to start online

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

90 Years dedicated to preserving the quality and beauty of Higgins Lake

payments for renewing members only, with a link to our website. A committee was formed including Wayne, Becky, Patty, and Bruce, to review these options and find a solution to implement.

Charlene said she will inform us when the member directory has been printed, so we can schedule a date to stuff envelopes. Charlene added that we are working on the annual meeting packet, which needs to be sent to members 30 days prior to the annual meeting.

Riparian Committee: John reported the following:

DNR Meeting, April 22

DNR participants were Josh Pellow, Rachel Roberts, Logan Graff, Christina Baugher and Mark DePew, Regional Manager of DNR Officers. HLF (Higgins Lake Foundation) was represented by Vicki Springstead, Nancy Lamb and John Barta. Charlene, Greg, Fred, and John attended for HLPOA.

The primary position taken by the DNR is that their plans and goals for the summer are essentially the same as for last year. In response to questioning, the following items were discussed:

1. Rachel stated that the DNR does not employ staff (other than Conservation Officers) to inspect for visible weeds at their boat access in State Parks or any of their other access, like the West Access at Higgins Lake. This appears to be a policy position.
2. Mark DePew confirmed that his officers spend two hours per week in the summer months at access inspecting for visible weeds. He said that officers in his 12-county region made 2100 marine contacts and 310 AIS (Aquatic Invasive Species) contacts in 2024. He suggested making a FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) request to check the totals for Higgins Lake or Roscommon County. That check found 46 AIS contacts in Roscommon County and one citation. Separate information for Higgins Lake was not available.
3. Vicki Springstead confirmed that HLF is attempting to hire extra help to expand visible weed inspection and data collection to two shifts on Saturdays and Sundays; 9-12 and 12-3. John confirmed that inspection and data collections of parked boat trailers and departing boats would continue this summer.
4. Christina Baugher, EGLE (MI Department of Environment, Great Lakes and Energy) AIS specialist, discussed plans for increasing AIS awareness by an increase in the use of social media, signage and their boat wash demonstration program. That is their primary defense for spreading AIS. In a discussion of the problems created by the lagoon, she suggested "that it is not the lagoon; it is the people who fail to wash their boats."
5. MTT-Dash will be back in the lagoon starting in June primarily to harvest SSW (Starry Stonewort). John questioned how much of the 300-bag harvest in 2024 was SSW and how much a native algae like Nitella. There was no clear answer and Christina and Rachel agreed that we could inspect the harvested material this summer.
6. Rachel said that an estimate of daily boat access information at the South State Park is available and agreed to provide it to us. Also, she confirmed that information on the usage of the CD3 boat wash equipment is available and agreed to provide it.
7. Josh said that they had no plans for staffing of the West Access nor to upgrade any of the facilities. However, he said that Lyon Township could choose to take over the access and charge a boat access fee (like at Gerrish Marina) to pay for improvements.

Environmental Committee: Fred reported the following:

GIS Layered Mapping of Septic Systems and Wells

The Central Michigan Division of the Health Department (CMDHD) continues to make good progress on their project of Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping of the drinking water wells and septic fields in Lyon and Gerrish Townships. A new permanent employee, Eliana McNichol, has joined Jennifer Smejkal in the Roscommon County CMDHD office. All "Purple Dot" property location information for Lyon Township has been placed on the base map. This CMDHD team is now working to place the "Purple Dot" location identifiers on the Gerrish Township base map.

Three volunteers from the HLPOA have been trained on the "Fetch GIS" application and are assisting in the project now. Once the "Purple Dot" location layer has been completed for each township, the volunteer team is enabled to attaché all of the available public well and septic permits, tax ids, ownership and address information to each "Purple Dot" located property. Since the Lyon Township location "Purple Dot" location map is complete, the volunteers are now working there. Once the Gerrish location map is completed, the volunteers will begin to work in that area also.

Eventually a GIS map of wells and septic fields in the Higgins Lake Watershed will be created for public reference. For an example, please copy and paste this URL into a Google Chrome Browser to view a near by work in progress on the Cedar River.

<https://www.cmdhd.org/cedarriverwatershed>

Macro-Invertebrate Survey in The Cut River and Big Creek

Duncan Lawrence led the survey team this year. The Cut River survey was done on May 7th. The Big Creek survey was done on May 13th. The differentiation of species found in these surveys provides the best assessment of the environmental purity and quality of these waters.

The teams gathered and sorted the insects captured for identification and preservation. Participants were Duncan and Kathy Lawrence. Wayne and Susan Brooks, John Davis, John Barta, Kevin Kessler, Larry Cherven and Fred Swinehart. Amanda Paige from the Muskegon River Watershed Assembly was there to assist with the sampling protocols and macro- invertebrate identification.

Earl Townsend generously provided permission for the teams' access to the Cut. Joel Schmidt provided access for the Big Creek site.

Biological and Chemical Analysis and Flow Rate in The Cut River

Samples and flow measurements were taken on 05/12 with the assistance of John Davis. The flow rate was estimated to be about 66.5 cubic feet per second, which is near the usual springtime high flow rate. The year-to-date sample analyses show phosphorous and bacteria at acceptably low levels.

HLSIO: Higgins Lake Swimmers Itch Organization (HLSIO UPDATE) May 2025, From HLSIO president Duncan Lawrence

Status as of May 18, 2025

- Merganser Relocation Suspended for 2025 — No change in the status on our ability to actively manage the Mergansers in 2025. However, we are reaching out and have had conversations with Congressman

Jack Bergman (US Representative 1st Congressional District) and Ken Norton (Michigan House of Representatives 105th District) to help move our case forward. Greg Semack is leading this effort and created a short summary of the Swimmer's Itch situation and alternative solutions with the Merganser removal that was shared with these individuals.

- Fundraising Dinner, Thursday August 14 - As we have done in the past, a fundraising dinner will be held at the Witt Bar, with Catering by Fred's and music by Taylor Perry. A flyer is being created and will be shared shortly.
- Swimmers Itch Solutions (SIS) Contract — We have a signed contract again for 2025. While we may not be moving Mergansers, we have several other activities they will lead (e.g., Water Exposure Study, waterfowl surveys, new research on eDNA).
- Canadian Goose Removal — Goose Busters has visited us once this year and has destroyed 6 nests and 29 eggs. Updates from their second visit will be available soon. We are not impacted by the recent legislation stopping the euthanasia of Canadian Geese, as this was never part of our plan.
- Michigan Lakes & Streams Association (MLSA) Convention Presentation — HLSIO was represented at the 4/26/25 Michigan Lakes & Streams Association (MLSA). Presentation was led by Dave Wynne of the Crystal Lake Association, with SIS (Curt Blankespoor) providing Swimmer's Itch background and Duncan Lawrence spoke on HLSIO's behalf. Primary emphasis of presentation showcased how effective removing mergansers from the lake is in reducing cases/severity of Swimmer's Itch. There were about 20 attendees from various lakes in the area. Reaction was quite positive, with many staying for extended Q&A. The presentation will be made available at a later date.

HLPAC: Greg reported the following:

Gerrish Township

Greg reported That Gerrish Township looking at long versus short term funding issues under the leadership of Jim Anderson and Brian Hill. He also mentioned the "For the Health of Health of Higgins Lake" Activities under Jim Ostling's leadership. Committees for this effort have been formed and populated.

Greg said that Kim Morley attended the last Gerrish Township meeting where she indicated that work on County Issues for the Higgins Lake dam has been delayed due to lawsuits but gave no details as to how lawsuits have impacted their efforts. Kim also mentioned that the county board is "trying to build trust in the community" Meanwhile they have stopped zoom meeting streaming based on a new law to be implemented in the future. Kim also stated that that all 3 lakes will follow the same procedure for maintaining lake levels.

County report

A special meeting will occur on Tuesday, May 20th, at 1PM at the Courthouse regarding Delegated authority resignation and Higgins Lake, Lake level control structure temporary revisions.

It was also mentioned that Chairperson Sensor is preparing a letter to the Resorter newspaper on the Commissioner's position on lake levels. There is also talk of a new dam at Higgins costing up to \$1.5 million and that the SAD would be used to pay for this. Chase Shepke has previously said that we could have somewhat better control of the lake level in the interim if the rocks that were removed at the bottom of the structure are replaced.

Lyon Township – Greg said that a report by HLPAC member Marty Barta on Lyon Township indicated that the Lyon Board is not harmonious It is reported that trustees are not getting materials in advance and special meetings are being set when members are not available. The board is working on an animal ordinance that

would allow chickens, cows, goats, ducks, etc. on properties of 2 acres or more. The Lyon Board is working on a septic ordinance however it only applies at the time of transfer or sale of property which will skip over many properties for years or decades. It was also reported that supervisor Bertrand is working on getting bigger name bands for their music in the park shows. Supervisor Bertrand made a vague comment about public access at road ends. He indicated that they want to stop adjacent owners from parking cars on road ends overnight. Last, Lyon Township is spending \$10,000 to improve their computer and zoom capability.

Ongoing Business: Charlene addressed the Board vacancy and that interest was shown by member Dennis Corte, whose biography was shared with the Executive Committee. Dennis's background is in finance, marketing and sales. A motion was made by Bruce to approve Dennis Corte as a Board member, seconded by Herb. Motion passed.

The *Sips/Chips & Dips* fundraiser was discussed. A meeting will be set up to include Patty and HLPOA neighbors who have volunteered to assist with this fundraiser on July 2nd.

The winner of the Mackinac Bridge Tower Tour raffle was announced on April 30th. The winning ticket was #1620, purchased by Gary Wales. Charlene stated we netted just over \$7,000 with this event!

The annual meeting was discussed, noting the change of venue to the Ralph A. MacMullan Conference Center. Becky noted the importance of alerting members of this change, which will be communicated via email blasts, our annual meeting packet and including an insert with the member directory mailing. Charlene added that Jim Ostling, Gerrish Board Trustee, will be a guest speaker at this meeting. Greg noted the need for IT assistance prior to the meeting.

It was suggested to have the summer Board meetings at the office vs Zoom. Herb will reserve the conference room here for June 16th.

Adjournment: Herb moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Bruce. Motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 11:23 A.M.

The next meeting will be June 16, 2025, at 9:00 A.M.