

City of Lake Geneva Avian Committee Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, November 12, 2024 6:00 P.M.

City Council Conference Room 2A

1. Call to Order: 6:05 PM by Sarah McConnell

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

3. Approval of Avian Committee meeting minutes

A motion to approve the minutes from the October 8 meeting was made by Rodriguez, seconded by Ross. The motion passed.

4. Visitors and Comments from the Public:

Alderperson Cindy Yager updated the committee on city matters:

Park Committee – the committee has heard from one of several companies about a proposal for a new playground in Veterans' Park. The concept is for an all-inclusive, multi-generational playground that will meet ADA standards and appeal to all ages. The Parks Committee will select the materials and plans to use money from impact fees. An environmental or veteran theme have been among the suggestions. The committee hopes to start the project in 2025.

Holiday Lights – The city would like the BID to come up with a new plan for holiday lighting – perhaps on buildings instead of trees. BID will take lights off after the holidays. She also mentioned that several of the city's downtown trees had been sawed off this fall by vandals.

Parks Director Position –this position is on hold until the new City Administrator has been installed. The city has received more than 60 applications for the City Administrator position and hopes to have an applicant selected by early January.

5. Bird City Application

McConnell reported a breakthrough in our attempts to work with Bird City Wisconsin. After a successful attempt to change our password, she was able to get into the website and find last year's application to modify it for next year. She also found a tutorial to help. McConnell has requested assistance from Ross to help upload and update our application for the 2025 year. The tutorial stressed tourism, which will work well with our plans to create and distribute hotel birding backpacks.

McConnell showed a tourism report detailing how birdwatching has doubled since 2016 and is now big business for the tourism industry. Lake Geneva is still listed with high flyer status.

6. Proclamation for Bird City Application:

The updated Bird City application is due February 29, 2025. We will need to create a proclamation from the city (there should be a copy of last year's on file at the city). Yager will talk to the city clerk about the proclamation and will suggest time at the City of a Whole Meeting on December 9 to read the proclamation.

7. Budget Update and 2025 Financial Review:

We followed up on a discussion last month about paying for supplies out of pocket or through Amazon and being repaid. Rodriguez spoke to the City Comptroller and reported that the city will order for us through their Amazon account, but will also repay us if we order directly.

Leonard proposed using Avian funds to power wash the bird houses every other year at a cost of \$450 each time. She projected needing a total of \$990 each year for ongoing maintenance. McConnell moved to set a budget line item for Martin house maintenance. Ross seconded the motion. McConnell also asked Leonard to send her updates on house maintenance.

The City Council will discuss and vote on the 2025 budget at their next meeting. Therefore, it was suggested we wait for their approval of our budget request. We are confident it will be approved because we asked for less money this year (we still have some carryover funds to be used).

8. Partnerships and Funding Opportunities (see item 9)

9. Birdwatching Backpacks for the City of Lake Geneva

Rodriguez reported that the Tourism Commission met in November and granted us the \$3000 we requested for marketing materials in the avian backpack project. In fact, they were excited and want us to make more than the five we had planned. We need to add the Tourism Commission logo to our materials. The backpacks will include binoculars, bird books, the backpack, and bird location materials. It was suggested that we put information about birding apps (like Merlin and Cornell University) on the brochure in our birdwatching kits. Rodriguez will create a letter to the hotels to solicit interest and will follow up with suggestions as to circulating the backpacks. This will include making sure the backpacks are returned after being checked out – maybe by putting on the room tab. We will also need to find a good artist to create a map of birding locations and maybe a seasonal birding list.

10. Climate Change Topics and Updates

Ross asked to carry this discussion of World Migratory Bird Day activities to the December meeting. It was reported that the Lake County (IL) Board has approved a new building code to help mitigate bird collisions on new buildings, and city of Libertyville has a new building with special windows to help alleviate the problem of bird strikes. Rodriguez suggested that the Avian committee advocate for such issues and McConnell agreed to pursue this topic, perhaps with some similar ordinance information from Madison.

11. Christmas Tree Decorating at the Geneva Lake Museum

Rodriguez reported that we will be included in this year's Christmas Tree Decorating Contest at the Geneva Lake Museum. Those who can help will meet at the Museum at 10 am November 20. We need to find/create rack cards for under the tree.

12. Next Meeting:

The Next Avian Committee meeting is on **Tuesday, December 10 at 6 pm in Conference Room 2 A**

15. Future Agenda Items

- Update from City Council
- Bird City Application status
- Budget Update and 2025 Financial Review
- Partnerships and Funding Opportunities
- Birding Backpacks Project
- Climate Change Topics/Updates
 - World Migratory Bird Day activities
 - EV Chargers in Lake Geneva
 - Dark Skies project
- Other
- Next meeting Date and Time
- Future Agenda Items

16: Adjournment:

Rodriguez moved to adjourn, seconded by Happ and approved. Meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, 11/26//2024
Kelley Happ