

**Health of Higgins Lake Initiative Committee Report**  
to the Gerrish Township Board  
April 2026

**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 299 individuals plus 50 committee members addresses. Email distribution also includes 16 government officials, 18 lake associations and 6 community organizations. Aprils Ripple *Effect* about invasive species with a focus on “what can you do.” *Committee Reflections* will be combination February and March committee reports. With March steering committee meeting being cancelled the February and March committee reports weren’t approved until April.

- **Social Media & Website**

Our possible Instagram account/waiting for the township to respond. Also discussing a YouTube channel to post videos about the lake.

The website analytics are suspect and need to be reviewed to make sure we are counting correctly. Consulting a website professional is planned in the Spring.

- **Community Outreach**

We are schedules to present at several associations annual meeting this summer.

Discussion of letters to our government officials was discussed and it was decided that a personal contacts would be more effective. Experience suggests that a letter would have little effect. We are composing a letter to our 50 HOHL members asking if anyone has a relationship with any government officials and would be willing to make introductions. We will have the HOHL tri-fold available with an updated insert available for the individual meeting.

The one-year update press release was sent out same news outlets we announce our formation to last year.

Summer outreach is still in planning stages but are leaning to a one day “expo” the same day at the Fire Department open house. Hoping to have a “booth” for each sub-committee and other areas of interest. (possibilities are septic map, road ends, invasive species, good septic practices, Zotero, etc)

We are exploring options for selling HOHL tee shirts. Currently contacting vendors and developing a plan. Hope to have a proposal for the steering committee in May.

- **Collaboration & Research**

The committee continues to collaborate with the septic map effort.

We have asked the Septic committee for guidance on what and when they want to publish on the Septic Map

- **Committee Development**

The committee met on April 27. Next meeting scheduled is May 13.

**Funding Committee Report**

- **Chair transition:** Catherine Voigt was introduced as the new Funding Subcommittee chair, with Ed Panyard stepping down as chair while remaining available to support the committee.
- **Meeting coordination:** Catherine will move future Funding meetings to her Zoom link and coordinate meeting timing with relevant committee members.

- **Rolling grant calendar:** The committee identified the need for a centralized rolling calendar to track grant deadlines, application windows, ownership, and subcommittee funding needs.
- **Subcommittee funding needs:** Catherine will reach out directly to subcommittee chairs to identify potential projects, ordinance-related needs, and information needed to support funding applications.
- **Donation capability:** The committee continued work on making the website donation path more prominent, including the donate button, PayPal account functionality, and possible QR code use on event materials.
- **Map-supported funding strategy:** Ed demonstrated current mapping work showing parcel density, terrain, septic and well context, and other data layers that may help explain local needs and strengthen future grant and outreach materials.
- **Steering Committee coordination:** Jennie will review or present the density map for Steering Committee and township board consideration once an appropriate version is ready.
- **Ordinance implementation funding:** The committee discussed likely funding needs tied to septic ordinance implementation, including possible consultant support and equipment/data needs rather than immediately assuming a full-time staffing model.
- **Grant source research:** Potential alternative funding sources were identified for follow-up, including community development block grants and USDA Rural Development opportunities.
- **Public outreach opportunities:** The committee discussed possible public-facing uses for map/data work, including outreach to agencies and legislators, boater education concepts, event materials, and communication around areas of concern such as South State Park.
- **Next report timing:** Monthly Funding report preparation will continue on the Steering Committee schedule so materials are available before the next work session.

#### **IT Committee Report**

- **Nextcloud operations:** Continued monitoring and maintenance of the Nextcloud collaboration environment supporting committee file sharing, access control, and ongoing project coordination.
- **Septic information map support:** Continued primary IT support for the septic mapping effort, including updates to parcel density views, septic and well context, shoreline/high-slope areas, and presentation layers needed for Planning Commission, Steering Committee, and township discussion.
- **LiDAR and terrain mapping:** Demonstrated an experimental mapping layer that combines parcel information with LiDAR/terrain data to better show land surface, relative elevation, and likely water-flow patterns toward Higgins Lake. Additional work is focused on improving clarity, performance, and presentation quality before broader use.
- **Database and scoring development:** Continued maturing the SQL-based data system that integrates assessor parcel data, CMDHD septic records, well data, and related inputs. The system supports property scoring and detailed reports showing the data behind individual scores.
- **Website and outreach support:** Continued coordination around the HOHL web presence and future public outreach uses of the mapping work, including map-supported funding discussions, possible QR-code/event materials, and potential boater education/geofencing concepts.
- **Steering Committee coordination:** Prepared the density map and related outputs for Steering Committee review and potential township-board use. Additional maps remain in refinement until the data, filtering, and presentation are strong enough for broader technical and public review.
- **Routine IT support:** Continued normal IT support, system maintenance, and project coordination across HOHL technology efforts while keeping the mapping and database work aligned with committee needs.

#### **Road End/Fertilizer Committee Report**

The committee met on 4-28-26. A sample of the Higgins Lake Road End Erosion Inventory was provided. Tim intends to reach out to the County Road Commission concerning their findings.

#### **Science Subcommittee Report**

The Science Subcommittee met on April 15. We received updates from our subcommittees and expect draft reports from the Near Shore and Aquatic Invasive groups at our May meeting, where we will also set timelines for forwarding

final reports to the Steering Committee. The Watershed/Drinking Water Committee will merge with the Septic Committee due to significant overlap.

Our next meeting is scheduled for May 20.

### **Septic Committee Report**

The Septic Committee met April 1, April 14 and April 28. While we have been maintaining a meeting schedule of approx. every two weeks, we have now adopted a more structured schedule of the second and fourth Tuesday of each month. We have also arranged for redline Media to attend the meetings and manage our zoom participation.

**Septic Ordinance Draft Submitted** – In March, the septic ordinance, previously submitted to the Steering Committee, was forwarded to the Gerrish Board. The Township Board reviewed the document and voted (April 14) to send it on to the Planning Commission. I attended the PC meeting on April 23 to present the proposed ordinance and answer any questions they may have. The PC will be starting work on their review soon.

**Database** – Work continues on the database development for the Health of Higgins Septic Committee. A select group of HOHL members from several committees met on April 24 to further review the methodology and review rules used to score properties.

Ed has incorporated the changes, and we are getting closer to having a database that can be shared with those interested in learning how they score and what needs to be improved to raise that score.

I sent a FOIA request to the CMDHD for any information they may have on water well testing results. I am not encouraged by what I expect to get as a result. We really do need a means to capture the water quality throughout the Township.

**New Map** – Once again - work on a map to display the condition of individual properties continues. This “Heat Map” draws attention with hotter colors for problem areas and is very telling. We are now beginning to see the picture anticipated early in the goals and objectives of the HOH over a year ago. More features evolve every month – kudos to Ed Panyard for his experience and knowledge in this area – it really is a great tool being developed.

**Major Change** – I met with Brad Gibson, chair of the Science Committee two weeks ago to discuss the ongoing work of their Groundwater/wells sub-committee. Those committee members, busy with other subcommittee work have been slow to get organized. We decided to bring the members of the Science/Wells sub-committee into the Septic Committee. Having completed the draft of the Septic Ordinance and seeing that the work overlaps a lot, this should be a good move. The Septic committee welcomed the groundwater and wells committee to our regular meeting on April 28. We will continue forward as a single committee and deal with both topics.

**April 28 meeting** - At our April 14 meeting, the committee discussed the ideal of breaking the ordinance into two parts – an inspection and an enforcement component. I prepared a sample ordinance (wholly based on what we had already prepared) that separated it into these two sections. The suggestion was somewhat significant and may have necessitated a new submission to the Steering Committee and Township Board. It was further discussed at the 4/28 meeting and decided to let the Planning Commission review and act on the submitted ordinance and make recommendations as to which way to go. We took no further action.

**Next Step**– We want to further clarify what the procedure will be to learn about an individual septic location, find the rating, and get information on how to comply with the eventual ordinance.

We have developed a “report” that is generated in the SQL to inform the residents of where their property stands. The procedure to move forward is still being developed.