

September 30, 2021

Re: Joint Letter of Support of the Sewer Project from the Higgins Lake Foundation and the Higgins Lake Property Owners Association

The mission statement of the Higgins Lake Foundation (HLF) is “promoting ecologically sound projects and practices for the protection of Higgins Lake and the surrounding watershed.” The mission statement of the Higgins Lake Property Owners Association (HLPOA) is “to protect, preserve and enhance the quality of Higgins Lake and its surrounding watershed.” These are two of the longest established and most respected civic organizations in the Higgins Lake area, if not the State of Michigan.

These two organizations have been involved for decades in maintaining the pristine appearance of Higgins Lake. The many water studies conducted over decades, all support the finding that there has been a negative change in the quality of Higgins Lake.

The quality of Higgins Lake is being dramatically changed from its historic, pristine environment towards a degraded biological impact caused by on-site septic systems.

Our organizations have commissioned and supported numerous scientific lake studies and water quality testing by the State’s major universities, including Michigan State University, University of Michigan, and Grand Valley State University. The Foundation has employed Dr. Mark Luttenton with the Biology Department and Annis Water Institute at Grand Valley State University to survey, test, and review historically the ecological system of Higgins Lake.

One central theme is that all scientific reports point to the deterioration of the water quality of Higgins Lake because of phosphates from residential septic transported via ground water to the shallow areas, and now into the deepest areas of the lake. The studies conclude that there has been increasing levels of nutrients and phosphates since the late 1990s. The additional nutrients have adversely influenced the ecosystem of the lake which led to algae with a shift towards blue-green algae which are now found throughout the lake.

In the summer of 2019, HLPOA retained Dr. Jennifer Jermolowicz-Jones of Restorative Lake Sciences, LLC (RLS) to study the environmental health of Higgins Lake. RLS is a scientific firm specializing in lake management and restoration. Their number one management recommendation is the “installation of a lake-wide sewer system.” The full RLS study is posted on the HLPOA website, hlpoa.org, under the Environmental Committee tab.

The scientists told us the single most important way to prevent the further degradation of Higgins Lake is to remove the current septic systems and develop a comprehensive sewer plan which will prevent the continuing phosphorous and other contaminates into the lake.

The organizations have independently met with the Engineering Firm of Fleis and Vandenbrink and studied their proposed wastewater treatment plan.

The organizations both strongly endorse the proposed wastewater treatment plan and urge the Townships and our citizens to move forward with the project.

