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MAQUOKETA SENTINEL-PRESS

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Art tour receptions this weekend



MSP photo by Kelly Gerlach

The sculptures of Terry Rathje are only part of the exhibits and events taking place at the Maquoketa Art Experience this weekend.

The Maquoketa Art Experience is offering a plethora of exhibits, receptions and artistic opportunities this weekend in time for the second annual Art & Culture Tour along the Grant Wood Scenic Byway.

The tour takes place Saturday and Sunday, May 15 and 16.

Saturday kicks off a two-month show by professor and sculptor Terry Rathje. His show opens this weekend, with a reception to be held at a later date.

Many of Rathje's life-size sculptures will be on display. But don't just look – be sure to take advantage of their interactive nature as well.

The Maquoketa Art Experience will also host a closing reception for master etcher Arthur Geisert. A documentary showing Geisert's unique etching studio will play all day. Geisert will be present for a meet and greet from 3 to 5 p.m.

Other work by local artists Thomas Metcalf, Charles Morris, and Rose Frantzen will be shown as well. Wine and refreshments will be served.

Dubuque artist Scott Lammer's pottery will also be on display.

Take advantage of free drawing sessions Sunday, May 16, from 1 to 4 p.m. The public is free to come in and draw during that time.

A closing reception will be held from 6 to 7 p.m. for parents and family of the children's art class that ends Sunday. Some of the youth's drawings will be displayed and refreshments will be served.

The Maquoketa Art Experience Studio and Gallery is located at 124 S. Main St., Maquoketa. For more information about any of the upcoming events, call (563) 652-9925.

West end stoplights replaced with signs

By DOUGLAS MELVOLD

The stoplights at the U.S. 61-West Platt Street interchange in Maquoketa will be taken out of service and replaced with stop signs at the end of the two exit ramps off 61.

The City Council approved the plan at a recent meeting after the city experimented with the idea by placing the lights in a flashing mode temporarily.

With the council's approval, the city will work with the Iowa Department of Transportation to take the lights out of service and install the stop signs requiring traffic exiting 61 to stop at Platt Street.

Platt Street traffic would flow unimpeded by a stoplight or stop sign under the new arrangement.

When the change is made, City Manager Brian Wagner said bags initially would be placed over the stoplights and stop signs would be put up for a period of 30 to 60 days.

If the arrangement works, the lights then could be removed. Wagner said the stoplights are considered to be city property. The city could keep them in case they're needed again.

The process is similar to that used when the stoplights at the intersection of East Platt and Olive streets were replaced with stop signs for traffic on Olive several years ago, Wagner noted.

Police Chief Brad Koranda said Maquoketa Municipal Electric Utility crews will remove the stoplights.

He said the DOT will absorb the cost of the signage at the ramps.

In addition to the stop signs, for added safety he said the DOT will post signage cautioning motorists exiting 61 that the cross traffic on Platt doesn't stop.

The council action follows a three-week ex-

periment by Koranda last month in which the two sets of traffic signals at the interchange were converted to a flashing mode.

The signals flashed yellow for traffic on Platt, allowing those motorists to continue without stopping, and flashing red requiring vehicles exiting 61 to stop at Platt.

Koranda said he switched the lights starting April 9 to test the traffic flow and to draw public comment. He said he favored replacing the stoplights with stop signs at the exit ramps for smoother traffic flow.

He said public reaction also was strongly in favor of removing the stoplights.

"Platt Street already has enough stoplights," the chief said.

The lights were switched back to their conventional mode on April 29 at the DOT's request.

No date was set immediately when the switchover will be made.

On another traffic control issue, the council directed that the two lanes for eastbound traffic on West Summit Street at the intersection with South Main Street be returned to one lane.

Koranda recommended that the two westbound lanes be returned to a single lane. He said the current arrangement is confusing to motorists.

Koranda called the arrangement in which left-turning vehicles share the same lane with those proceeding straight ahead "abnormal." Vehicles turning right to head south on Main have their own lane.

He said the arrangement causes westbound motorists who are waiting at the intersection to try to inch out ahead of the right-turning vehicle next to them to get a better view.

"That's when accidents happen," he said.

He said there were two accidents at the inter-

section in 2005, two in 2007, one in 2008, three accidents in 2009 and one so far this year.

Russ Long of Maquoketa, a Jackson County sheriff's deputy whose son was involved in an accident at the intersection, also appeared at a recent meeting of the council's Public Safety Committee to ask that the city consider safety measures at the intersection.

He also suggested that the approach with the additional lane be converted back to a single lane.

The council has discussed issues that have arisen from increased traffic at the intersection, including traffic flow and the difficulty of large vehicles such as semi tractor-trailer rigs and school buses turning from Main Street onto East or West Summit.

City officials have noted that the problem involves a lack of city-owned right-of-way to expand the intersection.

Converting the intersection to stoplights or a four-way stop also has been discussed with questions raised whether those measures may slow traffic flow.

Stoplights and stop signs also increase the incidence of rear-end collisions, Koranda noted.

Installing poles for stoplights also could pose a hazard for large vehicles making tight turns, he said.

He said he did not have a solution to the problem.

"I agree it is a problem," Koranda told the council's Public Safety Committee last month. "We've talked about this intersection many times.

"I'd love to have a lighted intersection there or a four-way stop, but how are you going to do

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