

STERLING MUNICIPAL BAND
 Post Office Box 991
 Sterling, Il. 61081
<http://sterling-il.gov/band.cfm>

City of Sterling
 Band Commission Meeting Minutes
 9/25/2018

Commissioners & Staff		Other Attendees	
Band Commissioner Gonzalo S. Reyes	P	Jessica Ausman	P
Band Commissioner Alex Segneri	P	Lisa Eaton	P
Band Commissioner R. Allen Lee	P	Jordon Schram	P
Band Commissioner Amy Boze	P	Dianne Ausman	P
Band Commissioner Kevin O'Keefe	P	Ryan Neumann	P
		Nicole Oberg	P
		Bryan Anton	P
		Shelly Houzenga	P
Business Manager Paul Ausman	P	Cathy James	P

I. CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Reyes called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
 Attendance roll call was taken showing:

Attendance Roll Call				
Reyes	Segneri	Lee	Boze	O'Keefe
<i>present</i>	<i>present</i>	<i>present</i>	<i>present</i>	<i>present</i>
five (5) commissioners present				

Commissioner Reyes read the following opening statement:

First, a brief recap of the events leading to tonight's meeting. At our September 10 Commission meeting, after the conclusion of our regular business in open session, we voted to go into executive session at 6:32 PM. Each staff member, in turn, was given an evaluation. At 8:45, we voted to return to

open session. Votes were then taken to not renew the director's contract, and to terminate the travel manager. Both votes were unanimous."

Our mayor, Skip Lee, in response to an email from a concerned band member wrote the following; he has given us permission to cite from his email.

The Municipal Band Commission is made of five individuals. Two have significant music backgrounds and at least one of them is a current member of the SMB. The other three were chosen to represent the diversity of the community. They take their job very seriously and are dedicated to the SMB. By law they have the authority and responsibility to administer the band program and to hire staff to accomplish the goals of the Commission.

The former leaders have been given ample opportunities over the past 3 years to be part of the team to carry out the direction of the Commission. The former leadership had been counseled and informed extensively of the expectations of the Commission for their performance. At the end of the day and many, I stress many, discussions the Band Commission unanimously felt the former leadership were not the people to do what needed to be done. As a result, they unanimously voted and supported the actions taken.

Over the past four years, the Band Commission has worked very diligently. It is now clear that the Band Commission sets/monitors policy and the Band staff implements the policies. Bills are now being paid in a timelier manner with some accountability. Program planning and goal setting is being conducted to make sure the SMB is relevant to all of our citizens. I could go on but the bottom line is that progress is being made and often in spite of not because of the former leadership.

When I appointed the current members of the Sterling Band Commission, I gave them four tasks. These were as follows:

1. Be a proactive commission; for too long previous Band Commissions, in my opinion as well as many of my colleagues in city government, had felt the Band Commissions had not acted as a Commission. They, the former Commissioners, had abdicated many of their responsibilities to band staff without proper review and accountability of action. The proper chain of command had to be reestablished.
2. Assess the current program and set goals for the future; I wanted to make sure the band was evolving with the times and not getting in a rut. I wanted the Band Commission to go back to dreaming big dreams and not be content with the "same o – same o". In order to resist voices wanting to trim the SMB budget, the program had to be relevant to all of the community.
3. Get the financial house in order; I did not feel the Band Commission was exercising the proper control and oversight of the public monies being spent. I was resisting voices wanting to trim the SMB budget and in order to do that purchase and expenditures had to follow proper procedures.
4. Implement the changes they deem necessary to accomplish numbers one through three above. This included hiring the band staff and determining what resources would be needed to support any changes. Everyone from the Commission down to the newest member of the band had to be able to acknowledge and accept their roles as members of the "team".

The Band Commission, starting at their Special Meeting, will be focused on finding a new Director and moving forward planning for the future. The strength of the SMB is in the dedication of the members of the band. I have no doubt that when the "dust settles", the SMB will continue to be something of which the entire community can be proud.

Sincerely, Skip Lee

As a result the Commission has exercised its authority to reform the fiscal operations. Together with the band members and the audience, the commission is interested in moving forward. The Sterling Municipal Band belongs to the entire community. We intend to uphold the proud tradition and rich

history of this ensemble. We are moving forward to see where our dreams of music can lead, where the individual and collective soul can be touched by the talent that is found in our community and on the stage of the Grandon Civic Center.

II. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Commissioner Reyes outlined the rules pertaining to Comments from The Public. Ten Citizens signed up to speak. Commissioner Reyes called then up to speak at the podium according to how they signed the list of intent to speak.

Jessica Ausman

I'm Jessica Ausman. I have a letter I've written.

My one concern about the band now is social media. There has been a lot of activity, and most of it has been ugly. People are being petty and mean. There is political smearing, name calling, and I don't appreciate how this makes the band look. I don't think that people think before they post. Putting hate on the internet is permanent. You can't take it back. Maybe you feel justified and vindicated now, but what will that bring to the band in the long run? People will see this and associate the Sterling Municipal Band with the hate they see online. That's not how I want to see, or the community to see the band. The band could potentially lose some of the audience to the online hate. All it takes is one person to see it who doesn't like it, and there goes the band's reputation. What if donors see this and decide to take their money elsewhere? What about the people in the community who don't want a band at all? What if the community decides to send their money elsewhere? The audience could walk away from the concerts as well. For people who claim to care about and love the band to post online hate and potentially harm the band just doesn't make sense to me.

Lisa Eaton

My name is Lisa Eaton. I would like to state that in a letter to Mark Bressler from Mayor Lee he had stated that he charged this commission with a four-point plan which you have read tonight. Given the Mayor's pledge to the city on his Facebook page, and I quote "To conduct the city's business where the people can see what we are doing." I would like to know how many times, and what dates, this four-point plan was discussed with the conductor and the band staff. Furthermore, as a long-time donor to this band I would like to know exactly where the direction this band is going.

Jordon Schram

Hi, I'm Jordon Schram. I've been a band member since 2001. Recently came back home from being away and one of the reasons I did move back was to be part of this group. I have watched the band maneuver from one director to the next. I have seen the addition of this council. And as Lisa has stated, the transparency. As with anything else, if you are transparent about things it's going to be better for everyone to know what's going on and what the plan is. I just restarted with the band, I have no idea what the four-point plan is. I am very confident that the director and band manager would have been able to do whatever was asked if it was transparent and very straight forward. It makes no sense to me going behind back and not being forward with band members and with the [unknown.] That goes back to the council. If you are going to do shady business like that it's only going to drive the band down and you might as well close the doors now because [unknown.] More transparency, we have a great team here in Sterling, some of the best music brought from around the world. And I find it despicable the way things have been handled. And I want some clarity for what this idea is for the future. I started before I was in high school. We have young players coming in to the band. We have in attendance in the audience young players, so I want more of an idea of where the band is headed. Thank you.

Dianne Ausman

My name is Dianne Ausman, and I am a past member of the Sterling Band Commission, retiring in June of 2017 after my appointment term was up. During that time, I served with all present Commissioners with the exception of Mr. Segneri, who was my replacement. I felt at the time, since one of the Commission's goals was to reach out to a more diversified audience, there should be a younger Commissioner. During the six years that I served I can only think of three or four band members who attended a meeting. I'm sure the majority don't know what's involved with a group like this. The role of the Commission is to oversee the management of the Band and support those in leadership positions. There comes a time when there are conflicts in those areas, just as there is in any business. It is time for a change. There is a process in place for this in which has been ongoing. Evaluations of these leadership positions have been done over the past three years, and goals and expectations given to all concerned. To my knowledge this was all done legally, and there were no back-door agendas. I would hope that since all here enjoy music, that you would continue to support this band, and its leadership allowing for a smooth transition. Thank you

Ryan Neumann

I'm going to tell you a story. I started my time with the Sterling Municipal Band as a performer in 2003. I played in the group for more than 10 years, and during my tenure as a performer, I was eventually asked to take over for Jack Chapman – first as announcer of the Band, and then also as Band Manager. These were duties that I enjoyed, and also took very seriously. At some point in my tenure, the director and the Commission began creating rules for the Band members. For example, band members were required to attend a set amount of rehearsals leading up to a concert. If they missed too many rehearsals, they would not be allowed to perform at that concert. This was put into place as a measure to ensure a high-quality performance. As I stated, I took my responsibilities as Manager seriously, so when the situation arose that I had to enforce that rule, I did so – in conjunction and with approval from the director. I told a particular band member that he would not be allowed to perform at a specific concert – he was not fired, contrary to popular belief. In Fact, at no point in my Sterling Band Management career did I ever hire or fire anyone. I mention this story for a reason. That event set into motion the beginning of a rift in the Band, much like the rift that we are seeing over the past several weeks. There were members of the band who felt that enforcing the rules was a good choice – there were others who felt very differently. Very strongly differently. This rift grew larger, and eventually people started to question whether or not they wanted to be part of the Band. Ultimately, it led to some members of the Band choosing to depart – they chose to leave the Band rather than be a part of an ensemble that I was managing. The band started to suffer. Eventually key players were quitting and speaking out against me, and making it known that they disagreed with my not only my actions, but with me holding a position of management. Eventually, I came to the conclusion that the only way to repair the band was to step down as its manager. The words I used at the Commission meeting where I resigned were this: "I feel that the vision I have for my job role as manager is far different than the vision shared by others." I resigned from Manager, I resigned from announcing, and eventually stopped performing in the band entirely – to be clear, I did this because I knew that the Sterling Municipal Band is bigger than any one person. Bigger than me, bigger than my pride or my reputation. The Band has been around for 90 years – not because of me, not because of Jon or Cathy or Patrick. It will continue to go on, being bigger than any one person. Over the past several weeks, I have been asked whether or not I agree with the Commission's decisions. Do I agree with all their decisions? No – and just like everyone else here, I am entitled to that opinion. Do I agree with their decisions to terminate the previous Manager and previous Travel Manager? Do I agree with their decision to not renew the contract of the previous director? I would say yes. In my opinion, they made it obvious that they felt the Band was theirs to do with as they pleased. They felt that all this was about THEM, and not about what was best

for the Band. Recently, a letter was sent out from the former Business Manager. And in that letter, he wrote, "I strongly urge you to discontinue playing in this band." Here is a former member, a former manager, who claims to have the best interest of the Band. However, as soon as he is unable to participate in it, in this Band, he suggests dismantling it. I liken it to the child who asked to play with his favorite toy – rather than sharing that toy with his brother, he breaks it. There, now no one can play with it. This type of attitude is reckless, it is dangerous, and it lacks any degree of humility or teamwork, and there is no place for it in a group with a legacy like this. I agree with these dismissals for the very same reason that I chose to step down – because the Band is bigger than any one person, and no person has the right to put their personal desires ahead that of the Band. The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few. Change is good – change is an opportunity to improve and to grow. I stand behind the Commission, I stand behind your decision, and I look forward to seeing what the next weeks and months have in store for the band. Thank you.

Nicole Oberg

My name is Nicole Oberg. Thank you for the opportunity to speak and be heard tonight. When I first heard about Jon and Cathy being released from their duties with the Sterling Municipal band, I was very surprised, and shortly after, I became extremely disappointed in the way this situation has played out over social media, text, phone calls and emails. I am here for facts. I'm not interested in speculation or rumor. I am here because I care about this band first and foremost. The history of this band and the role it plays in the community is bigger than any of us in this room. I am here because I believe we are obligated to secure the future of this band, not only for ourselves and our pleasure of playing and listening, but for the future generations of the Sterling community. In the hallway at school, it's not uncommon to find kids roughhousing. I break it up and I usually say, this is not how we act at school. Inevitably, one of them will say, "but he smacked me first." And my response is always the same - "Well, who made the right decision in this situation?" I have not been present at prior commission meetings, so I admit that I do not have the whole story. I have heard that there was a lot of arguing and disagreement between the staff and the commission (or perhaps just specific members of the commission,) again, I was not there, so I don't know. But I also heard that neither party chose to take the high road in a number of instances. So, the teacher in me says, it's likely there were wrongs (and rights) on both sides. We must treat each other with respect and consideration. At home I teach my kids that we respond to rudeness with kindness--and it is not easy, but that is the expectation. This is my expectation of the commission and the future band staff members - that even when there is disagreement, there will be tolerance, respect, consideration, and mature discussion. To the commission - as you move forward, I ask that you revisit your past interactions and discussions and think about the tone that you set as an employer. Reflect and learn and then look to the future and consider how the commission wishes to interact with the future staff of the Sterling Municipal Band. What kind of environment do you want to provide and how will you go about achieving that? I realize you are not answering questions today, but I do respectfully ask that you seriously consider that as you move forward with plans for the band's future. Some people here plan not to play in the band in protest and that certainly is your right. However, I ask that you think - think beyond today, think beyond the anger that you're feeling. Because when you act out of anger and when you hold on to anger, the person who you hurt most is yourself. When we are angry and when we feel wronged, we want to lash out and hurt back. But, in refusing to play, you hurt yourself, your fellow bandmates, and the community of Sterling far more than you will hurt the commission. I ask you to think about this question. What is the legacy that you want to leave? And after you consider that, if you feel the need not to play, I certainly understand and respect your decision...and I hope that the commission will always leave the door open should you decide to come back later. I realize that this situation is an incredibly difficult one for everyone involved. We cannot erase what happens in the past, but we must resolve to create a more

cooperative and collaborative environment from this point forward. It is our duty to improve the way this entire organization functions - from the managers, to the band members, to the conductors, to the commission because ultimately, we are all here for the same thing. We want what is best for the band. We can have different ideas and differing of opinions, and reasonable people can and will come to different conclusions. But, I hope that we will soon be able to put our negative feelings aside and come together for the highest good of the band. Thank you.

Bryan Anton

My name is Bryan Anton.

(Commissioner Reyes: Anton?)

Yeah

(Commissioner Reyes: Thank You)

Principal euphonium. I've played six solos for this band in the last three years. Cathy asked me to play in this band. I didn't want to do it, I'd rather play trombone, that's my major instrument. But I saw it as a vehicle to play some solos and maybe get some kids interested in band. I know you don't know my name or how to say it because none of you people up there said "good Job, I liked your solo." Six solos. In Three years. I started winter concert three years ago. And Allen, when he took over from Patrick to pay me missed me for several services from last winter concert. Because he didn't know who I was. And that's fine. I know it's not about me. But realize, Cathy and Jon built a lot of their contacts in small world music through their personal force and their nature. She asked me. I wasn't going to do it, I really didn't want to do it. I think I played pretty well. It might not be the music you like to hear though. I'm going to tell you, you've burnt more than one or two people. And this is my band shirt, you can keep it because I don't play in it. I can take two of the three jobs I was offered last summer and it will be more than you'll pay me all year. So, enjoy. [inaudible as speaker walked out of the room.]

Shelly Houzenga

I believe the decision to terminate Jon and Cathy James from their positions was, like Nicole had said, very surprising. These two have done a wonderful job with the band in my opinion for many years. I personally have very much enjoyed having Jon as a director and I cannot think of any reason why he should not continue to conduct this band. He is an excellent conductor. He does a fabulous job of preparing the band for the summer concerts with only one rehearsal. And the love of what he does continuously shows through his work which in turn shows through the performances. Cathy's works with the band has been nothing short of amazing. The caliber of guest conductors and soloists that she managers to bring to this band is outstanding, and she works tirelessly to keep finding incomparable talent to share with the people of Sterling and with the musicians with this band. I know I have personally grown as a musician thanks to the experiences with Jon and Cathy that I have had. And I know of many other young musicians that feel the same thing. I, as are many others, am absolutely devastated to even think about continuing to perform with this band without Jon and Cathy. You say that this band needs to head in a different direction, but I think that you are failing to see that it has been heading in the right direction all along. And I would like to say that I think there has been a lot of petty discussion going on, and I know that there's been rifts between certain people in the band, and I think we can grow up a little bit and talk about what those problems are, and continue with the same personnel that we have, and just learn from these experiences, and get past them, and continue making the awesome music we have been making for years. Thank you.

Cathy James

For those people in this room who don't know me, my name is Cathy James. I have been in the band I believe since 1986 or 87 that's about 31 years. I have served as band manager, I have served as a commission member for 15 years, I have served as travel manager, my recent title, librarian, and solo chair clarinetist. I don't just play in this band, quick fact I play in several bands. My playing in several bands is how I get contacts to bring new members into our band. I will agree with everyone that the band is the most important thing here. I would never stand and say that the band is the band because of myself, my husband, or any other conductor, or manager, or player. What I want to clarify is that, Nicole you had a good point, you said you haven't been present at all the meetings so you don't know the whole story. Well, I've been present at all the commission meetings, I've never missed one, and I still don't know the whole story. [On last weekend] I was asked to leave as the commission went into executive session, but I was asked to come in. And what was told to me was that everything has been reviewed and that I am being terminated as travel manager, librarian, and I'm not able to play in the band for a year. And this ability to hire and fire band members has always been solely the responsibility of the band director. Not a Commission member. But you can change laws anyway you want them when you want them changed. I have never been treated with respect by a couple of people on this Commission and I won't say the names but anytime I mentioned history, which I know very well because I have done a lot of research on history of this band. I put together all of the information for the 70th anniversary of Grandon Civic Center for this band, and it took hours and hours of work on my part to do so. So, I know a lot about the history of this band, and the tradition of this band, and how the band operates. That, just like any other municipal band, when it comes time for a director to step down it's usually that director's decision and that he passes the baton to someone who is vested in the band. But anytime I raised such a plight all I got was eye rolls, and head turns, and heads put down, and typing or [messing] without paying any attention to what I was trying to do, which was simply educate the Commission on the traditions and history of this very wonderful band. You talk about your four-point plan, well, I didn't hear about the four-point plan until a letter was written to a former member of the band from the Mayor. That's the first time I ever heard of a four-point plan. I've not been involved in any discussions over a four-point plan. Had I been included in discussions about a four-point plan I probably could have participated and worked towards making that plan become a reality. But you can not do that when you are locked out. I have been...I asked, when I was terminated, why? I was told that I would get a letter in the mail. That letter has not yet come. I have missed one concert my entire 31 years in the band. I work, yes, tirelessly and yet to me there is more, and that is working tirelessly to bring guest conductors and soloists and the final numbers for the band. I would do it for nothing. I don't need the pay. I don't have to have the pay. My concern is for the band, and the community that comes to listen to us every week and supports us and gives their donations. As one person on the commission has said way back, "Well, your audience is old. When they all die nobody is going to be left." The band is over 100 years old. Our audience isn't made up of 100 plus years old people. Somehow, we managed to survive even though all the audience is old. So, something's happening there. The Conway family has made significant donations to the Sterling Municipal Band. They made those donations because Grandma Conway brought all the children to the band concerts. And then the children brought their children. And those children brought their children. Our audience members and our donors make a significant portion of our budget are still giving us money. I had no indication I was doing a bad job. In fact, Mr. Lee, Allen Lee, stood up at the pops concert, and I almost had a heart attack. Because, well, first and only time I was given praise along with my husband and the band for a great performance that we did. I've never heard words like that. It was nice, but I guess [Commissioner Lee: Time.] he didn't mean it.

Sorry, I could go on for more, but that's the end of my time. Thank you very much.

III. CONSIDERATIONS FOR INTERIM CONDUCTOR / CONDUCTOR FOR THE PURPOSE OF EVENT PLANNING

A. Commission Reyes inquired in to the scheduled dates for the rehearsals leading up to the 2019 Pops and Spring concerts.

1. Commissioner Boze stated that there were conflicts with using the High School facilities due to concerts scheduled on 12/5 and 12/12. Commissioners Boze and O'Keefe felt that there would not be an issue using Challand as a backup.

2. Commissioner Boze suggested switching the first rehearsal to 11/7 instead of Halloween night, as well as adding more rehearsals to December that have not been scheduled yet. Commissioner O'Keefe will check on availability of those dates (12/5 and 12/12.)

3. Final rehearsal location will be determined depending on SHS Football playoff schedule.

4. Commissioner Boze will verify the availability of rehearsal locations for the Spring concert.

B. Commissioner O'Keefe suggested hiring a couple of Interim Conductors for the Pops and Spring concerts, while searching for a Permanent Conductor.

1. Commissioner Segneri suggested using Facebook and word of mouth as a means of obtaining names for consideration.

2. Commissioner O'Keefe suggested using City Manager Scott Shumard as a resource for what we should do, and how to do it, as pertaining to advertising the position. He also stated that the position of Interim Conductor, should be handled separately from the position of Permanent Conductor.

3. Commissioner Lee inquired what was the latest date rehearsals could start. Commissioner O'Keefe stated that rehearsals need to start on the planned 11/7 date.

4. Commissioners O'Keefe and Boze will contact candidates for Interim Conductors. Interviews with those candidates will be set up for the regular scheduled meeting on 10/8. Commissioner O'Keefe stated that the Commission must make a decision at that meeting to give the Interim Conductors time to plan for the 11/7 start of rehearsals.

5. Candidates for a Permanent Conductor will be tried out with the Band during rehearsal time for the Pops and Spring concerts. The process must be made "very public."

IV. EXECUTIVE SESSION

Motion to enter executive session				
Reyes	Segneri	Lee	Boze	O'Keefe
	<i>motion seconded</i>			<i>motion made</i>
	<i>Aye</i>	<i>Aye</i>	<i>Aye</i>	<i>Aye</i>
Motion Carried				

The commission entered into Executive Session at 6:48 p.m.

Motion to return to open session				
Reyes	Segneri	Lee	Boze	O'Keefe
	<i>motion made</i>			<i>motion seconded</i>
	<i>Aye</i>	<i>Aye</i>	<i>Aye</i>	<i>Aye</i>
Motion Carried				

The commission returned to open session at 7:14 p.m.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Motion to adjourn meeting				
Reyes	Segneri	Lee	Boze	O'Keefe
	<i>motion seconded</i>			<i>motion made</i>
	<i>Aye</i>	<i>Aye</i>	<i>Aye</i>	<i>Aye</i>
Motion Carried				

The meeting was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Minutes taken by Paul Ausman and are hereby submitted to the Clerk of the City of Sterling

Paul Ausman
Business Manager, Sterling Municipal Band

**The next regular meeting of the Sterling Municipal Band Commission will be
Monday, October 8, 2018 at 6:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers
1st floor of 212 Third Avenue, Sterling, IL. 61081**