



AFM Local 500

2024 1st Quarter Newsletter

Dear Local 500 members,

Just like the many hours of practice and rehearsal that go into a performance, many things are going on behind the scenes here at your Local. Recent projects have included extensive bylaws and wage scale updates, creating room in the budget for \$4,000 to go towards DEI training, the first Music Performance Trust Fund (MPTF) projects in over a decade, and work protected and performed under single engagement contracts. Moving forward, we are planning a new website to launch in the next few months and continuing to grow our membership to represent the diverse group of professional musicians working in our jurisdiction. This summer, AFM Officer Training sessions will resume and we plan on sending both myself and our new Vice President, Brevan Hampden, to attend the training sessions and the Southern Conference (SoCo). All of these projects require countless hours of work and planning, but add up to improving the longevity and health of our Local. This newsletter seeks to keep you informed of some of these projects - I hope you enjoy!

In Solidarity,

Jessica Kunttu

Secretary-Treasurer, AFM Local 500

Message from the President

Happy New Year! We hope you've had a great holiday season. Now that 2024 is upon us, we're feeling energized and ready to move forward together.

Going forward into the next year, we would like to identify specific ways in which we can help our membership. Please let us know how your Local Board can help.

One of the subjects we've identified in the past few months is help in navigating the small claims court system. If your gig is on a Union contract and something goes wrong, we can help. Later in this newsletter is a summary of some of the information we've put together to help with questions about this topic.

Recently, our Membership Committee worked hard to create a survey for both member and non-member musicians in the area. Please let us know your thoughts, and feel free to pass the survey along to any musician colleagues that you know who are not members yet.

Finally, we're always looking for people to join committees. We have some new energy and new people involved, especially with our Membership and Social Media Committees. If there's a committee you'd like to start or be a part of, please reach out. Wishing you all the best for a successful and prosperous 2024.

In solidarity,

Leah Peroutka

President, AFM Local 500

New Board Members

Welcome new board members, Kenny Phelps-McKeown, Ganesh Om, and Stephanie Wilson!

Kenny Phelps-McKeown was born and raised in Durham and has been performing professionally in the Triangle area since 2007. He studied at Florida State University under Rodney Jordan and Marcus Roberts, has accompanied Christian Scott and Etienne Charles among many others, and currently enjoys a wide variety of freelance work on both electric and upright bass.

Ganesh Om is a freelance trumpet player in Raleigh, NC who performs with the NC Symphony, NC Master Chorale, Chamber Orchestra of the Triangle, the Mallarmé Chamber Players, and at the Durham Performing Arts Center. He teaches trumpet lessons at Leechford Music in Cary, NC.

Stephanie Wilson is currently the Principal Librarian for the North Carolina Symphony. She is also a freelance oboist and enjoys her free time hiking, biking and cooking.

Bylaws Updates Summary

At our January 14, 2024 General Membership Meeting, the Local 500 membership voted on Bylaws updates. In accordance with our bylaws, the proposals were first presented at a General Membership Meeting on December 17, 2023 - at this meeting, the proposals were read in full and members could make amendments. This meeting had a very high member turnout - thank you to everyone who attended!

Here is a summary of the bylaws updates that passed:

Wage Scale Updates

- General Increases - Wage Scale increases by approximately 5% effective July 1, 2024 and approximately 2.5% effective July 1, 2025 (increases on a two-year timeline help organizations budget to include wage increases for employees)
- Adding DJ and EDM artist categories to the Wage Scale
- Adding a Masterclass Scale - the masterclass scale is intended for individuals who teach private lessons and want to make pension contributions for this work. This category requires Articles of Incorporation, e.g. a LLC, with an AFM Pension Participation Agreement.

Work Dues Updates - adding more categories to work dues rates allows us to accurately account for different types of work being done in our jurisdiction

Modernize Problematic Language - Local 500 board members combed through the bylaws to evaluate and remove language with implicit bias or language that could be harmful or subjective. The vast majority of this referred to gender or language that would disproportionately harm minorities and people of color.

Student Membership Category Update - Students can join Local 500 without paying Local or Federal Initiation Fees. Prior to this bylaws update, Student Members paid the same membership due as Regular Members. This proposal lowers the student rate to \$100 annually. This update is subject to approval by the AFM IEB (International Executive Board).

Smaller Items - Three smaller proposals included:

- Adding the Vice President as the Third Delegate to conferences and conventions
- Alphabetizing counties as listed in our jurisdiction
- Language specifically allowing members who work in but do not live in our jurisdiction

AFM Convention & Southern Conference

The AFM Southern Conference of Locals (SoCo) contains all of the Locals in the Southeastern US from Washington, D.C. through Texas. SoCo is one of nine Local Conferences in the AFM. As the Local 500 Secretary-Treasurer, I serve as First Delegate for conferences and conventions and attended the 2023 SoCo conference and 2023 AFM Convention. I also currently serve as Vice President of the Southern Conference.

Voting on bylaws changes, resolutions, and recommendations is one of the most important things that happens at the AFM Convention. This year, some of the resolutions and recommendations that passed include but are not limited to:

- Recommendation No. 5 - New Member Orientations - Locals are now required to hold quarterly new member orientation meetings (previously one per year), but after a lengthy discussion about mental health and officer capacity, especially in smaller Locals like our own, it was determined that Locals can satisfy this requirement by holding a virtual meeting with another Local (see more about this in the SoCo section).
- Recommendation No. 13 - Increase Contributions to Symphony-Opera Strike Fund - This recommendation, submitted by the International Executive Board (IEB) would increase Strike Fund payments by 50% (Individual musicians in Strike Fund member orchestras pay into the Strike Fund each year in order to qualify for benefits in the event of a strike). The ICSOM governing board, including chair Meredith Snow, made a thorough presentation at the Finance Committee meeting and ultimately convinced the committee to make an unfavorable recommendation to the convention. The recommendation was defeated - this is a huge win for musicians! In addition, Resolution No. 1, which expanded the Strike Fund benefits, was also voted on favorably.
- Resolution No. 11 - Student Member Dues Rate - this resolution eliminated language that limited student membership dues rates from going below the rate for regular members. Local 500 utilized the passing of the resolution by lowering student membership dues rates by \$10 in our recent round of bylaws changes (NB: this change is subject to approval from the IEB).
- Resolution No. 12 - Canadian Office Administrative Autonomy - this resolution sought to give the Vice President from Canada more ability to act without the direct supervision of the AFM International President, especially in emergencies and situations that affect solely Canadian members, Locals, or matters. My impression is that this was a particular issue when offices were closed in 2020 and 2021. Ultimately, this resolution was defeated, resulting in the entire Canadian Conference walking off of the convention floor.
- Resolution No. 16 - Mental Health Aid Training for AFM Officers and Staff - this resolution, submitted by the Canadian Conference and OCSM, asked for “psychological and mental health first aid training as an integral component of ongoing AFM officer and staff training programs.” In my opinion, passing this resolution is a no-brainer; burnout and mental health crises are very common among union officers. Ultimately, the resolution was referred to the IEB.

AFM Convention & Southern Conference (cont.)

- Resolution No. 18 - Small Local Assistant to the President - this resolution called on several articles and instances of existing language within the AFM bylaws to create an “Assistant to the President assigned to educating and empowering small locals with fewer than 350 members.” I endorsed this resolution and spoke on the floor in support of it, citing Resolution No. 16 regarding mental health aid. Ultimately, the resolution was referred to the IEB. I cannot emphasize the strain that small locals experience compared to larger locals in regards to resources and fulfilling the expectations of the national AFM and our own mission and how vital this assistant would be.
- Resolution No. 21 - DJs, Hip Hop and EDM Artists as AFM Members - this resolution sought to “publicly affirm and welcome DJs, Hip Hop, and EDM artist as members of the AFM” on the grounds of guarding against implicit bias and structural racism and because there is no mention of these terms in the AFM Bylaws. There was a significant amount of debate centered around the misunderstanding of these terms and musicians, but ultimately the resolution was adopted favorably.
- Resolution No. 23 - Balanced Budget Organizing Expenditure Exception - this was one of the most heavily debated resolutions at the convention. As it stands, the IEB is charged with adopting a balanced budget for the AFM, meaning if there is a year where the revenue outpaces the expenses, the difference must be put into savings and can never be used for any purpose. Resolution No. 23 cites the AFL-CIO’s call for all labor unions to spend 30% of their resources on organizing, the diminishing trend of AFM membership at the national level over the last 10 years, in addition to several other compelling factors, ultimately seeking to amend Article 3, Section 9(u) in the following manner: “... the IEB shall adopt a budget in which the projected operational expenses shall not exceed the projected annual income for that year, with the exception that any projected expenses related to Organizing and Education may be offset by drawing from the AFM’s unrestricted cash reserves.” I think it is important to note that one of the submitters of this resolution was also the only woman assigned to the 15-person Finance Committee, which was assigned with reviewing the resolution. Ultimately Resolution No. 23 was referred to the IEB, which the submitters felt was positive.

In addition to the business of the convention, exciting discussions and changes took place at during the Southern Conference. One of the most valuable components of the conference this year was small group brainstorming sessions focused on issues such as freelancing resources, building community partnerships, contracts, and utilizing MPTF. Our guest speaker was EMSD Director John Painting, who spoke about electronic media contracts. At the conclusion of the conference, Aaron Lack, President of Local 433 in Austin, Texas was elected SoCo President, Jeff Apana, Secretary-Treasurer of Local 655 in Miami, Florida was elected Secretary-Treasurer, and I was elected Vice President. Jeff has created a website for SoCo, www.afmsoco.org and we are working on organizing joint new member orientation meetings, among other joint resources. The next SoCo will be held in June 2024 in Austin, Texas.

Submitted by Jessica Kunttu, Secretary-Treasurer

Committee Updates

The Local 500 Committees that are currently active include: Diversity, Membership, and Social Media. Any member in good standing can serve in and even chair a committee! Want to join an existing committee or get involved with a different committee that's not currently active? Reach out to contact@afm500.org

Diversity Committee

The Diversity Committee has put together a list suggested readings and podcasts to help guide our anti-racism journey. As a labor union, it is vital that we work to create spaces in and out of the workplace that are inclusive and supportive of all people. This means working to understand our own biases and those that are built into the structure of our lives. I hope you will check out these resources if you haven't already:

Books

“White Rage” by Carol Anderson

“So You Want To Talk About Race” by Ijeoma Oluo

“Racial Justice at Work” by Mary Frances-Winters

Podcasts

Black History for White People

Diversity & Inclusion: Revolution or Reform

Social Media Committee

The Social Media Committee is very active! Check out our Instagram @afm.local500

Membership Committee

The Membership Committee would like to recognize two musicians who have recently passed. Tina Martin and Hugh Partridge were longtime members of the NC Symphony.

In Memoriam

Christine Ragonetti Martin - May 15, 1948 - November 24, 2023

Hugh Partridge - August 2, 1939 - December 14, 2023

The membership committee has also put together a survey for both members and non-members - please scan the QR code, fill out the survey, and ask your colleagues to do the same!



Small Claims Court Resources

Small Claims Court info and links:

Have you ever been stiffed on a gig and want to recover the money you are owed?
Have you ever rented out your equipment or instrument and found it damaged upon return, or not returned at all?

Small-claims court is to recover dollar amounts or property valued at less than \$5,000 to \$10,000, depending on the county.

You don't need to hire an attorney!

If you filed a union contract for the gig with the Local Secretary, we can help you!

First, reach out to one of our Board members in order to determine whether going to small claims court is the right step for you.

While the Local can't offer legal advice, if we have a copy of your contract on file, we CAN help you determine whether to go to small claims court. We may even be able to advance you money for initial court costs or filing fees.

In NC, small-claims matters must be filed in the county where at least one of the defendants resides.

Here are some helpful links for understanding more about Small Claims Proceedings:

<https://www.nccourts.gov/documents/forms/complaint-for-money-owed>

<https://www.nccourts.gov/documents/forms/complaint-to-recover-possession-of-personal-property>

Instructions for Small Claims Court in **Wake County**:

<https://wakelsc.org/wp-content/uploads/Small-Claims-Money-Owed.pdf>

Instructions for Small Claims Court in **Durham County**:

<https://www.nccourts.gov/assets/inline-files/Durham-Pro-Se-Money-Owed-Packet-Instructions.pdf?VersionId=SZNIPiFDDJiVIutKe9KTnhcVOT8BUNVj?SZNIPiFDDJiVIutKe9KTnhcVOT8BUNVj>

Legal Aid Guide to Small Claims Court:

<https://legalaidnc.org/resource/a-guide-to-small-claims-court/>

General NC Judicial FAQ about Small-Claims Court

<https://www.nccourts.gov/help-topics/lawsuits-and-small-claims/small-claims>

(All links will be posted under "Resources" on our website, www.afm500.org)

FAQs

Some of the most frequently asked questions - and the answers!

Q: I'm a member in good standing, but I can't find my name under "Members," "Find a Musician," or "Find a Teacher," why not??

A: All public-facing search features on our website are OPT-IN. When the website launched in 2021, all current members had several weeks to set up a profile and opt-in. If you missed that window, or have joined since and didn't join via the Local 500 website, no problem, you can create a profile by either:

- clicking the "Join" button in the upper right hand corner of the website and filling out the basic info. This will create a member profile request that the Secretary-Treasurer can approve on the admin side. Once approved, you can add a bio, headshot, contact info, and opt-in to any of the public-facing search features.
- Or, emailing contact@afm500.org, stating what you'd like your username to be, and the Secretary-Treasurer will manually set up your profile with a temporary password so you can log on and make any changes you want.

Q: What is Life Membership status and how do I change my status?

A: In accordance with our bylaws Article IV, Section 4: "Life Membership status, and entitlement to reduced dues, shall be granted to Federation members of at least thirty-five consecutive years who have also attained sixty five years of age." Note: Local 500 will try to identify anyone who may qualify for Life status during the renewal process, but it is technically the responsibility of the member to notify the office of a change in status.

Q: I just moved here, can you transfer my membership from another Local?

A: No - member records are specific to a given Local. If you wish to join another Local, you must either be "Active" or "Resigned in Good Standing" in all Locals with whom you currently have membership. If you know your dues are up-to-date, simply send an email to contact@afm500.org stating you wish to resign in good standing effective your last paid thru date. As long as you are not in arrears, you'll receive a confirmation that you are now "Resigned in Good Standing," and be able to join any other AFM Local.

AFM Local 500
PO Box 1549, Raleigh NC 27602
919-649-4998 (email preferred)
contact@afm500.org