

Committee Activity Report

Health of Higgins Lake Initiative Report to the
Gerrish Township Board
February 6, 2026

Steering Committee – January 2026

The Steering Committee met on January 20, 2026. Jim Ostling was appreciatively recognized for his interim service as the chairperson. Agenda items included an update by Catherine Voigt from the Finance Committee on the EGLE Grant; an overview of the drafted septic ordinance by Jim Ostling from the Septic Committee; and individual reports were provided by the subcommittee chairpersons.

A joint work session (Special Meeting) with the Steering Committee members and the Subcommittee chairpersons is planned for February 9, at 9AM. The agenda will include a review of the septic ordinance draft from the Septic Committee; a presentation provided by Catherine Voigt on funding sources and resources; administrative items; and a review of the HOHL progress. Committee members and subcommittee chairs will review the Septic Ordinance Draft, Master timelines, and the original HOHL presentation and supporting documents previously introduced to the Gerrish Township Board prior to the meeting to offer constructive reviews of past practices and provide input as the HOHL continues pursue its mission. Subcommittee chairpersons will be encouraged to meet following the work session.

The regular Steering Committee will be February 17, at 7PM.

Communication Committee - February 1, 2026

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

- **Email Campaigns**

Our email distribution list has grown to approximately 275 individuals plus 50 committee members addresses. Since there were no reports submitted by sub committees in December, the content from the November committee reports was used to send out a *Committee Reflection* in late January. Two *Ripple Effects* are planned for February highlighting the subgroup members of the Science Committee and their findings regarding aquatic invasive species.

- **Social Media & Website**

We had a special meeting to address comments made on Facebook. There are a few individuals who would just like to argue. We are developing a battery of factual responses and will pass along any concerns the Steering Committee should be aware of.

- We are looking into starting an Instagram account as well.
- Some improvements have been made to the website. All agendas and minutes are now uploaded.

- **Community Outreach**

The Communications Committee attempted to have a presence at the 2026 WinterFest, sponsored by Higgins Lake-Roscommon Chamber of Commerce (HLRCC). This event is held in Lyon Township and on Higgins Lake. Paul Bertrand (Lyon Township Supervisor) asked the Chamber to not schedule any political groups at this event on Lyon Township property. After being informed by the HLRCC, Jennie Walker approached Gerrish Township (GT) officials who recommended that the HOHL not provide an information station. Mr. Bertrand was also asked by a GT official. to reconsider but he reconfirmed that he was not in favor.

We have started to actively contact associations around the lake to determine the point person and the dates of their summer meetings. We will be volunteering to give a presentation at their annual meetings.

We have designed and printed a trifold brochure explaining our purpose. They will be available to pass out to the public. The brochure can be found in the Steering Committee folder.

- **Collaboration & Research** - None
- **Committee Development** - We are sad to lose Jennie Walker from our committee but are glad she has stepped up to take a bigger role in our efforts. We are delighted to have two new members join our committee, Alma Blackburn and Karen Ehinger. We look forward to putting their talents to good use.

The committee met on December 10, January 19 and 26. The next scheduled meeting is February 12.

Funding Subcommittee – January - February Summary of Activities

- **Payment system recommendation:** Reviewed the treasurer's investigation of payment options and discussed PayPal as the preferred payment system for township departments, in progress. Next step: confirm township constraints (policy/audit/fees/reporting) and what Steering wants recommended.
- **Grant tracking calendar:** Reviewed the rolling calendar system for tracking grant opportunities, ongoing. Next step: confirm update cadence and assignment of owners for opportunities.
- **Subcommittee inputs for targeting grants:** Discussed strategies for gathering structured information from subcommittees to better target funding sources, in progress. Next step: create a simple intake template and start collecting needs for the next funding cycle.
- **Collaboration exploration:** Explored potential collaborations with organizations to support water quality initiatives at Higgins Lake, in progress. Next step: shortlist candidates and define outreach/next contacts.

IT Subcommittee – January - February Summary of Activities

- **Nextcloud certificate expiration:** Addressed an unexpected certificate expiration that forced a Nextcloud shutdown over the year-end holidays; restored service and confirmed normal operation.
- **Certificate automation:** Work in progress to automate certificate renewals/updates to prevent future unplanned outages (including validation of renewals and failure alerting).
- **Nextcloud backups:** Fine-tuned the Nextcloud backup schedule to improve coverage and reliability while keeping the process operational and repeatable.
- **macOS WebUI troubleshooting:** Investigated a macOS-specific issue affecting the Nextcloud web interface; documented findings and workarounds for impacted users.
- **Purple Dots coordination:** Worked closely with the Septic and Communications committees to support publishing/display of Purple Dots information, including technical coordination and implementation support.

Road Ends Subcommittee

The subcommittee is currently compiling their report on collected GPS data and road end evaluations. The report will be submitted when Tim returns to Michigan sometime in March. Future subcommittee meetings and a meeting with the Roscommon County Road Commission will be scheduled at that time as well.

Science Subcommittee - February 2, 2026

- Science Committee members have been working diligently in their respective subcommittees. We met as an entire group on January 21 at the Township Hall. Several committee members attended via Zoom.
- A decision was made to combine two subcommittees. Going forward the Watershed and Groundwater/Drinking Water Contamination Committees will merge. The two groups were reviewing the same data and had a tremendous amount of overlap. The union of the two groups makes sense. The Science Committee now has seven subcommittees.
- The Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) and the Recreational Activities Subcommittees shared their progress thus far. The Nearshore body presented a written overview. We anticipate further updates from these three groups and the other subcommittees at the February meeting. Once these reports are completed, after feedback and analysis from the entire Science Committee, they will be forwarded to the Steering Committee. Expect the reports to start coming in during the spring. Not all subcommittees will have their work completed at the same time.
- February 18 and March 11 are our next two Science Committee meetings.

Septic Committee Report – January 2026

The Septic Committee met on January 6, 13 and 27 last month.

Septic Ordinance Draft Submitted - The committee's efforts to draft a septic ordinance continue. Initial plans to submit the draft to the Steering Committee were delayed so the team could further discuss the topic of variances. Some minor changes were addressed and the HOHL Septic Ordinance Draft (Rev6) was submitted to the Steering Committee on Jan 20, 2026. The Steering Committee will review and forward it as necessary.

Jim Ostling met with the director of the health department (HD) on January 5 to present questions from the Septic Committee. The usual excellent dialogue resulted in further understanding of options and procedures.

The Septic Committee will now focus on policy nuts and bolts topics that detail the requirements of the ordinance. They will forward revised versions to the SC as appropriate.

The committee requested and received updated information from the assessor's office regarding the database. A few changes in structure now provide for the addition of FETCH information expected in early February.

New Map - The "map" referred to in previous reports used street address information from the assessor's data to position properties and their color classification. While this was a very good learning experience, its development led Ed from the IT Committee to take a different approach. He was able to assign a

latitude/longitude to each property, making the data much more accurate and can now be used to calculate its relationship to other locations. The resulting map, using a different format, displays the properties and, in addition, the relative density of areas around the lake. Once the HD data is available and entered the spreadsheet, color codes for each property will be represented on the new map showing dramatic density and compliance hot spots.

The committee chair met with the director of the health department again on Jan 26 to further address topics of interest. The health department director will attend our next meeting on Feb 10.