

Crystal Lake & Watershed Association
Annual Meeting
Saturday, July 25,
2026 Mills
Community House
Benzonia, Michigan

DRAFT MINUTES

Attendance: ca. 100 present; 264 electronic votes, 151 votes returned by mail; total of 415 eligible votes.

Call to order:

President Sue Brown called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. The Secretary reported that the votes received constitute a quorum of voting members.

Election report:

The draft minutes from the 2025 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 2026 election, which was by mail and online ballot. The minutes of the 2025 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 2028):

President – Susan Brown (reelection)

Secretary – Ellen Herscher (reelection)

At-large board members for three-year terms (to 2029):

Ronald Ahrns

(reelection)

Peter Gaudino

Tom Kucera (reelection)

Ron Reagh (reelection)

Steve Stephens (reelection)

At-large board member for two-year term (to 2028):

Andrea Bard

President Brown thanked the Nominating committee for its work over the past year. She introduced the new board members and thanked Wanda Shreiner and Rick Cosaro for their service on the board of directors.

Crystal Circle Award:

President Brown noted that the Crystal Circle Award is made to someone who has made outstanding contributions to the CLWA's mission to protect the watershed of Crystal Lake. This year it is being awarded to Tom Kucera, who has chaired the CLWA Land Use committee for nearly 10 years. During that time he has worked tirelessly to promote understanding of the need for protection in critical areas of the watershed such as steep slopes and wetlands. His efforts have helped strengthen zoning ordinances around the lake, boosted awareness of watershed protection in the local community and encouraged communication with local governments on these issues. Kucera thanked the CLWA for the award and expressed his appreciation to other members of the Land Use committee for their support, especially Mary Ferens and Tassie Bosher.

President's report:

President Brown reported that the CLWA continued to confront many of the same challenges this year as had been presented at last year's annual meeting: lake water levels, invasive species, swimmer's itch. But a major part of its energy and resources were directed at the issue of residential development around the lake and a lawsuit against the Sunkissed Hills development. To address that topic, Brown introduced the CLWA legal team of Kristyn Houle and Lauren Teichner.

Teichner noted that they are bound by confidentiality not to discuss the details of the settlement reached in May, but the result was a positive outcome for the future of Crystal Lake. All parties committed to protect the wetlands and control erosion at the development site. In response to an audience question, she stressed that, to prevent future episodes like this, community members should keep aware of what they see happening and raise any concerns that they have. President Brown thanked CLWA members for their support during the course of the lawsuit.

Brown 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 memberships are steady at about 671 (= ca 1,095 individuals). She encouraged those present to help the CLWA grow by reaching out to their neighbors who are not members: about 500 riparian property owners are not yet CLWA members.

Education and Communication, chaired by Ellen Herscher, has continued its program

of publications and educational events. Regular emails to members are bringing current news and information, while *Crystal Whitecaps* newsletter covers CLWA's work in more depth. Free brochures on swimmer's itch, septic maintenance, zoning and land use are available. The annual Walkabout for middle school students celebrated its 31st anniversary; a newer salt testing field project for high school students is continuing.

Brown stressed that the focus of the Land Use committee, chaired by Tom Kucera, is advocacy: it has no authority to regulate or enforce. She encouraged attendees to attend local township ad planning commission meetings to keep informed and express their views.

The Water Quality committee, chaired by Hugh Walton and Bruce Gerhart, continues its work to detect and control aquatic invasive species. Treatment of Eurasian watermilfoil is continuing to decrease this infestation, but remote underwater survey has detected the presence of quagga mussels. In the fight against invasive species the CLWA boat wash station at the Mollineaux Road boat launch is an important tool. Since it opened in 2013, it has washed nearly 35,000 boats. The staff there are known for their friendliness as they assist. Unfortunately the ban on merganser relocation remains in place, and therefore, as expected, the incidence of swimmer's itch has increased. CLWA's efforts to find solutions remain active as it seeks new approaches.

Report by Lake Biologist John Ransom: "Protecting your shoreline from erratic lake levels"

Ransom reported that there have been many complaints of erosion due to high lake levels this year. He showed images and charts of the fluctuations in lake levels which have varied widely over the years, but seem to have been more extreme this year. Crystal Lake is classified as a "high energy" lake. He cited actions that can accelerate shoreline erosion: removal of native vegetation in water and on land and hardening of the shoreline (e.g. seawalls). The negative impact of jetties on shorelines was of particular interest to the audience. Ransom then described best practices for protecting a shoreline, such as planting native plants, stopping use of fertilizer, controlling stormwater runoff and maintaining septic systems. He also provided information on several resources for more information on shoreline protection.

Treasurer's report:

The financial statement for 2025 was distributed and is posted on line. Treasurer Tim Davis reported that an independent review of CLWA 2025 finances was conducted and no issues of concern were found. In detailing the expenditures in 2025 and the budget for 2026, he noted that the CLWA is an all volunteer organization that carries out its projects with very little paid staff.

Davis explained the "unusual" expenditures due to the litigation in 2025, the impact they had on the CLWA's liquid cash balance, and the resulting reduction

in the CLWA's net assets. "Regular" expenses have remained consistent through 2024-2025. With the lawsuit now settled, the CLWA must return to its healthy financial status.

Adjournment:

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:15 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