

City of Lake Geneva Avian Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, February 6, 2024 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, Karen Gallo and Kelley Happ. Beverly Leonard and Alderperson Cindy Yager are excused. Longtime member Carol Zimmermann resigned from the Avian Committee this year. With regret and sincere thanks for the amazing leadership she has displayed, we accepted her resignation.

3. Approval of Avian Committee meeting minutes from December, 2023 (The January, 2024 meeting was cancelled because of inclement weather) A motion to approve the minutes was made by Rodriguez, seconded by Happ. The motion was passed.

4. Comments from the Public

Viki Ross, a resident of the Symphony Bay subdivision, attended the meeting to learn more about the Avian Committee and to request an Avian Committee member speak to her group. She was interested in promoting ways that residents could learn more about birding in the area.

5. Bird City Application

McConnell reported that there were considerable problems uploading the Bird City Application, which was due at the end of January. The application form had recently been changed by Bird City Wisconsin, without informing us, and our considerable amount of work could not be submitted in a format to fit their new application. Since we completed all the work on time and the old application was still posted online, McConnell thinks Bird City Wisconsin will accommodate us. She will work with both David Nord and Bird City to see how we can proceed.

6. Financial Review and Update for 2023-24

We will ask for and address updated budget information for the next meeting, including final 2023 expenses.

7. Strategic Planning

Traditionally the months of January through March are low key for the Avian Committee, as birding activities generally begin in the spring. However, The Great Backyard Bird Count, an international birding activity sponsored by Cornell University, Audubon and Bird Canada takes place in February to help scientists track migratory birds. The Avian Committee will help publicize this event through press releases and on our Social Media pages to encourage local families and bird enthusiasts to participate.

The committee also discussed ways to carry on the Story Book Trail project. We will be installing new permanent signs this spring but will not be working with St. Francis School children to write and illustrate the story. Instead, we discussed new ways to reach and inspire young children all over the area to learn about birds and their connection with our natural environment. We would like to continue to provide information about birds and migration geared to first and second grade levels. More and more libraries are creating Story Book Trails, and we talked about the possibility of working with the Geneva Lake Public Library. Rodriguez will contact the library about ways to interface or possibly offer birding programs. She will also inquire about publication rights to use book illustrations in our educational programs or on trail signs.

McConnell will contact Public Works about installing the new signs.

We will promote and celebrate World Migratory Bird Day in May.

Purple Martin colonies – Leonard and Gallo are still willing to chair the Purple Martin project and have several volunteers to help them with cleaning and watching the nesting boxes. It was mentioned that we need a sign to explain the gourd nesting boxes along the lakefront – our birds seem to like them, but many people don't understand what they are.

Rodriguez updated the committee on the butterfly garden that the Rotary Club is creating with the library. They are planning to host a "Monarch Pallooza" celebration from noon until 2 pm on June 22, with a ribbon cutting ceremony, speakers and information about monarch butterflies. McConnell suggested that this could be a good time to show off our Martin boxes to the public. If the timing is right we could lower the Martin houses to show nests, eggs or babies.

8. Partnerships, Funding Opportunities and Potential Grants

Tai Thompson of The Geneva Lake Conservancy asked for our help with their Purple Martin house at the Fishing Creek. Gallo said one of her volunteers is willing to help.

We selected the date of **Thursday, September 5, 2024 for the Swift Night Out** event. We all agreed that the program offered by the Schlitz Nature Center is always a popular draw and we should ask them back. McConnell will call the Geneva Lake Museum and Schlitz to arrange for the date.

We will participate in the Christmas tree decorating project at the Geneva Lake Museum again this year. Rodriguez will sign us up as soon as the project is announced. We all liked the Cardinal theme with red cardinal ornaments from last year and decided to do a similar tree this time.

Rodriguez also mentioned the Cookies for a Cause program with Simple Bakery. No plans have been announced yet, but she will sign us up to participate as soon as information is available.

Rodriguez reported on the Tourism Grant to help us fund birding backpacks we can supply to some of the local hotels, similar to the kids' backpacks we provide to the library. The costs are estimated at \$1500 to \$2000. However, she found that the Tourism Grant will not pay for supplies.

Another suggestion was creating or updating a tri-fold flyer about birds that can be found in this area. McConnell thinks there may have been one created before. We can work to update this or maybe create a new one. We will address this item in February.

9. Ways to Recognize our Volunteers

We have several volunteers who help each summer with our Martin houses and we would like to recognize their assistance. It was suggested that we invite them to an Avian meeting and give them each a good bird book. We will look at the Purple Martin catalogue for ideas. Gallo suggested this for the July meeting.

10. Other: New Member for the Avian Committee

It is with regret we accepted the resignation of longtime member and mentor Carol Zimmermann. We will be looking for a new citizen/member. The applicant will need to be a resident of Lake Geneva. There is a form on the city's website to apply.

There was a brief discussion about changing the meeting date from the second Tuesday of each month, but the committee decided to wait until a new member is appointed and current members' terms are renewed before we make any decisions.

11. Next Meeting:

The Next Avian Committee meeting is on **Tuesday, March 12 at 6 pm in Conference Room 2 A**

12. Future Agenda Items

- Update Financial Review for 2023/24

- 2024 Calendar/Strategic Planning/Projects
- Partnerships, Funding Opportunities and Potential Grants
- Monarch Pallooza at the Library
- Recognizing Our Volunteers
- New member for the Avian Committee
- Other

13: Adjournment:

Rodriguez moved to adjourn, seconded by Happ and approved. Meeting was adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, 2/15/2024

Kelley Happ