

Crystal Lake & Watershed Association
Annual Meeting
Saturday, July 19, 2025
Mills Community House
Benzonia, Michigan

MINUTES

Attendance: ca. 115 present; 233 electronic votes, 145 votes returned by mail; total of 397 eligible votes.

Call to order:

President Sue Brown called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. The Secretary reported that the votes received constitute a quorum of voting members.

Election report:

The draft minutes from the 2024 annual meeting had been reviewed and posted on the CLWA website. The formal actions taken were the election of new board members and officers.

The Secretary reported the results of the 2025 election, which was by mail and online ballot. The minutes of the 2024 Annual Meeting were approved and the slate of officers and board members put forward by the Nominating committee was elected:

Officers for two-year terms (to 2027):

Vice President – Mark Walton (reelection)
Treasurer – Tim Davis

At-large board members for three-year terms (to 2028):

Bruce Gerhart
James Hamp (reelection)
Dirk Nelson (reelection)
Wanda Shreiner (reelection)
Hugh Walton (reelection)

At-large board member for two-year term (to 2027):

Ginny Murphy

At-large board member for one-year term (to 2026):

Ron Reagh

President Brown thanked the Nominating committee for its work over the past year. She introduced the new board members present and thanked Susan Kirkpatrick who is retiring from the board of directors.

Keep Crystal Clear event:

Coleman Schindler described the 5th annual fund-raising event to be held on August 8. It is being organized by the CLWA “junior committee,” led by Lukas Szniewajs. He encouraged people to attend and bring their friends and neighbors, and displayed the tumbler that will be available.

President’s report:

Brown’s report began with a listing of challenges currently facing the lake: water levels, invasive species, salt, zoning, swimmer’s itch, microplastics, wake boats, Beulah stormwater, development at the Outlet, and others.

She then reviewed the recent work of the various CLWA committees, who have been very active over the past year. The Development committee chaired by Barbara Leonard, reports that there are currently 679 memberships (= 1,096 individuals). She encouraged those present to help the CLWA grow by reaching out to their neighbors who are not members.

Education and Communication, chaired by Ellen Herscher, has continued its program of publications, educational and public events. Regular emails to members are bringing news and information. Brochures on swimmer’s itch, septic maintenance, zoning and land use are available. A salt testing field project for high school students resumed this year. Brown introduced Debbie Smith, who is now responsible for the annual Walkabout for middle school students.

The Land Use committee, chaired by Tom Kucera, has continued its efforts to strengthen zoning throughout the Crystal Lake watershed. Lake Township is currently making changes to their ordinance and the public should express their opinions that the changes should protect the lake’s water. CLWA has settled its lawsuit with Benzonia Township over the Sunkissed Hills development but the lawsuit remains active against the other defendants. Its aim is to protect the wetlands on the property and to encourage all local jurisdictions to enforce their zoning ordinances.

The Water Quality committee, continues its work to control invasive Eurasian watermilfoil. They have made significant progress, but one area near Beulah has been resistant. It is being analyzed to determine whether it is a hybrid species that may require alternative treatment methods. The CLWA boat wash station at the Mollineaux Road boat launch washed 799 boats last year, about a quarter of those launched at the site. It was disappointing that mergansers could not be relocated this year, so swimmer’s itch control remains uncertain for the future. Statistics from the Congregational Assembly report that those who swim in the afternoon suffer

much lower rate of infections than those who swim in the morning.

Report by Lake Biologist John Ransom: “Trouble-shooting Crystal’s shoreline”

Ransom reported that he has made a lot of site visits around the lake this year, so is well aware of the problems that people are experiencing. There has been a lot of damage from the high water levels this spring. He is always assessing the effectiveness of what the CLWA is doing and following the best science available. He is grateful for the community’s support.

He described the shoreline survey carried out in 2019 that recorded various types of land use practices around the lake. Of the 2,900 points recorded, the most were due to lack of greenbelt; very few recorded natural shorelines, which are preferable. Greenbelts are important because they serve as a buffer between the land and the lake, protecting it from pollutants brought by run-off and erosion.

In his 10 years of monitoring the lake, Ransom made a Secchi reading in April of 67.5 feet, the highest ever recorded. This measures clarity, and indicates that many microscopic materials have been removed from the lake, probably by zebra mussels. Those microscopic plankton etc. form the food for fish and other aquatic creatures.

Ransom acknowledged that we are not going to get rid of many things now in place (e.g. roads): he stressed what we do *now* is what affects the future of the lake. He showed examples of various simple shoreline practices that can make a difference, for example gentling sloping shorelines, deep-rooted plants and trees, reducing lawns and avoiding fertilizer, installing rain gardens and reducing impervious surfaces. The turnover rate of the lake’s water is very slow, so changes take a long time. We need to build a community culture that protects the lake for the future.

Treasurer’s report:

The financial statement for 2023 was distributed and is posted on line. Treasurer Bruce Gerhart recognized the outstanding work that Ransom is doing.

Gerhart noted that the 2025 budget is nearly \$300,000, including a payment of \$40,000 in matching funds for Beulah’s stormwater grant project. He pointed out that most of the expenditures go toward water quality. He explained the purposes of the three separate CLWA funds. In the Operating Fund, only 22% comes from dues and the other 78% from donations. The Reserve Operating fund is for emergencies and has never been drawn from – this may have to be done this year because of the high legal expenses being incurred. The new Endowment Fund with the Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation is intended to serve as a tool for estate planning.

Questions:

Questions from the audience concerned a variety of issues: the future of swimmer's itch control, launching boats at road ends where no washing facilities are located, zoning changes in Lake Township, finding landscapers with proper lake protection practices. Several raised the failure of the County Drain Commissioner to perform his duty to regulate the lake level at the Outlet.

In closing, President Brown stressed that all CLWA's work is supported by its membership and donations and she thanked the members for their support.

Adjournment:

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ellen Herscher". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Ellen Herscher, Secretary

(Minutes approved by mail and electronic ballot July 25, 2026)