

NOTICE
HEALTH OF HIGGINS LAKE
STEERING COMMITTEE - Agenda
2997 E. HIGGINS LAKE DRIVE
ROSCOMMON, MI 48653
PHONE: (989) 821-9313

WHEN: Tuesday, November 18, 2025
PLACE: Gerrish Township Municipal Center
PURPOSE: Regular Meeting

Call to Order: 7:00 pm

Pledge of Allegiance:

Roll Call: Biggar __, Booser __, Teisen __, Walker __, Ostling __, Chaney __

APPROVAL OF MEETING AGENDA:

Motion by _____ supported by _____

That the agenda for the November 18, 2025 be approved as presented.

APPROVAL OF October 21, 2025, MEETING MINUTES

Motion by _____ supported by _____

That the minutes be approved as presented

APPROVAL OF OCTOBER SUB-COMMITTEE REPORTS AS ATTACHED

Motion by _____ supported by _____

That the reports be approved as presented

Public Comments Agenda Items:

Old Business

New Business

Welcome Don Chaney to the Steering Committee

EGLE grant opportunity

Presentation of opportunity

Entertain a motion to forward application to the Township Board

Motion: Motion by _____, support by _____ that the HOHL Steering Committee approves of and authorizes the Interim Chairman to forward the Grant application

NPS Watershed Council / Capacity-Building RFP (FY 2026) to the Gerrish Township Board for their action and approval.

Sub Committee Reports –

1. Science – Gibson
2. Communications – Gelderbloom
3. IT – Panyard
4. Roads – O'Rourke
5. Septic – Ostling

Public Comments:

Announcements/ Member comments:

Motion by _____ supported by _____ that the Board adjourn at _____ pm.

Jim Ostling, Interim Chair

Sub-Committee Activity Report

Health of Higgins Lake Initiative Report to the Gerrish Township Board

November 18, 2025

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee's regular meeting, held on October 21, 2025, received reports from each of the committee chair people and provided the audience with an opportunity to ask questions about their activities.



HOHL Communication Committee Report

The Communications Committee continues to make steady progress in strengthening outreach and engagement efforts.

- **Email Campaigns**

Our email distribution list has grown to approximately 176 individuals plus 49 committee members addresses. Our plan to distribute two emails per month was completed. *The Ripple Effects* – Highlighted the Science Committee this month and was distributed on Oct 19th. *Committee Reflections* – Giving an overview of each committee's progress was distributed on Oct 2.

- **Social Media & Website**

Facebook posts were made from the committee report submitted to the steering committee at the October meeting and public education opportunities. A total of 4 posts were made in October. Work is being done to allow the posts to be made from the township instead of an individual. Some improvements have been made to the website, but it still needs work.

- **Community Outreach**

The communication committee is developing a full-page introduction to HOHL to be included with the winter tax bills.

- **Collaboration & Research**

Professor Amanda Buday of Grand Valley State University, has provided a quote for an area opinion survey \$8381. Full quote can be found on NextCloud/Subchairs/HL_suvey_budget. This would be a lake specific in nature. The timing of the survey was decided to be in the spring when people are around. The process will be all electronic with email, Facebook and possible newspaper ad to direct to a site. Discussion had started but needs to be continued with the planning commission to see if we can combine or compliment efforts

- **Committee Development**

The committee met on October 1. Next meeting scheduled November 12.

Funding Subcommittee –

- **Donate button (status):** Waiting on IT for technical implementation. Funding is prepared to review processor options, fee handling, deposit flow, and transparency language as soon as an implementation approach is available.
- **Rolling funding-sources calendar:** Standing tracker to organize opportunities across rolling/quarterly/annual cycles.
- **Format:** Likely a spreadsheet for ease of filtering and updates. Suggested fields: To be determined
- **Location:** Stored in the Nextcloud Funding folder for shared access and version control; reviewed/updated on a regular cadence.

Next meeting: 20-Nov-2025 — target agenda includes donate-button status check, approval of the calendar template, and populating initial opportunities.

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IT Subcommittee –

- **Zotero (macOS) issues:** Continued investigation and fixes for macOS-specific Zotero behavior to improve stability and smooth startup/updates.
- **Email delivery for Nextcloud / Communications:** Reviewed reported email delivery issues from Nextcloud and potential impacts on Communications workflows; isolated likely configuration points and queued remediation steps.
- **Donation button support for Funding:** Provided technical guidance on implementing a Donate option, including basic integration considerations and coordination points for downstream processing.
- **General maintenance & backups:** Performed routine maintenance, health checks, and backup verifications to keep services reliable and recoverable.
- **Zotero literature management:** Continued partnering with the Science subcommittee to load studies and references, organizing libraries and metadata for easier retrieval and citation.
- **Next meeting:** Scheduled for 19-Nov-2025.

Road Committee report

- Chairman updated the group on the Steering Committee meeting on 10/21.
- Don turned in his Lyon Township data sheets and photos.
- Kevin H. has provided his as well.
- Tim's are now complete on 10/30 and Pat H. will provide his by the 11/6 meeting.
- Jean distributed a number of older documents from the last road end survey and 319 grant information. She would like to help in collection if possible.
- Discussion on who still had data sheets to be completed and returned. Don, Kevin and Tim offered any help needed.
- Tim and Don to schedule a follow-up meeting with HLF Representatives to discuss Fertilizer use/ possible bans and or Ordinances for limiting use near open waters in the Higgins Lake watershed.
- Tim will forward 2010 equations on sediments and contaminates to Brad Gibson for Science Committee review.
- Future meeting schedule as follows.
 - 11/6 and 11/20 regularly scheduled.
 - 11/13 Special to complete remaining road end data collection.
 - ** Steering Committee 11/18 to hopefully provide them with an overview of what we have found.

Science Committee

Our eight workgroups, or sub-subcommittees, are busy working. Each workgroup is assigned a “problem” to study. The committees are:

- Near Shore Water Quality
- Invasive species
- Groundwater and Drinking Water Contamination
- Watershed Quality
- Changing Fisheries
- Deep Water Quality
- Recreational Activities
- Non-Nutrient Contamination

Each problem has a list of questions, created by the entire Science Committee, for the subcommittees to address.

The process each sub-committee will utilize to address the questions has been established. In its’ simplest form, each sub-committee will:

- Study the questions posed for each problem.
- Gather data
- Evaluate the data
- Analyze the data
- Draw conclusions and draft a report.

The Science Committee will now meet monthly. The agenda for the next few months will be updated by the subcommittees with feedback and input from the Science Committee members.

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For the next few months the Science Committee will be meeting the third Wednesday of the month.

Septic Committee

The Septic Committee met on October 1 and Oct 15, A third meeting was postponed at the chairman's request.

The primary focus of the Septic Committee is the development of an ordinance to be considered by the Township Board for eventual adoption. The Committee has prepared a list of Attributes that they would like to incorporate into an ordinance. The list was reviewed and vetted by the committee and used as a base for development. As the document evolves, it will get input from the Health Department and Steering Committee, before it is reviewed by the Township Board for potential action. Some of the topics discussed include:

- Next draft of the List of Inspectors was revised by Health Department and made available.
- Domestic water wells continue to be a topic of consideration and will be integrated into the draft ordinance
- Work continued on the development of a list of attributes that we would like to see addressed in an ordinance. The Committee settled on a list of over 50 items that are important for consideration
- A draft Septic Ordinance has been prepared for review by the Committee. This draft is currently based on a combination of other ordinances with the insertion of the Attributes developed by the committee.
- The Committee will be concentrating on the Draft Ordinance this month and subsequent review by the Health Department before sending it off to the Steering Committee for comments.

The Sub-Committee reviewed a variance pending on a property in the Township. Current parcel is small and low. The owner has proposed a new septic /drainfield but is still slightly non-compliant. To resolve the situation, they plan to install an anaerobic treatment system, bringing the system very near compliance. The Health Department has approved the proposal.

Work on the Purple Dot project continues. Gerrish is nearly complete, and the volunteers have moved on to finish Lyon Township. The Health Department is soliciting funds from the area to assist in getting this work completed by using their staff and that of FETCH. This is likely the most critical work being done at this time. Once complete, we will be able to generate informational letters to the residents as to the status of their STD's according to the records at the Health Department. Completion of the status information will also allow for better analysis of the overall condition of STD's throughout Gerrish and Lyon.

I wanted to bring to your attention a **time-sensitive** funding opportunity from EGLE that **Catherine Voigt found**, which could directly support HOHL's Science, Communications, and IT committees — and how it relates to our upcoming decision on the Grand Valley community survey.

1. The grant opportunity (quick overview) EGLE has released an **NPS Watershed Council / Capacity-Building RFP (FY 2026)**

- Up to **\$40,000** per project (no match required)
- **12-month** project period
- **Proposals are due Wednesday, December 10, 2025**
- This is less than **five months** away, and planning time will be tight
- Focused on strengthening internal watershed capacity, including:
 - Training
 - Data and information systems
 - Outreach and educational materials
 - Equipment or supplies supporting watershed work
 - Development of workflows and planning resources

This is a capacity-building grant — it's about strengthening systems, not implementing projects.

2. How this supports HOHL – Science, Communications, and IT

The opportunity aligns extremely well with work already underway:

Science

- Develop structured monitoring and documentation workflows.
- Acquire basic water-quality sampling supplies for volunteer pilot monitoring.
- Organize and standardize scientific records for future watershed planning.

IT

- Enhance the **Zotero + Nextcloud metadata framework**, which functions as HOHL's primary system for cataloging all research and submissions.
- Expand tagging standards, metadata consistency, and long-term data organization.
- Improve automation around the Study Submission → curation → Zotero pipeline.
- Train additional volunteers to ensure shared knowledge and long-term sustainability.

Communications

- Develop unified NPS education materials for the public.
- Improve outreach infrastructure for lake-resident engagement.
- Build the communication capability needed to interpret and follow up on the community survey results.

This grant strengthens the backbone systems HOHL already depends on.

3. Urgent decision needed: Grand Valley community survey

We need to decide **very soon** whether we are moving forward with the GVSU survey project.

This is urgent because:

- Survey results directly shape Science and Communications priorities.
- If we proceed, the EGLE proposal can use the survey as:
 - A key input for understanding community needs
 - A justification for expanding HOHL's information-management and outreach systems
- If we do not proceed, the grant narrative will need a different framing.
- With the **December 10, 2025** deadline, we need clarity soon to align both efforts.

4. Next steps

- Confirm whether we want to pursue the EGLE capacity-building grant.
- Finalize the direction on the GVSU community survey.
- Determine which organization will serve as the **applicant/fiscal agent**.
- Review the draft proposal at the internal NC link below and provide feedback.

Nextcloud Draft Proposal Link:

[HOHL_Watershed_Capacity_Building_Proposal_Draft](#)

Thanks all — and thanks again to Catherine for identifying this opportunity.

Should we move forward applying for this grant? It sounds like we are a perfect fit.

Ed Panyard

November 16 – Verbiage for the Grant Application

Background on Health of Higgins Initiative

As a follow-up to a failed attempt to build a lake wide sewer system, the Gerrish Township Board created a department to take a comprehensive approach to the overall condition of Higgins Lake. The Health of Higgins Lake Initiative was formed in December of 2024. Over 50 volunteers from Gerrish and surrounding townships with widely diverse backgrounds and expertise, have joined the effort.

We believe that this comprehensive approach to the needs of the lake may be the best approached with the support and guidance of a Township Government based effort. There have been many organizations' attempts at identifying specific problems with little identifiable success. The Health of Higgins Lake Initiative has brought representatives from all major special interest groups together (under the umbrella of the Township Government) into a single group to share their significant knowledge and search for solutions.

A five-member (expanded to seven) **Steering Committee** was formed to oversee the work of 'task specific' sub committees and they report directly to the Township Board.

The specific Committees include:

- **Science Committee** has assembled surveys, studies, papers, research and other material into a secure database that is now searchable. Smaller work groups are addressing eight specific concerns and researching current data as well as recommending additional areas that need further data. Conclusions will be published in a final report.
- **Communications Committee** has created a web site, social media presence, working on community outreach and is taking the work of the project to the residents through several media.
- **IT/Funding Committee** created a secure network to store the work of the committees and assist with all things technical. They also have enlisted the assistance of individuals trained in grant writing and researching available funding
- A **Road end Committee** was formed to evaluate the impact 80 roads that terminate at the waters edge on all of Higgins have made. They have now updated studies done in 1991 and 2010 into a current evaluation. A final report will be published soon.
- On Site Septic Systems are being addressed by the **Septic Committee** and a Gerrish township Septic Ordinance is being drafted. This effort is working closely with the Central Michigan District Health Department to be sure the ordinance is in step with the Health code.

Each of these committees has developed a plan and are involved in ongoing research or implementation. All committees need funding at some level. We wish to work with Staff at EGLE to evaluate the best approach to applying for funding to address and assist our efforts.

Listed below are project specific funding requests items that our subcommittees have identified for consideration.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee has oversite to all committee activity and is not requesting any funding at this time.

Science

The Science Committee is not requesting any funding at this time

Communications

Our primary task is community outreach and delivering an accurate message.

We would like to do the following:

1. Develop a brochure to handout at events, a trifold in color. Print cost (\$500)
2. Swag give aways, we have priced small pads of paper, pens etc (\$500)
3. 100 more yard signs (\$500)
4. We could use some help on improving the website (\$250)
5. Subscribing to an email/marketing service to enhance ease of signing up and sending emails and possible geo-marketing (\$15-\$150/month depending on marketing)
6. Coffee/donuts seminars with focus on a specific topic during summer (8*\$50)

Total request for outreach = \$4000

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There have been questions from the science committee wondering about the public perception as to what the issues are around Higgins Lake. There are also questions about how educated our residents are. An opinion survey has been suggested, and Prof Buday was recommended to us. She is a GVSU professor and has experience survey areas with water concerns. She has provided a quote and CV.

Survey cost = \$8381
Total request for communication committee = \$12,881

Road ends

This committee has updated the reports conducted in 1991 and 2010 to include current conditions and identify areas that still need additional attention. They are working with the Roscommon County Road Commission to implement remediation efforts at problematic road ends over the next budget cycles. However, while their report is concise, it will require funding to publish and print the results. We are asking for assistance with this effort.

IT - HOHL-IT Needs (Capacity-Building)

- Maintain and strengthen HOHL's Zotero metadata framework — one of the organization's strongest information-management assets — ensuring consistent tagging, organization, and long-term integrity of curated research.
- Support the ongoing curation workflow that extracts catalog information from Study Submission forms and prepares metadata for Science and Communications.
- Maintain, refine, and document the HOHL Nextcloud environment, including folder architecture, permissions, file-handling workflows, backup practices, and cross-committee collaboration structures.
- Expand IT capacity by training additional volunteers so Zotero, Nextcloud, and the curation workflow remain sustainable across multiple trained individuals rather than a small core team.
- Enhance automation and simplify tools used in the submission → curation → metadata process to reduce manual effort and improve consistency.

Septic

The Septic Committee has taken a slightly different approach to the implementation of an ordinance. A Police Powers ordinance that relies heavily on the data captured by the Health Department is central to the ordinance. The Health Department has been collecting data on individual properties about the septic and wells for decades. Until recently, this data has been on paper in filing cabinets with no ability to do any meaningful research. The Health Department has enlisted a company, FETCH-GIS, to scan and digitize these records and create searchable fields from the information. Tank size, drain field size and location, domestic water well size and location, depth, etc. are all captured — Where the information is available.

The HD with the help of several volunteers from Gerrish and Lyon Townships, have now taken the scanned files and entered the data into several fields in their database. This work is approximately 60% complete and significant effort and funding is required to complete the work. Additional staff will complete the mapping of the sites then assist in the evaluation of all sites to determine the level of compliance of each parcel assigning a code. The goal will be to bring all parcels within Gerrish Township to a "green" compliance.

Once this is substantially complete, we will have dramatically reduced the level of contamination caused by failing on site Sewer Disposal Treatment Systems (STDS) in the Township. Our early work with the Health Department indicates that other governmental agencies here in Northern Michigan are watching our efforts and have an interest in following suit.

Additionally - Our Information Technology committee will assist in the development of software, database, and expertise in the efforts of all sub-committees. Specifically, they will assist in the database work needed for the Township to capture, evaluate and disseminate the data collected as a part of the interface with the Health Department. Some of those efforts include:

- Develop secure software tools or scripts to merge and aggregate septic-system data received from CMDHD, including parcel IDs, inspection history, permit records, and missing documentation.
- Standardize and clean incoming CMDHD datasets so they can be accurately compared to township parcel maps and local records.

Build internal data-matching workflows that flag parcels with incomplete, outdated, or questionable septic information (“Purple Dots”).

Create automated or semi-automated processes to update the Purple Dots dataset as new CMDHD data is obtained.

Generate internal reports, summary tables, and analysis outputs that help the Septic Committee identify potential failing or marginal systems and prioritize follow-up actions.

Document all scripts, data processes, and procedures.

Funding Summary

The following chart is a summary of the funding that we are requesting from this grant. Please note that this is a request for a single award to Gerrish Township. The breakdown is for clarity on who the funds will be allocated.

Item	Committee	Request Amt
1	Science – Not requesting funds at this time	\$0.00
2	Communications – mailing and outreach	\$13,000
3	IT - Database development/refine purple dots	\$7,500
4	Roads – Assistance with Publishing and distribution	\$500
5	Septic – Finalize septic survey mapping	\$19,000
	Total Funds Requested for the HOH Initiative 2026	\$40,000