

Wood River Mayor wants to continue municipal music, despite budget vote

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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WOOD RIVER - Wood River Mayor Cheryl Maguire has was elected mayor on April 4, 2017, and she has served on the city council for more than 16 years - the Wood River Municipal Band she would like to save, however, has been a part of the city for more than a century.

Unfortunately for supporters of the city's municipal band, the newly-elected Wood River City Council voted against including them in this year's budget. Maguire said, while she

has supported the band through her entire tenure in Wood River government, the council voted against including them within the budget.

Previous Wood River Mayor Frank Akers, who was appointed after the death of former Wood River Mayor Fred Ufert and did not seek reelection, wanted to keep the band within this year's budget, but wanted to decrease funding from \$14,500 to \$10,000, which would mean less performances, but the band would still exist.

"In April, the majority of the council vote was for a revised budget without the band being covered," Maguire said. "People came last week to speak on behalf of the band. The City of Wood River supports the arts, and we still desire the band members to continue."

The Wood River Municipal Band, which has been performing for more than 100 years, is composed of as many as 40 members who are sourced from Wood River as well as surrounding communities. Maguire said they are unionized musicians who perform at events such as Wood River's Independence Day celebration and the annual Wood River Ice Cream Social.

"They will play different kinds of music, and people bring out lawn chairs to listen," Maguire said of the Wood River Municipal Band. "The Wood River Parks and Rec Department brings out benches as well for people. Weather, of course, is always a factor, but there is usually a good following for concerts."

Maguire used the example of nearby cities Edwardsville and Alton having municipal bands, with the latter being in the city's definitive charter.

When asked if the Wood River Municipal Band would still be performing by this summer, Maguire said: "it is rather questionable." When asked about live music during Wood River's celebrations without funding for the band, she said, "in my opinion, it wouldn't be there."

This possible future without municipal band music was enough of a fear for supporters in Wood River that Maguire said more than 20 came to a standing-room-only May meeting of the Wood River City Council to show solidarity for the band. As many as three took opportunities to speak on behalf of the band as well.

While the future for the Wood River Municipal Band may seem bleak at this time, Maguire said she did not want to forego the city's rich history of having one at this time - despite the council's vote.