

City of Lake Geneva Avian Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, September 11, 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, Kelley Happ, Victoria Ross and Alderperson Cindy Yager. Karen Gallo and Beverly Leonard were excused.

3. Approval of Avian Committee meeting minutes from August 13, 2024. A motion to approve the minutes was made by Yager, seconded by Ross. The motion was passed.

Yager relayed that she will no longer be allowed to vote on our committee, due to new City rules, but that she will still attend as our Alderperson. The Avian Committee will need to look for a new member to fill out the roster of eligible voting members.

4. Visitors and Comments from the Public:

Peg Esposito attended the meeting to thank the Committee for holding the Swift Night Out event. It was the first time she was able to attend SNO. She also mentioned that Friends of Hillmoor might like to have a booth at the event next year. Esposito also asked to move item 11 (climate change topics) up for discussion before number item number 5. Ross made a motion to move item 11, seconded by Rodriguez and approved.

7. Swift Night Out

The Committee agreed to skip right to item number 7, as we were already discussing Swift Night Out. Everyone agreed the event was a great success. Perhaps not as many people attended, but it was estimated that there were at least 150 to 200. There was also the threat of rain which may have kept some people away, although the night remained cloud free. Schlitz Audubon presented an excellent program, and we agreed that the moderator, Cheyenne, was extremely knowledgeable.

McConnell said she was contacted by someone from Wauwautosa to say they also hold a Swift Night Out and they were interested in learning how we estimate the numbers of birds. We estimated that we had 500 to 1000 birds this year. We should remember to invite the Wauwautosa group to our SNO event next year. We also wondered about other places in the area that Swifts could be using. Yager said she checked the Lake Geneva Utility building and she saw none using the chimneys. She said she spoke to Josh (Water Dept.) and asked them not to cap the chimney. Swift-friendly chimneys cannot be capped, nor can they be lined with metal that prevents the birds from gripping. St. Francis Church, which used to have swifts, has since capped their chimney, as did the old Olive Shop in town. It was pointed out that many people think the Swifts are bats, as they flit around at dusk.

McConnell heard there was a group providing money for people interested in rebuilding their chimney to accommodate migrating Swifts; she will see if she can get details. Yager will follow up with Josh.

The date was set for September 4, 2025 for next year's Swift Night Out. The committee agreed to stick with the same program next year, as the Schlitz program is always popular. Other suggestions – more rack cards, more yard signs, more flyers. (250 flyers and rack cards, 5 yard signs this year). If we give the date as the first Thursday in September rather than the exact date, we can re-use the yard signs, which are expensive. We also need to reach more families – maybe attend back to school night at the various schools.

11. Climate Change Topics

One of the new requisites for the Bird City application includes a program on climate change. New Parks Director Samantha Ingo had offered to help us find a speaker on a climate topic for an Avian event in the future. Ross offered to follow up with Ingo for any possible leads. We discussed possible venues, including the library (capacity 70 people) and at the Riviera if we can get a big name speaker. The Ridge was not the

best location for our needs. We discussed picking a date in mid-May, during the week, and presenting a climate-related topic of interest to the general public. This would tie in with World Migratory Bird Day. Esposito would like to work with us on this issue. Rodriguez suggested we could possibly work with Badger High School science classes on climate. She offered to be the Badger liaison. It was also suggested looking into climate topics through Michael Fields's programs on farming and crops. Esposito mentioned the Lyons Biodiversity Group or Wild Ones.

5 and 8. Financial Review and Update

Yager and Rodriguez advised us that Lake Geneva's annual budget meeting will be held on September 19. Rodriguez has prepared our budget request to the city for 2025. We have reduced the budget request the last two years and will be using our carry over funds and grant money to fund our projects. Rotary has given us \$1000 towards the hotel backpack plan, and we will be applying for a Tourism grant for marketing materials. McConnell and Happ have agreed to present our 2025 budget.

Leonard requested \$400 to pressure clean the martin houses, which need to be thoroughly cleaned out at the end of each season. There is a person/company who does this service and will bring his own water. Leonard and McConnell will work with him.

6. Partnerships, Funding Opportunities and Potential Grants

Hotel backpack project – see item number 10.

9. Volunteer Recognition

The Committee recommended September 23 to recognize Avian Committee volunteers at a Common Council meeting. We will be honoring and thanking our former Avian team leader Carol Zimmermann, whose leadership and energy led the Avian Committee to soaring heights. She was responsible for developing and implementing many of the successful Avian projects, including the Learning to Soar program with students at St. Francis school. Our birdhouse volunteers, Nancy Wolff, Jeff Gardner and Brad Robbins, put in many hours checking the houses at least once a week, removing invasive species and cleaning the houses at the end of the season. Yager will contact the mayor about certificates from the City of Lake Geneva. Ross will write a proclamation for each volunteer.

10. Birding Backpacks

Rodriguez reported on the progress of our birding backpack project which will provide backpacks to some of our local hotels, similar to the ones we donated to the library. These backpacks, which can be checked out by guests, have binoculars, birding books and local birding maps and information. She will be ordering supplies for 10 backpacks from Amazon. The Rotary Club has donated \$1000 towards supplies, and Rodriguez will be applying for a Tourism grant to pay for marketing materials, including artwork for maps and bird materials. Parks Director Ingo created a draft of a parks brochure identifying local parks.

11. Climate Change Topics

See number 5

13. Christmas Tree Decorating at the Geneva Lake Museum

Rodriguez will be submitting the application as soon as it is available. More details next month.

14. Next Meeting:

The Next Avian Committee meeting is on **Tuesday, October 8 at 6 pm in Conference Room 2 A**

15. Future Agenda Items

- Bird City Application
- 2025 Financial Review
- Partnerships and Funding Opportunities
- Birding Backpacks Project

- Climate Change Topics/Updates
- Ideas for World Migratory Bird Day activities
- Christmas tree decorating at the Geneva Lake Museum
- Other

16: Adjournment:

Rodriguez moved to adjourn, seconded by Ross and approved. Meeting was adjourned at 7:22 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, 10/2/2024
Kelley Happ