

Avian Committee Minutes
Tuesday, May 12, 2026 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 Linda Frame

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

2. Roll Call. The following members were present: Sarah McConnell, Kelley Happ, Jill Rodriguez, Victoria Ross, Beverly Leonard and Alderperson Linda Frame. Karen Gallo was excused.
Others present: David Winger; Betty Volquardsen

3. Approval of minutes from April 14, 2026

Motion: Ross moved to accept the minutes, second by Rodriguez

Voice Vote: Minutes approved

4. Comments from the Public:

Volquardsen commented on the Dark Skies project, suggesting the committee make a side-by-side comparison to help educate the public on the changes the committee is proposing. She also suggested we use the most restricting language applicable and include standards and enforcement in our proposal.

5. Annual Election of Officers:

Motion: McConnell was nominated to serve as chair for the coming year by Rodriguez, second by Leonard.

Vote: Motion was approved unanimously by voice vote

Motion: Happ was nominated by McConnell to serve as secretary; second by Rodriguez.

Vote: Motion approved unanimously by voice vote

6. Review of City Ordinances pertaining to the Avian Committee

Motion: Ross moved that the Committee meet on the following dates for the Committee Year 2026-2027: 06/09/26; 07/14/26; 08/11/26; 09/08/26; 10/13/26; 02/09/27; 03/09/27; 04/13/27 and 05/11/27. The motion was seconded by Rodriguez.

Voice Vote: unanimous

7. Financial Report Review:

There were no new expenses for April. Rodriguez requested that we verify that our available funds including our carryover from last year. We have not yet received this report.

Ross will be submitting reimbursement request for materials.

Motion: Rodriguez moved to accept the Financial Report. Second by Ross.

Vote: Approved unanimously

8. Discussion/Recommendations regarding Policy and Ordinance Initiatives:

a. Exterior Lighting Standards/Dark Sky Ordinance.

Motion: Ross moved that the Committee ask for a continuance of the May 18, 2026 Public Hearing on Text Amendment 98-707 so the Committee can address the Staff Recommendations provided on 05/05/26. The motion was seconded by Rodriguez

Discussion: Ross wants to map the differences in the current ordinance and what the Committee proposes to change, and to postpone the presentation until next month's Plan Commission meeting in June. It is important to Ross that the changes apply to public property as well. She will prepare a new recommendation, based on feedback. Winger will help with the new recommendation.

Voice Vote: passed four aye, one nay. Motion passed.

b: Climate Related Topics: Discussion

It was recommended that we be more specific on our agendas about topics and whether they are recommendations or discussions.

9. Annual Events and Applications: Discussion/Action/Reports

a. Swift Night Out:

Date is Thursday, September 10, 2026 at Geneva Lake Museum.

JoJo's will bring the food truck, beginning at 5 pm; Community Bank will be asked to provide the ice cream truck as per last year.

The Audubon program will begin at 6 pm.

b. Bird City Application: Lake Geneva was awarded the High Flyer status on May 8. Thanks to Ross for all her hard work in preparing and updating the application.

c. World Migratory Bird Day Report/Action: Tuesday@2 Talk at the Geneva Lake Museum was held on May 12. An excellent talk by Carol Elkins of the Geneva Lake Conservancy and Adam McCulloch of GLAS helped us educate the public about bird migration and what we all can do to help. At least 50 people were in attendance. Thanks to the Geneva Lake Museum for being so accommodating. Happ will send a report and photos to Ross for next year's Bird City application.

8. Projects and Partnerships: Report/Action:

a. Hotel Birding Backpacks: Rodriguez submitted the final report to Tourism about the Hotel Birding Backpack project and how we continue to support and market it. We discussed the need for a follow-up survey

b. Purple Martin/Kestrel houses: Purple Martins have returned to Lake Geneva, as have the mayflies, so there is plenty of food. The cold/hot pattern in early spring seemed to be hard on our returning birds – not enough bugs so some of the Martins may have starved. Leonard reported that there are 9 houses, including the gourds, but the most activity is at the “beach house.” She also reported that the cables with locks will be changed out. Leonard welcomed some fabulous new volunteers, as well as thanked the returning ones.

Kestrel House – Happ has purchased and will provide the Kestrel house pole to Public Works, who will set it in the ground. Then the rest of the structure will be constructed by a few volunteers

C. Native Plant Grant Project:

Action: McConnell, Leonard and Volquardsen will travel to the White Pelican Farm Friday 5/15 to pick up plants. Members will remove plastic weed cover, apply newspaper and mulch (150 square feet – 25' x 6' plot) on May 18 at 10 am

9. Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn by McConnell, seconded by Rodriguez

Voice vote carried at 7:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Kelley Happ

Secretary, Avian Committee