

# Schenectady Pipe Band

## Information for Prospective Members

### **Introduction**

The Schenectady Pipe Band's main mission is to play pipes and drums to the highest skill level possible. The Band performs several dozen times a year for a variety of events and practices weekly in order to maintain and improve its standard of performance. A high communal spirit, endless good times, and above all, the joys of achievement, are the reward of hours of dedicated practice.

The band continually seeks new members and appreciates the effort it takes to develop playing and performance skills. In reaching out to prospective members, the Band has set up several preliminary levels of association before full membership is attained. In doing so, it provides beginning pipers the opportunity to develop the skills needed for playing in a band situation instead of restricting participation only to those pipers who already possess these skills.

### **Aspirant Members**

*Aspirant* is the first level of membership association with the Band. Aspirants have reached a playing standard where they can begin to play with others, learn new music as it is picked up by the rest of the Band, and, in general, learn how to perform with a pipe band.

Aspirant pipers should have mastered the basic fingering skills on the practice chanter and are at the stage where they can play several tunes on the pipes correctly at tempos played by the Band. To become an aspirant, pipers must meet these standards:

1. Fingering must be clear and precise
2. While playing the bagpipe, tempos must be even, and the tone of the pipe steady.
3. Ability to read music and a general knowledge of staff notation.
4. Reasonable ability to properly express bagpipe music.
5. Roughly  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the Band's current parade repertoire must be mastered and memorized on the practice chanter.

Snare drummers must have good mastery of the drumming rudiments, a well-developed sense of rhythm, and have a working knowledge of the standard drum scores.

Upon meeting these standards, pipers are appointed as Aspirant pipers by the Band's Pipe Major and drummers by the Drum Sergeant. Some of the things Aspirants can expect to receive instruction on are:

Starts and stops

Marching and drills  
Group playing  
Maintenance  
Proper band dress  
Uniform Maintenance  
Music Theory  
How the Band operates

Aspirant players should attend rehearsals regularly, continue to improve in playing ability, and expand their mastery of the Band's repertoire. Aspirant status may be withdrawn if the person fails to reasonable progress or meet expectations.

### **Probationary Membership**

Once an *aspirant* shows they have mastery of the Band's parade repertoire and can perform properly with the Band, and they show a commitment and interest in Band membership through regular attendance and effort, they are ready for *Probationary* membership with the Band. Pipers are appointed as Probationary members by the Pipe Major for a period of six or more months, after which time they will be considered for full membership by the Band.

Probationary members are issued a Band uniform and participate in Band performances, meetings, and special social events. Probationers may be asked not to play at performances where greater experience and full command of the Band repertoire would be required. Probationary members may not yet hold an elected office in the band or vote at Band meetings.

The probationary period gives the individual an opportunity to better understand the commitments and responsibilities of band membership. In addition, the band also has an opportunity to see if the individual is committed to the organization in the long run without having to withdraw full membership after having awarded it.

One important step in awarding Probationary membership is a review of the individual's playing ability during an informal audition process. This may take place over a period of time not exceeding nine months. It involves a private review of the individual's playing, several tunes at a time, by the Pipe Major or Drum Sergeant. Constructive critique may be offered for improvement of some aspect of playing. Selections may be reviewed several times, as necessary. Improvement between sessions is viewed as proof of the player's interest, proper practice habits, and ability to correct playing in the manner required of all players in the Band.

Pipers will be asked to play half a dozen parade tunes in the Band repertoire on the bagpipe with a proper introduction (strike-in) and ending, at the desired tempo, on the march, with good expression and execution, on a well set-up, well tuned, and steadily blown instrument, and generally to a standard that would enable the piper to participate in a public performance with the Band.

## **Full Membership**

Once the audition process on the remainder of the repertoire is complete and a person has shown good effort to attend practices and performances, the probationer is presented by the Pipe Major or Drum Sergeant to the rest of the band as a candidate for *full band membership*. If progress is slow or attendance is weak, the probationary term may be extended or terminated.

After becoming a full member, the commitments of regular attendance and maintenance of tunes in the bands repertoire, of course, continue.

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