

FORMER BAND DIRECTOR ARRESTED

Former CHS Band Director Kevin J. Muehlenthaler Accused of Sexual Exploitation While Teaching at North Polk

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Kevin Muehlenthaler, former CHS band director, turned himself into the Story County Jail on the morning of February 8th after a warrant was issued for his arrest on four counts of sexual exploitation by a school employee,, which is a class D felony and can carry a sentence of up to five years in prison, stemming from accusations that he had an inappropriate relationship with a 16-year old student helper from 2013-2014.

According to court documents obtained by the Ames Tribune, on October 7, 2016, a female victim told police that she had an ongoing relationship with Muehlenthaler during this 2013-14 time period while she was a student.

During this time, Muehlenthaler was employed as a fifth grade band director in the North Polk school district. These charges were not pressed until recently and all suspects are innocent until

proven guilty. Muehlenthaler was employed as the CHS high school band director for the beginning of the 2016-17 school year, following the departure of popular band director Leah Schmidt, who left Chariton to take a position in Louisiana.



ACCUSED (Left) A photo of former CHS band director Kevin Muehlenthaler as it appeared on his classroom website on August 30th. (Right) A booking photo of Muehlenthaler released to the media by the Story County Jail after his arrest on February 8th.

As previously reported by the *Ink*, Muehlenthaler was in the classroom teaching from August 22nd to August 30th, after which he did not return to the classroom.

During a Band Booster

meeting on September 13th, Chariton Community Schools Superintendent Paula Wright and CHS Principal Tracy Hall updated band parents and students on the situation, but could not provide many specific details, due to per-



sonel issues. In September, Muehlenthaler resigned from his position,

According to the Chariton Community School District Hiring Procedures Manual, provided to the Ink

by Superintendent Wright, all potential hires must go through pre-interview references and background checks during the hiring process for applicants in the Chariton Community School District.

Wright and Hall both confirmed that the procedures in the manual were followed, and that none of the accusations against Muehlenthaler popped up on his background checks and were never mentioned before or during the hiring process. There are no current accusations of misconduct by Muehlenthaler while he was employed at CHS.

When asked for an official statement on the charges against Muehlenthaler, Wright declined to the comment.

During his absence, the band struggled to find its footing and, many students

were left confused. Retired CMS band director Oscar Ortiz was hired to sit in for Muehlenthaler and help improve the band. CHS has since hired a new, full-time band teacher, Daniel Scheetz.

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