

Drop the police band? Surely, that's a crime: About the town

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Drop the police band? Surely, that's a crime

Chicago Police Supt. LeRoy Martin can now confront the forces of crime and mayhem without snare drums and soprano bugles.

In a move sure to terrify El Rukn gang members and organized-crime chieftains, Martin is ditching the 57-year-old drum and bugle corps to free more police for duty on our mean streets.

This gambit heeds a penchant for efficiency but disparages matters of the soul—not to mention raising doubts as to any real effect on catching bad guys.

Can a city claiming greatness spurn rousing tarantellas at the Columbus Day Parade, las mañanitas at the Mexican Day Parade, the too-often forgotten Liechtenstein Polka, not to mention the Croatian national anthem?

"I am shocked and horrified!" said Dr. Marjorie Stewart Joyner, 93, president of Chicago Defender Charities, sponsor of the South Side's Bud Billiken Day Parade, which is traditionally led by the police band.

"They have been a joy to the poor, the handicapped and the disabled," Joyner said. "Community groups come and go, but the police are there."

About the town

James Warren

"This is *de minimis*," Ald. Edward Burke (14th), a former cop, said Monday, employing legalese for "insignificant" to deride the move.

"One reason we're in the band is that, on the job, we always see the bad part of people. Here, we see smiles. It's one time when they like to see us around," said Ken Januszyk, a Wentworth District sergeant and the group's Henry Mancini in his role of musical director.

"How do you put a price tag on the public relations to the city?" asks Dennis McKenna, a Jefferson Park District patrol officer and practitioner of the marching bells.

For the moment, the bells toll ill for McKenna.

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The band was formed in 1931 as part of American Legion Post 207. The affiliation remains for its current 54 members, 25 of whom are in the patrol division, and



Tribune photo by José Moró

Police band members: Bears fan Dennis Januszyk, Rocco Sannicandrio, Mike Reynolds, McKenna (clockwise), Robert Robertson, Ken Giachino Donatello and Lou Wilcox.

most of whom are war veterans.

The group is self-sustaining and broad-based. It pays for its instruments, uniforms, hats, shields, transportation and cleaning bills. The band includes patrol officers, sergeants, detectives and technicians.

There's a brother team, Dennis and Tom McKenna, a traffic ac-

cident investigations specialist, and a husband-wife duo of patrol officers Michael and Maureen Schmidt. It's largely white and mostly men, but there are six women, as well as Hispanics, Asians and the band's captain, Pullman District evidence technician Robert Robertson, who is black.

But as Giachino Donatello, a Monroe District patrol officer, said, "There's an impression that this is all that we do. That's wrong."

The members are regular officers allowed to practice four hours twice a month. For those

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two sessions, they receive compensatory time on an hour-for-hour basis.

Their primary function is in parades. Last year, they performed in 24, but it's usually closer to 20, including the St. Patrick's, Columbus, Polish Independence, Von Steuben, Mexican Day, Chinatown and Say No to Drugs events.

When a member plays in a parade, an event that tends to fall on a holiday, he gets eight hours of comp time if it's a normal day off. If the event falls on a scheduled workday, he gets only his normal pay, thus missing the time-and-a-half holiday pay he'd receive if working.

The city places the annual cost, which it calculates in terms of the value of the comp time, at \$216,000, or 1,400 work hours. It maintains that the hours could be better spent, noting that other cities, Philadelphia being the most recent, have disbanded bands.

Effects of redeployment are problematic. For example, 37 members played in the Nov. 26 Christmas parade along Michigan Avenue sponsored by McDonald's Corp. Of those, 17, including 9 patrol officers, were scheduled to work that day and, thus, missed regular duties.

Meanwhile, the city's normal policing of parades often involves 200 to 250 officers, including traffic and tactical teams.

It's a system that critics find wasteful, calling for procedures like those in New York City, where unpaid volunteers, who wear uniforms

but don't carry guns, supplant many regular police at parades.

If one wonders about deployment of others in the 12,000-member department, police officials confirmed Monday that two officers are assigned full time to Ald. Anna Langford (16th); two to Ald. William Henry (24th); four to Burke; two to Eleanor Daley, widow of Mayor Richard Daley; and four to Rev. Jesse Jackson when he's in town.

For "security reasons," the department won't disclose how many protect Mayor Eugene Sawyer, latest beneficiary of Chicago's tradition of an imperial, well-guarded mayoralty.



Conceivably, the band could endure. Remember, they're really an adjunct of the American Legion, not the Police Department.

If they could schedule days off to coincide with parades, and not mind losing the comp-time benefit, they could accept invitations to perform—and they are considering just that. But they concede that recruiting new members surely would be hard.

And musical innovation may be at stake. If the band died, Januszyk would no longer face the task of adapting certain tempos to marching in step. Like the 3-4 time of Ravel's "Bolero"—you know, the one that Bo Derek popularized in the movie "10."

Confronted by "Bolero," Januszyk improvised. He did so in the grand tradition of Mancini and Ira Gershwin, two guys whose daily regimen did not include breaking up bar fights or picking up winos who pass out at intersections.

"It was impossible to march to, so I just changed it to 4-4 time."