

City of Lake Geneva Avian Committee Minutes

Tuesday, November 11, 2025 6 p.m.

Lake Geneva City Hall; Conference Room 2A

Members: President – Sarah McConnell, Secretary – Kelley Happ, Jill Rodriguez, Beverly Leonard, Karen Gallo, Victoria Ross and Alderperson JaNelle Powers

1. Call to Order: 6:00 p.m. by Sarah McConnell

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

Others present: MaryJo Fessenmaier, Betty Volquardsen and David Winger

3. Approval of minutes from the October 14, 2025 Meeting

Motion to amend October minutes to correct Holiday tree decorating from Thursday to Tuesday, Nov. 18

Motion to approve amended minutes by Rodriguez, seconded by Gallo

Voice Vote: approved

4. Comments from the Public:

Betty Volquardsen, from Friends of Hillmoor, stated that she was very happy that the Avian Committee wrote the winning Bird City/White Pelican grant and will use it to enhance the stream on the Hillmoor property. Also a shout-out to Ross for her hard work on the Dark Skies ordinance. Friends of Hillmoor are happy to support this project.

Mary Jo Fessenmaier also commented she was glad to see Dark Skies moving forward.

5. Financial Review and Update:

We do not have a current update. The budget will be voted on at the November 24 City Council meeting. We will request carryover information again in our budget review. Rodriguez and McConnell will request.

6. Discussion/Recommendation regarding the proposed revisions to Sec. 98-707 Exterior Lighting Standards of the City of Lake Geneva's Municipal code be sent to the Building & Zoning director for consideration and adoption by the City of Lake Geneva

Discussion about meeting with Adam McColloch and Dr. Amanda Bauer in December to answer questions about items in the new Dark Skies proposal. McConnell and Ross suggested a Zoom meeting in December, then plan to meet in person in January. Ross will plan.

7. Discussion Regarding Membership

Issue resolved. No longer needed on agenda

8. Discussion/Update Regarding Swift Night Out

It was pointed out that our SNO event is usually held on the first Thursday in September. Next year it would fall on the day before the Labor Day weekend and there may be too many activities going on that weekend, including school vacation and the Walworth County Fair. Happ will make rack cards for the 2026 event.

Motion by McConnell, second by Rodriguez, to move the 2026 SNO event one week later, to September 10

Voice Vote: motion passed

9. Discussion/Update Regarding Bird City Application:

The discussion was moved to the December meeting. Winger advised us to submit a resolution regarding the Bird City application at a December City Council meeting, so it can be approved by due date in February/March.

10. Discussion/Update Regarding Hotel Birding Backpacks

Rodriguez commented that 7 of the 10 hotel birding backpacks were requested and are at the locations. Will check with Maxwell Mansion and the Geneva Inn to see if they are interested. Need to check back to see if they are being used and if we need to replenish rack cards.

11. Discussion Regarding Holiday Tree at Geneva Lake Museum

Tree decorating is scheduled for 9:30 am Tuesday, November at the museum.

12. Discussion/Recommendation Regarding Climate Change Topics and Projects

It was suggested we add World Migration Day to our agenda. Gallo will talk with the Geneva Lake Museum to see if we can present a “Tuesday at 2” talk in April or May.

13. Discussion Regarding Purple Martin Houses and other Birding Projects

The Lakeland Audubon Club has offered to give us a Kestrel house. Happ will speak to the Hillmoor Commission to see about placement on Hillmoor property.

14. Discussion/Recommendation Regarding Partnerships and Grants

Lake Geneva Bird City was awarded the state-wide Bird City/White Pelican Farm grant for at least \$500 worth of native plants. The Avian Committee is working with Friends of Hillmoor and the Geneva Lake Conservancy on a proposed site of about 5 feet by 30 feet along the banks of a small creek on the south end of the Hillmoor property adjacent to Route 50, and of the appropriate plants to stabilize the banks and attract birds and pollinators. Peg Esposito and Betty Volquardsen will help draw a simple plan to present to the Hillmoor Commission at their Dec. 3 meeting showing the proposed location and plants. McConnell will contact landscapers regarding cost to prepare the site.

15. Discussion Relating to Educational Mission

No separate discussion. This is related to our native plant grant. We would like to include students from Badger High School’s science or ecology clubs in the native plant planning and planting.

16. Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn by Rodriguez, seconded by Gallo

Voice vote carried at 7:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Kelley Happ

Secretary, Avian Committee