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EXTREME TEMPERATURES caused water mains and water meters to freeze during the recent cold spell. St. Francis city crewmen were busy repairing the street on Tuesday after they had dug out a main earlier in the week. With the rake is Earl Hankins.

Herald staff photo by Karen Krien

City crew repairs broken water mains

By Karen Krien

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It has been cold with little snow cover. Consequently, two water mains have broken in St. Francis and numerous other residential water meters have frozen.

J.R. Landenberger, city superintendent,

said the temperatures were at extreme low levels and when the temperatures started warming up, it drove the frost down, thus freezing up the pipes and mains.

The water mains at Third and River streets, and Denison and Second streets were both dug out last week. The superintendent

said that it was eerie as when they dug out the main on Denison and Second as it was dark and very cold and the steam from the pipes engulfed the scene.

He said that Roger and Chris McQuigg were also there to help the city crew with the work.

The city crew has also thawed out water meters for residents.

People are reminded to put insulation on top of their meters out by the street but, sometimes, even the insulation is not enough.

To be safe, he said, leave the water dripping inside. This keeps the water

moving and from freezing up at the meter.

Kathy Woodcox, St. Francis weather observer, reported a low of -10 last week. The National Weather Service is predicting warm temperatures through the weekend with highs in the mid 40s to mid 50s.

Intangibles tax changes explained

Many Cheyenne County taxpayers recently received a postcard from the state of Kansas, Department of Revenue regarding the Intangibles Tax. Terry Miller, county clerk, said the yellow postcard has caused a lot of confusion, especially to taxpayers who are not required to file it.

The intangibles tax is not a new tax. It is a local tax on gross earnings on savings accounts, stocks, bonds, accounts receivable and mortgages. Many taxpayers do not have such earnings and therefore are not required to pay an intangibles tax. Most likely the taxpayer's tax preparer has filed these for them in past years.

The intent of the postcard was to notify taxpayers of these two changes:

1) The Intangibles Tax Form 200 will no longer be provided in

your Kansas Income tax booklet from the state.

2) Those who are required to file an Intangibles Tax Form 200, must now file it with the County Clerk. (The deadline is April 15)

As in the past, Mr. Miller said, your Kansas Income Tax Return is still filed in Topeka either by mail or electronically. This has not changed.

The rationale for change is, in the past, the state did nothing with the intangibles forms, except sort them and mail them back to the appropriate counties to be locally processed. This year, due to state budget cuts, the state was unable to hire the additional staff needed to process the Intangibles forms.

With the change, taxpayers are required to send the completed Intangibles form directly to their

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COYOTE CALLING was interesting stuff to this man and boy. While their names are not known, they were some of the people present Friday at the Midwest Coyote Calling event held in St. Francis.

Herald staff photo by Casey McCormick

Program helps teens

By Karen Krien

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A program geared to helping students make better choices is coming to the St. Francis high school on Wednesday. There are two programs, one at 1 p.m. held in the high school gym which is basically for ninth through 12th grade students. The second will be held at 7 p.m. in the gymnasium which will have a more religious tone to it. The public is urged to attend one or both programs.

Todd Becker was an 18-year-old high school student who was killed in a car crash in which alcohol was a factor. Now Todd's brother, Keith Becker, is working to help other young people make better choices. Mr. Becker and other members of the Todd Becker Foundation will be giving the presentations.

The program is about the "road of life" and has gotten rave reviews from students who have seen the presentation.

The afternoon program is expected to be very high energy and will include performances of contemporary music which should appeal to the students.

The evening program is more faith-based because there is more to the story than just drinking. Some of the material covered through the program could be somewhat distressing for younger students and they should be accompanied by a parent.

We are excited to have Keith with his foundation present the program to our students and community, said Scott Carmichael, principal. He has made the presentation in both the Rawlins County and Decatur Community high schools and his message has been well received.

A full-capacity crowd is expected for the evening presentation as Mr. Becker is very highly recommended, Mr. Carmichael said.

The program is sponsored by the Ministerial Alliance and the St. Francis schools. There is no admission charge.

Help available for heating bills

By Karen Krien

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Some families in Cheyenne County will once again be able to get help heating their homes this winter. However, applications are due no later than Feb. 14.

Priority Oil & Gas LLC ("Priority") has announced the company will be helping those families in the county meet their winter heating costs.

When Robbie Gries, president of Priority, said she realized that, with the rising energy costs, there are people who are having trouble paying their heating bills, she decided to begin the Cheyenne County Energy Assistance Program (CCEAP) in the winter of 2005. Every year since then, Priority has continued to assist Cheyenne County residents with their heating bills.

"The program is a direct relationship between the oil and gas company and low income families who need help with their heating bills because of the increase in energy prices," Ms. Gries said.

The program is comparable to the Low-income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP).

Applications are available at various locations in St. Francis and Bird City. Cheyenne County residents may call the company at (303) 296-3435 or e-mail priorityog@aol.com. People may also contact Jessica or Kevin Andrews in Idalia, Colo., at (970) 354-7495 or e-mail LaRanaLLC@aol.com for applications.

It is important to note that applications are due in Priority's office no later than Feb. 14.

"Helping residents with their heating bills is a way the company can give back to the community," Ms. Gries said. "The assistance is not designed to pay the whole bill but assistance will be given on the varied bases of need. We try to weigh the need with the amount of dollars to be dispersed."

Priority Oil & Gas LLC owns natural gas wells only in Cheyenne County, however, they have

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School and state finances hot topic at board meeting

By Karen Krien

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Much of the Monday evening St. Francis Board of Education meeting was spent talking about school finances.

Rob Schiltz, superintendent, said at the December meeting, that if the state didn't cut any more, the school would be OK for one more year by increasing the local option budget. But, the state is still looking at cuts, he said.

He had sent a letter of concern to senator Ralph Ostmeyer. He heard back from Mr. Ostmeyer who said he didn't like being accused of not supporting schools. Mr. Schiltz pointed out that the last four bills which had called for money to support schools, Mr. Ostmeyer had voted in favor of schools on one and against schools on the other three.

"I asked him, when, in the last 15 years, have taxes been raised

for schools?" Mr. Schiltz said he had asked Mr. Ostmeyer.

In fact, Mr. Schiltz said, according to the Kansas Association of School Boards the state has not collected over \$9 billion in taxes due to tax cuts and exemptions over the last 15 years, and now it is endangering what we have in our schools.

Mr. Schiltz said that Mr. Ostmeyer's whole concept in helping schools is to stimulate businesses. But, he said, if we don't have schools, we don't have businesses.

Dr. Mary Beth Miller, board president, said she felt that many legislators didn't really know what was going on and it didn't surprise her that Mr. Ostmeyer did not know that the \$9 billion in taxes had not been collected.

It was also pointed out that the overall state figures really didn't represent small rural schools and show the financial problems.

Mr. Schiltz said that the schools can be cut deeper than we initially thought.

One of the things that Mr. Ostmeyer had said which disturbed Mr. Schiltz was the fact that the only two counties from which he had heard from residents were Cheyenne and Sheridan counties.

Dr. Miller said she will be visiting with both Ostmeyer and Faber.

In the meantime, Mr. Schiltz said both Tom Keller and Carla Lampe will be organizing a public meeting for March. At that time, legislators will be able to answer questions concerning school finance and what it is going to take to keep the doors open without sacrificing programs.