

# AROUND THE AREA

## THE MUSIC MATCHMAKER

### Fratzke helps set PLAC's annual concert schedule

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When it comes to what works and what doesn't, Performing Arts Director Rachelle Fratzke knows the secret sauce to fill the 280 seats in Pearson Lake Art Center's Lauridsen Theatre each year. Is it classic rock? Yes. Country? Yep. American standards? That too. "Anything between the '50s and '80s seem to work out," Fratzke said. "They have to have a recognizable name or it won't sell." Fratzke gets her report card at about this time each year — PLAC's members-only presale window is now open and winter purchases are an early sign of summer success.

"It is important to get your tickets early," she said. "Last year we sold out almost all of the performances."

Fratzke stays in contact two groups as the scheduling puzzle comes together. She exchanges emails with artists or agents and books a flight or two.

"I attend presenters meetings a couple times a year to network with my peers," she said. "I also attend a conference each year where I can see many artists live."

Patrons are the second factor. Fratzke's always trying to find the right fit for the Okoboji audience, adding "our sponsors also have a say in what I bring in." She balances the "seen them, heard that" crowd with audiences who hope to see their favorites return.

"If they were extremely popular I may bring the back the next year," she said. "Sometimes I add



**Hotel California, the Texas Tenors (above) and Marilyn Maye are booked for two nights each at the Pearson Lakes Art Center in the summer of 2026. Performing Arts Director Rachelle Fratzke plans an eclectic mix of debuts and fan favorites each year. (Photo submitted)**

a second show so more people get an opportunity to see them."

For 2026, the two-night honors go to the Eagles tribute band Hotel California, The Texas Tenors, who are Emmy-winning "America's Got Talent" alums and Johnny Carson's Tonight Show "super signer" Marilyn Maye.

Commotion, a Creedence Clearwater Revival tribute is back for a single night.

"A couple of the new shows I am looking forward to are Linda Ronstadt Experience (June 30), ELO — Evil Woman (July 21) and The Players (Aug. 11)," Fratzke said.

The Players includes former members of the band Chicago.

On Mondays from Memorial Day to Labor Day the Pearson Lakes Art Center hosts the

#### PLAC 2026 PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE

Ticket prices are \$50 or \$40 with a PLAC membership unless noted

- **June 9-10** — Hotel California (Eagles Tribute)
- **June 16-17** — Texas Tenors (Country/Classical)
- **June 23** — The Papa's and Mama's (Mamas and Papas Tribute)
- **June 30** — Linda Ronstadt Experience (Linda Ronstadt Tribute)
- **July 7** — Commotion (Creedence Clearwater Revival Tribute)
- **July 14** — A Brothers Revival (Rock 'n' Roll)
- **July 21** — The Electric Light Orchestra Experience feat. Evil Woman
- **July 28** — Heart by Heart (Steve Fossen, Michael Derosier of Heart)
- **Aug. 4** — ABBA-Mania (an ABBA Tribute)
- **Aug. 11** — The Players (Former Members of Chicago)
- **Aug. 18-19** — Marilyn Maye (Tickets are \$75 or \$65 for members)
- **Sept. 24** — Manhattan Short Film Festival: Tickets are \$15

Dick Bauman Big Band. The Manhattan Short Film Festival brings people to PLAC during the shoulder season. Tickets for those events are priced to give visitors additional, affordable entertain-

ment options.

"Our overall mission is to create experiences for all," Fratzke said. "Bringing world class music to the center is just a part of all we provide."

## LEVY INCREASE

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current fiscal year, FY26, to save money for disaster recovery.

For FY27, which begins on July 1, 2026, Robinson and Finance Director Barb Smith implemented a system that primarily uses each department's reserve funds to pay for their capital improvement projects. A city department's reserve fund is comprised of money that it was authorized to spend in a given year but didn't. So, instead of taking on debt and using the city's debt service property tax levy to repay it, the city will, essentially, use cash on hand to pay for new equipment and major building repairs.

"Kevin and I were very careful

not to increase the levy by very much, because we understand, you know, citizens are still trying to catch up from the flood," Smith said.

While walking the Finance Committee through each department's proposed capital improvement budget, Robinson said, most departments were able to cover their essential needs with their reserve budgets. The departments whose needs exceeded their available reserves, such as the fire department, which needs window repairs and a new air tank refilling station, were able to use Hotel/Motel tax or Local Option Sales Tax revenue, thanks to another city

budgeting change — capping sales tax revenue allocations to nongovernment groups.

Applying Spencer's sales tax dollars to city projects and other needs will likely prove critical in the coming years. Robinson said the city is expected to see around \$7 million worth of residential property removed from its tax rolls as part of Federal Emergency Management Agency hazard mitigation buyout programs. Some of the loss could be replaced by new housing built with help from Community Development Block Grant-Disaster Recovery programs, but that process can

take up to six years to bear fruit.

Finance Committee members, for their part, praised staff and department heads for presenting what they described as a manageable budget and CIP list, and agreed to present the budget package to the City Council on Feb. 23 during a Committee of the Whole council meeting.

"It's commendable. The fact that you're talking facts and not emotions in this is good, the data doesn't lie ... and also thanks to the department heads for their efforts," said At-Large Councilor Loren Reit, who chairs the Finance Committee.

## HOUSE FILE 2135

continued from 1A

their story during their trial. But in most cases, Johnson said, there really isn't a compelling need or constitutionally protected right to depose a victim before trial, which is why 48 states have strict limits on deposing child victims. In fact, Florida passed a law in early 2025 that largely prohibits discovery depositions of child victims in criminal cases.

Jones said she has been encouraged by the amount of support HF2135 has received at the Capitol so far. On Feb. 4, Johnson and several victims and their families, about 20 people in all, traveled to Des Moines to testify before the House Judiciary Committee subcommittee tasked with holding the bill's first hearing.

The subcommittee consisting of Reps. Samantha Fett, R-Carlisle, Rick Olson, D-Des Moines, and Charley Thomson, R-Charles City, voted to send HF2135 to recommend that the full Judiciary Committee pass the bill. And, Jones said, the subcommittee's members have "really taken a passion for this project" and are now leading work to revise the bill's language.

After HF2135's subcommittee

hearing, Jones said the bill's supporters then spent the day meeting with lawmakers and even securing an impromptu meeting with the lieutenant governor, Chris Cournoyer.

"This bill has caught some attention," Jones said. "I think we caught some fire there."

Still, Jones was measured in her confidence about HF2135's chances of becoming law in 2026. She said only about 7% of the bills filed in a given year become law.

"We have to be realistic. I know there are some concerns about this, but we have a really good subcommittee of people working on this bill ... and they have really taken a passion for this project. And so they are working diligently on this language and working on moving it forward," Jones said. "Good bills take a lot of time."

With the session's first funnel week set for Feb. 16-20, HF2135's second big hurdle is fast approaching. The bill must pass through the full House Judiciary Committee by the end of the day, Feb. 20, or it will be considered dead for the year.

## FATAL BUS ACCIDENT

continued from 1A

"We are deeply grateful to the first responders, medical personnel and the law enforcement who responded quickly and professionally," Stokes said. "We are also appreciative of the overwhelming outpouring of support we have received from across Iowa and beyond."

Student Services VP and athletic director Troy Larson said any decisions about the baseball season are "probably a couple of weeks" away.

"Our baseball team is more than a roster, they're a family," he said. "Carter was a great teammate, a friend and a valued member of our athletic community."

Larson said Johnson "really impacted our campus, both with-

in our halls and the classrooms as well as on the playing field," during his time at Iowa Lakes.

"The athletic world is a small world, and we've had so many calls and messages and prayers and support — from near and far, from former student athletes to coaches across the country and athletic directors around the country," Larson said. "Our local community has reached out, and we appreciate that more than you could ever imagine."

The outpouring of compassion has been very powerful. Right now, we're focusing on wrapping our arms around all of our students, but specifically our student athletes and our baseball student athletes."

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