

Avian Committee Minutes
Tuesday, June 9, 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: 6:05 p.m. by Sarah McConnell

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

Others present: David Winger, Parks Director; Betty Volquardsen (Park Board) and Jeff Gardner (Martin house volunteer)

3. Approval of minutes from May 12, 2026

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

Voice Vote: Minutes approved

4. Comments from the Public:

Volquardsen commented on the Dark Skies project, fully supporting the prospective ordinance and asking the city to support it as well, including lighting on public property and compliance.

Gardner reported on the increase in the number of Purple Martins in our houses this year – they're full. He is concerned about overcrowding and would like to see more houses along the beachfront towards the library.

5. Review Financial Reports:

Rodriguez presented the current financial review. She recently received a note from the city comptroller that we no longer have our rollover funds. Rodriguez explained that for the past three years we have asked for less funding because we were carrying a rollover amount of \$500 in our account, which we had not used. Rodriguez's records show that our budget for 2026, which was submitted and approved, was \$4000. We asked for \$3500 because we counted on having access to the \$500 carryover. Committee members were concerned that the money was withdrawn without us knowing about it. Winger said he would discuss this with the comptroller.

Rodriguez reported that our remaining balance is \$1600 for the year. The Hillmoor project cost us more than we planned (mulch, ground preparation, etc).

The committee also agreed with a recommendation to plan for the purchase of two more Martin houses in next year's budget.

6. Discussion/Recommendation regarding Policy and Ordinance Initiatives:

a. Exterior Lighting Standards/Dark Sky Ordinance Ross led a discussion about the update of our proposed Dark Skies Ordinance. She created a chart comparing our proposed plan, the city plan and the staff report. The next step is to add feedback from Adam McCulloch, Education and Outreach Manager from GLAS. More information will be presented at the next meeting.

b. Climate related topics pertaining to birds. No discussion at this time

7. Discussion/Recommendation regarding Annual Events and Applications:

a. Swift Night Out:

Date is Thursday, September 10, 2026 at Geneva Lake Museum. JoJo's has committed to bring the food truck, beginning at 5 pm; Community Bank will provide the ice cream truck as per last year. The Schlitz Audubon program will begin at 6 pm. We need to start publicity for SNO.

b. Avian Educational Activities. The committee agreed to partner with the Hillmoor Commission to present a talk on the environment and birds at the Lake Geneva Public Library on June 23. The speaker is Tom Gunn from the American Bird Conservancy, who will speak on why restoring the land, especially in places like Hillmoor and our City Parks is so important to preserving our wildlife.

8. Discussion/Recommendation regarding Projects and Partnerships:

a. Hotel Birding Backpacks: Several hotels have reported interest among their guests. We agreed to check back with other participating local hotels and lodges to access interest and replenish literature.

b. Purple Martin/ Kestrel houses:

Purple Martins - Leonard updated activity in our Martin houses - and reported full houses and a variety of nesting activities. These birds are very beneficial in eating millions of mosquitos and other pesty bugs all summer. So far they have counted 120 eggs. The Martin team expressed concerns about overcrowding and aggression. They recommended purchasing two more multi-unit houses, which includes the system for lowering to clean, trays, rods and predator guards at a cost of \$1525 each. We will look at our budget and any sources of donation for this.

She also officially thanked the Street Department for putting up perching rods.

Kestrel House –Public Works installed the base post; we can now proceed with the completion of the new house.

c. Native Plant Grant Project:

Report: McConnell, Leonard and Volquardsen travelled to the White Pelican Farm Friday 5/15 to pick up 90 donated native plants. Avian members and Friends of Hillmoor will provide mulch and plant them.

9. Adjournment:

Motion to adjourn by Linda Frame, seconded by Ross

Voice vote carried at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Kelley Happ

Secretary, Avian Committee