

Avian Committee

Tuesday, January 5, 2021, 6:00 P.M.

City Council Chamber and online

Minutes:

1. Call to order: 6:04 PM by Alderperson Flower

2. Roll Call. The following members were present in the Chamber or online: Alderperson Cindy Flower, Carol Zimmermann, Sarah McConnell, Beverly Leonard, Jill Rodriguez, Karen Gallo, Kelley Happ.

There were not any members of the public in the Chamber or online.

3. Approval of Avian Committee meeting minutes from December 1, 2020:

Motion to approve minutes by Zimmermann, second by Rodriguez. The motion was passed.

4. Four Seasons Nature Center

The committee held a discussion about the opportunities for the Avian Committee to help enrich and promote the city's Four Seasons Nature Park as a native plant and birding area. The committee is also looking to engage partner organizations, local volunteers and school/scouting groups to work with us. Neil Waswo (Public Works) attended the meeting and encouraged our participation. "You have a clean slate," he commented. Waswo mentioned a very involved volunteer several years ago named "Mary" who enlisted high school students to help with the prairie area and plantings, as well as maintained the educational signage at the entrance. Flower volunteered to reach out and contact Mary. Waswo explained that the city's Public Works Department regularly maintains the facility – shelters, mowing, trails, removal of buckthorn and other invasive species, and has plans to repair or replace parts of the existing boardwalk (excluding the tower area, which will not be replaced). Public Works also constructed and continues to take care of the birdhouses as time permits.

There followed a discussion of signage, both at the park and along Highway H. We agreed to study what is currently being used and see if there is money in the budget for sign improvements. The committee could also take over the educational display boards at the entrance.

Partnership and educational topics included engaging local groups – Rodriguez suggested contacting Badger Science Club, Interact Club and scouting groups. Also suggested creating a demo area for native plants, and promoting the facility as a birding site, not just nature paths. We could also incorporate repairing the birdhouses into our plans.

Wasco suggested obtaining a GIS plat from the Walworth County website. Mentioned that the city's compost site is on the property just north of Four Seasons.

The committee thanked Neil Waswo for attending the meeting. Flower suggested we get approval from the Park Board when we come up with a plan. Waswo suggested we talk to Lana Kropf relating to park permits.

Wasco said that our new Purple Martin sign would be installed when the frost goes out. McConnell has a spot in mind for the sign.

Zimmermann suggested a special one-hour strategic planning meeting to move forward on ideas for Four Season and for the 2021 Swift Night Out – this needs to be on the agenda. More discussion later.

5. Discussion/Recommendation regarding Bird City Application:

The Resolution needed to complete the Bird City application was passed at the December 14 City Council meeting. David Nord will upload the completed resolution, add the application fee of \$35 and submit. Keep this item on the agenda for an update.

6. Christmas Tree Walk:

Rodriguez reported that the Avian Committee's tree was charming but we need to put a little more thought into it next year.

7. Discussion/Recommendation regarding Environmental Education Foundation Grant (Learn to Soar)

The Avian Committee received a grant of almost \$1000 from the Environmental Education Foundation for our Learn to Soar educational program. Zimmermann updated her outreach to local teachers to offer the Learn to Soar program or for individuals to participate in the bird fair. Rodriguez contacted scouting officials in Madison who were enthusiastic, but we need local contacts. McConnell reported on the 4-H group involvement through a Madison contact. Everything is remote now but they have programs for building birdhouses, nature walks and cleanups. Premature now but this is a good group to keep in contact with. Elkhorn is the closest chapter and includes children from third grade through high school.

Zimmermann, Rodriguez and McConnell will get together to see who else might be interested in participating in the bird fair.

8. Grants and Fundraising - We Energies

Zimmermann stated that once we get a Four Seasons plan we might think about writing a grant.

9. Discussion/Recommendation regarding allocations to the Library for book purchases

Rodriguez reported that we have \$347.50 from Cookies for a Cause. We have also allocated \$300 to help the library purchase books and update the birding backpacks.

Rodriguez moved to allocate \$300 for the Library for materials and use the Cookies for a Cause money to enhance and replace materials in the backpacks. Karen Gallo seconded the motion. Flower asked about the library using some of our books for story time. Rodriguez thinks they will for sure when the library re-opens.

10. Great Backyard Bird Count

Zimmermann created a draft media release. Happ will help distribute the release to all our partners and media contact. The Great Backyard Bird Count has a great website with more details. Zimmermann also reached out to Lakeland Audubon and created a puzzle for our Facebook page. How can we use our social media to help facilitate the flow of information? It was suggested that Lake Geneva Lake Life and the Regional News have very active Facebook pages. Zimmermann will send the information to Flower to forward to the city's website. Rodriguez also suggested forwarding the information to the high school to send in their school backpack information. www.lakegenevaschools.com/district/community_backpack/community-backpack-submission

Our goal is to get this information to the media before Feb. 1.

11. Future Agenda Items

- Strategic Plan for Avian Committee's activities
- Discussion/plans for Four Seasons Nature Park
- Bird City Application update
- Learn to Soar update
- Great Backyard Bird Count, scheduled Feb. 12 to Feb. 15

Zimmermann will come up with ideas for a strategic planning session – we need at least 1.5 hours. Do we break into groups or have two meetings regarding future plans.

Flower will invite Neil Wasco to our next meeting. McConnell would like to ask him what kind of signage the city could provide. Flower would like to look at the photos to see what is available. She would like it to look like other Lake Geneva park signs.

11. Next Meeting Date -Tuesday, February 2 at 5:30 pm

In the City Council Chamber and online

12. Adjourn: Zimmermann moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:10. The motion was seconded by Happ and passed.

Respectfully submitted
Kelley Happ
1/30/2020