

Health of Higgins Steering Committee

Purpose and Scope

In December 2024, the newly elected Gerrish Township Board formally moved to create a Steering Committee that will take a rebranded look at the overall health of Higgins Lake.

There has been concern for years over Higgins Lake and its perceived deterioration. Lots of organizations have weighed in on how to go about dealing with the problem. Until now, there has been no coordinated approach to preparing a plan to address this perceived condition. With the formation of GLUA in 2020, came the idea that a new lake-wide sewer project was eminent. It seems now that many believe this notion was premature. This Board would like to step back and take a fresh look at where we are, what we can do right now and what the future might hold.

Therefore, the formation of this committee. It is their intent to look at all facets of the impact activities have on the lake, and address those impacts with thoughtful, effective, and financially feasible solutions. This will necessitate the involvement of many people - some from here in the community, some that vacation here, seasonal property owners, state officials, federal agencies and politicians and support from all over the Midwest.

It is our hope to find and engage people with the skills, dedication, resources, time, and ambition to join this effort. Those with extreme positions and radical thoughts about what should be done may want to focus their energy elsewhere. We are looking for anyone that has the willingness to listen to ideas and present their thoughts with the single goal of what is best for the lake. This cannot and will not be an “us vs them” effort – the Health of Higgins depends on it.

The Steering Committee will focus on several topics including but not limited to:

- **MASTER PLAN** -The steering committee and its subcommittees should work to create an overall master plan for the direction of this effort. The Master plan should have timelines, clearly defined goals and objectives, costs, potential funding sources, and other direction for the committees. We have created a presentation that lays out the vision for the initiative at a high level. Further detail will be presented as the project progresses.
- **COMMUNICATIONS** - Begin a specific organized communications plan that keeps the community advised and up to date on the work of the committee.

*Health of Higgins Initiative
Power point presentation is
available upon request*

- **DATA** - Evaluation of the data that has been collected over the years and consolidated into a single report that reflects the trends affecting the lake. If necessary, additional testing will be done to quantify and verify existing data and set a benchmark from where we move forward.
- **UNIVERSAL DATABASE** - Consider the creation of a universal database to capture current data as well as data collected going forward such as - lake test results, well and septic status, property ownership, zoning, etc.
- **MAPPING** - Continue the mapping effort that has been started and identify the layers and data that needs to be gathered. The GLUA project has contracted for the aerial mapping and ground control surveying already. The next step will be to get a base map created and initiate specific layers that will display activities of various groups working on the Health of Higgins.
- **ROADENDS** - Work with Roscommon County Road Commission to address any road ends that are contributing to negative runoff into the lake.
- **FERTILIZER** - Consider the possibility of a fertilizer ordinance or outreach plan that stems the use of inappropriate fertilizers around the lakeshore.
- **SEPTIC ORDINANCE** - Develop a septic ordinance that can be implemented if necessary. The first steps in this effort should be to map the location of well and septic in the Township.
- **WATER WELLS** - Work with the health department to test and evaluate the overall condition of drinking water throughout the Township. This is a matter of public health in our community, and we need to evaluate where we stand.
- **DOCUMENTATION** - The committee will need to document the work done in each of these areas and benchmark their progress. The first steps of each effort will be to evaluate where we are. We can then measure progress and the effect of our work as time goes on. It will be important to point to the items that have made the most progress in the overall health of the lake and where we need to do more. This team will need to establish a scoring matrix that can be used to show where we have moved and how we are accomplishing our goals. Documentation and Communication teams will need to work closely to get what is hopefully a positive message out to the public.
- **FINANCE** – Some of the efforts identified will need funding right away, others not as much. The Steering Committee will need to create a budget as well as potential funding sources. Finance will need to work with GLUA to see if our efforts coincide enough to use grant funding for their work. New funding will be necessary.
- **GLUA** – The Steering Committee will take the overall lead on the Health of Higgins Lake but will also work closely with the existing GLUA team to evaluate potential

sewer solutions. GLUA has been granted funds by the Federal Government and will appropriately use those funds as they are earmarked. The Steering Committee's work will need to coincide with GLUA in a collaborative and effective manner.

Each of these efforts will need a lead person(s) collaborating with the overall team to show progress toward our goals. Some activities will need to be started very soon, others can follow along. In any case, an overall approach and plan is necessary to keep on track.

Very shortly, we will post a solicitation for applications (per Gerrish township policy) from those that want to be involved. We will use the applications to create a "short list" for appointment to the Steering Committee. We will also be looking for those that want to chair or work on one of the original committees identified in the solicitation. While Gerrish Township originates this committee, we will be entertaining all applications – regardless of address.

The call for applications will further detail what will be expected of the position and what the effort will entail.

On behalf of the Gerrish Township Board, I welcome your input, suggestions, time, and talent to this new initiative.

Regards,

Jim Ostling
Trustee1 – Gerrish Township

Health of Higgins Lake Initiative

Jan 2025

Foreword

We continue to gather information and consider the work that many organizations around the lake have done to date, and it becomes clear that overall people want a clean and clear lake. Gathering this information and consolidating it into a single easy to understand format and creating a consolidated path forward is a big step toward a healthy lake. Every day there is more evidence of the good that people have done and continue to do for the community – lake studies, testing, outreach, opinion papers, donations, grants, and general support for important causes. Your Township Board agrees with, supports these efforts, and wants to take the work a step further.

As the ***Health of Higgins Lake initiative*** by the Gerrish Township Board kicks off, structure, committees, timelines, and general organization begin to come into focus. In mid-January 2025, Gerrish will release an invitation to apply for openings on the Steering Committee and its various sub-committees. This process will remain open for 30 days while we accept applications prior to beginning the selection process and formation of committees.

The following is further detail on what committees will be formed and what their work will focus on. We will gather the names of those interested through the *Gerrish Appointments Policy* form that is attached. We encourage anyone interested in participating in this very important and worthwhile effort to apply.

Gerrish Appointments policy is attached, or you can get it from the Gerrishtownshp.org website at this link:
[link](#)

We will shamelessly exploit your years of life experience in the business, corporate, government, professional or other arena and now focus that experience on this important project. In return, you will gain a great deal of satisfaction in knowing that you have worked with some very dedicated individuals and organizations to finally have an influence in the health of this crucial resource for future generations.

The only critical requirements are that individuals have a sincere interest in working toward a healthy lake and are committed to a team effort. Any “us vs them” or single-minded individuals need not apply. We will be focusing on several specific sub-projects and consolidating their results into a single goal – the health of Higgins Lake.

Selection Process

Applications submitted through the Gerrish Township Appointments process will be received and held through the 30-day application timeline. Gerrish reserves the right to extend the application deadline if necessary to receive an adequate applicant pool.

While the application asks for the basic information necessary to begin a selection, A resume stating your qualifications and interest in the project would be helpful. Please identify which area of the project you are interested in and your qualifications for that position.

During the open application process, we will assemble a review/selection committee. The committee will review and research all applications, then make a recommendation for appointments to the steering Committee. An offer to the selected applicants will eventually fill the positions.

Once the Steering Committee positions are filled, they will participate in the selection of applicants to the sub-committees. Applicants that are not selected to the Steering Committee will remain in the pool for consideration as sub-committee chairpeople. Committee chairpersons will then determine the need for additional help on the committee and make their own selection(s)

Timing

The Appointments notice released in mid-January 2025 with the selection process starting in mid-February. The selection of the Steering Committee members will be done by the end of February and subcommittee chairs selected soon after.

The Steering Committee will meet for an organizational kickoff meeting within a week of the final appointment and begin their work. Sub -Committee’s will start on staggered dates thereafter to keep a smooth process and keep everyone engaged and supported, as necessary.

A management timeline will be published as the committees are appointed and work begins.

Data Informed Solutions

Compensation

All positions are on a voluntary basis. A budget for the initiative will be created and after committees get a chance to evaluate the direction and effort required. The finance Committee will have further details on the reimbursement/expense procedure.

Term

The Steering Committee positions are for staggered three-year terms. Committee chair positions will be for three years commencing at their appointment.

Meetings/frequency

Initially the steering Committee will meet frequently to get the sub-committees organized with goals and direction. As committees progress and start their work, meetings will be scheduled as needed. At a minimum, sub-committees will report their progress to the steering committee monthly and meet quarterly. Monthly reports will be recorded for the public by the documentation committee chair and archived on the Health of Higgins Web site. (web site is yet to be released)

Position Descriptions

(1) Steering Committee Member

Overview: The Steering Committee Member will play a crucial role in guiding the Health of Higgins Lake initiative, a comprehensive project aimed at improving and maintaining the health of Higgins Lake. This position requires a dedicated individual who is passionate about environmental sustainability and community development. The members will collaborate closely with other committee members to develop strategic plans, oversee project implementation, and ensure that the initiative meets its objectives.

The Steering Committee is entrusted with the critical role of developing and communicating a comprehensive plan for the Health of Higgins Initiative. This position requires a strategic thinker with excellent leadership and communication skills to ensure the project's success from inception to completion.

Key Responsibilities

- Strategic Planning: Contribute to the development of a strategic plan that outlines the goals, objectives, and timelines for the Health of Higgins Lake initiative. Lead the development of a comprehensive strategic plan that outlines the goals, objectives, and timelines for the Health of Higgins initiative.
- Engage with stakeholders to gather input and ensure alignment with the broader agenda.
- Identify potential risks and develop mitigation strategies to ensure the project's successful execution.
- Master Plan – Members of the Steering Committee will be responsible for the development and adherence to a comprehensive Master plan detailing the direction of the project.
- Project Oversight: Monitor the progress of various sub-committees, ensuring that they align with the overall goals of the initiative.

Monitor the progress of various sub-projects, ensuring they adhere to the master plan and align with the overall goals of the initiative.

Implement a robust project management framework to track milestones, deliverables, and key performance indicators (KPIs). KPI's are specific metrics used to quantify performance and measure progress

Facilitate regular progress reviews and adjust plans as necessary to address emerging challenges or opportunities.

- Oversight of the project's budget, ensuring financial resources are used efficiently and effectively.
- Address and resolve any stakeholder concerns or issues promptly and professionally.
- Committee Coordination: Collaborate with other committee members, sub-committees, and stakeholders to ensure seamless coordination and communication.

Ensure transparency and accountability through comprehensive reporting and documentation.

- Resource Management Identify and allocate the necessary resources, including budget, personnel, and equipment, to support the project's objectives.
- Stakeholder Engagement: Engage with external stakeholders, including community groups, industry partners, and other government agencies, to build support and collaboration for the project.

Foster a collaborative and inclusive environment that encourages input and engagement from all stakeholders.

(2) Science

Overview: Manage a committee to evaluate technical and scientific data as it applies to the quality of the lake and a potential sewer. These include overseeing the collection, analysis, and interpretation of scientific data related to the lake's water quality and the potential impacts both for and against a potential sewer project. The chairperson must ensure that the data is accurate, comprehensive, and scientifically sound. They are also responsible for coordinating with various stakeholders, including environmental experts, government agencies, and community members, to gather input and ensure that the evaluation process is transparent and inclusive. Additionally, the chairperson must communicate the findings to the public and recommend actionable steps based on the data to improve the lake's health and address any potential issues related to a potential sewer project.

(3) Finance

Overview: The Finance Sub Committee chair for a Health of Higgins project will oversee budgeting, financial planning, and resource allocation. The need to ensure efficient use of funds, compliance with regulations, and collaborate with stakeholders to secure funding and manage financial risks.

They will be highly involved in the grant process and seek new means of funding for consideration.

Their role is crucial for the project's financial health and success.

(4) Communications / Outreach

Overview: Communications and Outreach chairperson is responsible for developing and implementing a comprehensive communications plan to keep the community informed and engaged. They are responsible for creating and distributing updates, managing public relations, and coordinating outreach efforts to ensure transparency and foster community support.

+They are responsible for various means of communication such as newsletters, social media, public presentations, printed reports, etc.

Additionally, they work closely with other committee members to align communication strategies with the project's goals and objectives.

(5) Lake Data

Overview: Subcommittee chair will be responsible for evaluating and consolidating previously collected data and reports into a single comprehensive document. They ensure the data reflects trends affecting the project and, if necessary, conduct additional testing to verify and quantify existing data. Their role is crucial for setting benchmarks and moving forward with accurate information.

Key to the success of the overall project will be the extent that old and new data can be effectively conveyed to the public in a comprehensive and easy to understand manner.

(6) Mapping / Database

Overview: The Mapping and Database subcommittee chairperson will be continuing the mapping effort initiated by GLUA, Department of Public Health, Roscommon County GIS and others that may be in progress and identifying the layers and data that need to be gathered. They are responsible for creating a base map and initiating specific layers that will display activities of various groups (lake testing results, well and septic locations, property boundaries, residential and commercial properties, etc.) working on the project.

Additionally, they consider the creation of a universal database to capture old and current data as well as data collected going forward.

There has been an aerial survey of the lake, and the ground control has been mapped. The chair will monitor this activity and work with vendors to assure the proper end product is realized.

(7) New Lake Testing

Overview: Sub-Committee chair will consider the creation of new water quality and environmental testing around a lake to supplement and or verify previously performed testing include overseeing the development and implementation of a comprehensive testing plan. This involves coordinating with various stakeholders, including local government agencies, environmental organizations, and community members, to ensure that the testing procedures are thorough, specific to Higgins Lake and scientifically sound.

Additionally, they must analyze and interpret the collected data, communicate findings to the public, and recommend actionable steps to improve water quality and environmental health.

(8) Well Testing

Overview: The chair will be responsible for managing a committee to create, implement, manage, and evaluate a water well test for Gerrish Township, including overseeing the development and execution of a comprehensive testing plan. This involves coordinating with local government agencies, environmental organizations, and community members to ensure that the testing procedures are thorough and scientifically sound. The chairperson is responsible for securing funding, managing the budget, and ensuring compliance with relevant regulations. Additionally, they must analyze and interpret the collected data, communicate findings to the public, and recommend actionable steps to improve water quality and public health. 1

(9) Documentation

Overview: The sub-committee chair is key responsibilities for documenting and conveying the status of data collected and correspondence created during the execution of the Health of Higgins Lake Initiative, including:

1. **Documentation:** The sub-committee must document the work done in various areas and benchmark their progress. This involves evaluating the status, measuring progress, and highlighting the most significant achievements in the overall development of the project.
2. **Communication:** The documentation and communication teams need to work closely to ensure that a positive message is conveyed to the public. This includes establishing a scoring matrix to show progress and how goals are being accomplished¹.
3. **Reporting:** Ensuring transparency and accountability through comprehensive reporting and documentation is crucial. This involves regular updates and clear communication with stakeholders.
4. **Security** -Committee will make recommendations as to how to best store and keep information secure.
5. **Media** – Sub-Committee will evaluate and make recommendations as to how best to disseminate information to the public through such media as print, and social media.

These responsibilities are essential for maintaining transparency, ensuring accountability, and keeping the community informed and engaged throughout the project's execution.

(10) Road Ends/Fertilizer/Septic Ordinance

Overview: This important sub chair will begin research on what can be done to address the immediate needs projects such as:

- 1) Road end runoff and contamination of the Lake. Work with Road Commission to evaluate what can be done and the cost associated,
 - 2) Research other fertilizer ban or ordinance documents from other communities and prepare a sample for Gerrish to consider. Steering Committee will then decide when document should be presented to Township Board
 - 3) Research other septic ordinance and work with Planning Commission to prepare sample ordinance that could be implemented in the future. Coordinate with Mapping and database committee to map the location of existing well and septic fields around the lake then throughout the township.
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Please provide any information you feel will be helpful to the selection committee during their evaluation of applicants.

Questions should be directed to:

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