

City of Lake Geneva Avian Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 11, 2025 6:00 P.M.

City Council Conference Room 2A

1. Call to Order: 6:00 PM by Sarah McConnell

2. Roll Call. The following members were present: Sarah McConnell, Jill Rodriguez, Kelley Happ, Karen Gallo, Victoria Ross, Beverly Leonard and Alderperson Cindy Yager.

3. Approval of Avian Committee meeting minutes

Rodriguez made a motion to approve the minutes from the February 11 meeting, seconded by Ross and passed.

4. Visitors and Comments from the Public:

Betty Volquardsen, JaNelle Powers, Robert Croce and Peg Esposito were in attendance. Volquardsen was introduced and expressed interest in joining the Avian Committee. She has submitted her application.

5. Update from City Council

Yager updated the committee on the search for a new City Administrator and said the city will be interviewing two strong candidates. She also said several applications have been received for a potential Building and Zoning position.

Yager has been leading the city's interest in installing EV chargers and has been talking to potential providers serving the Wisconsin area. The Avian Committee is interested in making this an environmental action goal.

She also updated the committee on the Hillmoor Commission and the Knowles Nelson grant that will be used to fund improvements to the property. There are now three good bridges, including two new ones along the river near the disc golf course, and plans are being discussed to create a river walk that everyone can use, possibly with intergenerational activities and equipment. Plans are being finalized for various age group equipment and areas at Veteran's Park. Rodriguez suggested adult exercise equipment at either place.

6. Budget Update and 2025 Financial Review:

McConnell made a request to the Comptroller to include carryover funds in the Avian budget, which now will be reflected in our ongoing reports.

7. Bird City Application

The Bird City application has been filed! Thank you to Ross who worked with McConnell to update and complete the application, and who will keep the files up to date so they won't be so difficult to create each year. The Bird City Committee will begin reviewing the applications mid-March. McConnell has asked the city administrator and/or comptroller to let us know the outcome. McConnell also plans to discuss with the Bird City organization that city size should be a consideration. A city the size of Lake Geneva cannot possibly hold extensive activities as a city like Madison and should not be compared to them.

8. Birdwatching Backpacks for the City of Lake Geneva

Rodriguez brought a sample of the new backpacks, binoculars and books that will be going into each of the 8 bags. All the items will have a sticker or identifying label. She also has a prototype letter introducing the project to the local hotels and asking for their participation. (The hotels will not be held responsible for the cost if a backpack goes missing, but we will request that they put it on the borrower's hotel tab until it is returned). Rodriguez has also commissioned Althea Salgada, a local graphic artist, to create an image we can use on social media. VISIT Lake Geneva will help us publicize, and maybe a ribbon cutting ceremony.

9. Climate Change Topics and Updates

- **World Migratory Bird Day Activities**

- The date of Saturday, May 17 in the Smith Reading Room from 10:30 am to 12:30 pm at the library is confirmed. Ross presented a timeline for the speakers and reported that library staff will read to children and help oversee craft activities outside while adults are inside with the speaker. Speaker is Dr. Benjamin Zuckerberg, Ph.D., Dept. of Forest and Wildlife Ecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. His topic will be “Canaries in the Coal Mine: Birds and Climate Change”. Friends of Hillmoor will also give a short talk. Weather permitting, a tour of the Purple Martin houses will be offered.
- **EV Chargers**
See report under # 5.
- **Tuesday@2**
- Happ reported that we are set for a “Tuesday@ 2” program at the Geneva Lake Museum on April 1 on the subject of bird migration with three speakers. Ross moved to approve an honorarium of \$50 for each of the speakers. It was seconded by Rodriguez and passed. Happ will follow up with procuring a W9 form for each speaker and contacting the comptroller. McConnell has handouts she will bring. Happ will get information out to the newspaper, Rodriguez will put the information on our Facebook page, and Happ will put a copy of the press release in each alderperson’s box.

10. Purple Martin House Update

Leonard reported that the Martin house watchers are ready, the houses are clean, prepped and waiting for the first of the Martins to arrive. Leonard expects them to arrive in mid-April. They will first open the houses on the warm side, then begin to open more as the birds arrive. Leonard and Gallo and volunteer Gardner helped check all the cables for wear – and reported that some are hard to reach. Hopefully there will be action to show our visitors by May.

11. Proposed Park Director Position

Letters defining the job were sent to each of the groups affected by this position, including the Avian Committee. Yager began a discussion on the proposed position. McConnell expressed dissatisfaction that there was not one mention about an applicant’s environmental science or ecological awareness in the job description. Volquardsen thought the description was well written and inquired about bachelors or masters degrees. McConnell wants to be sure this person will be aware of our committee’s mission and Rodriguez hopes this person will work as a liaison with our committee as needed.

12. Next Meeting:

The next Avian Committee meeting is on **Tuesday, April 8 at 6 pm in Conference Room 2 A**

11. Future Agenda Items

- Update from City Council
- Budget Update and 2025 Financial Review
- Bird City Application update
- Birding Backpacks Project
- Climate Change Topics/Updates
 - World Migratory Bird Day update
 - EV Chargers in Lake Geneva
 - Tuesdays at 2 program Update
- Purple Martin House updates
- Other
- Next meeting Date and Time
- Future Agenda Items

12: Adjournment:

Ross moved to adjourn, seconded by McConnell and approved. Meeting adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, 3/26/2025

Kelley Happ