



COLBY FREE PRESS

Weather holds down voter turnout locally

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

Weather played a big role in Tuesday's primary election for school board positions in Colby and Brewster, which saw a mere 13 percent of registered voters casting their ballot, according to information from the Thomas County Clerk's office.

Six of the seven Colby School Board candidates vying for a position in the April general election were chosen. The top six were: Tracy Rogers, 446 votes; Gary Walker (incumbent), 363; Gerry Fulwider (incumbent), 352; John Cranston, 344; Dale Herschberger, 329; and Gary Seemann, 303. Roger Stockton came in seventh with 280 votes.

The only other contested race in the primary was for the Brewster School Board in position 5. Two of the three candidates will now advance to the April general election. Tony Horinek drew 51 votes, with Shane Benham close behind at 49 votes. The third candidate, who was defeated, was Kathy Long, who collected 18 votes.

The breakdown by precincts follows:

• Ward I — Rogers, 78; Herschberger, 52; Fulwider, 67; Seemann, 55; Walker, 65; Stockton, 54; and Cranston, 60. The total number of voters was 107 out of a possible 739 eligible or 14 percent turnout.

• Ward II — Rogers, 84; Herschberger, 62; Fulwider, 53; Seemann, 47;

Walker, 63; Stockton, 39; and Cranston, 69. The total number of voters was 104 out of a possible 702 eligible or 14 percent turnout.

• Ward III — Rogers, 98; Herschberger, 65; Fulwider, 76; Seemann, 65; Walker, 74; Stockton, 57; and Cranston, 58. The total number of voters was 121 out of a possible 1,074 eligible or 11 percent turnout.

• Ward IV — Rogers, 62; Herschberger, 43; Fulwider, 54; Seemann, 49; Walker, 61; Stockton, 48; and Cranston, 50. The total number of voters was 103 out of 983 eligible or 10 percent turnout.

In some cases, precincts were lumped together. For example, votes were combined for Lacey, Menlo,

Gem, North Randall, and Wendall. The results there were: Rogers, 9; Herschberger, 14; Fulwider, 9; Seemann, 8; Walker, 12; Stockton, 7; and Cranston, 10.

In Lacey, there was only one voter out of 21 who went to the polls. Menlo's two eligible voters didn't vote; Gem had 9 cast ballots out of 62 eligible; North Randall had 3 voters out of a possible 40 eligible; and Wendall had 5 voters in the primary out of a possible 22 eligible.

Summers Township had 23 percent of its eligible voters cast ballots or 24 of the 104 registered. The results there: Rogers, 7; Herschberger, 19; Fulwider, 2; Seemann, 12; Walker, 6; Stockton, 7; and Cranston, 9.

East Morgan Township had 183 eligible voters with 26 going to the polls for a 14 percent turnout. The results were again combined to include East Morgan, West Morgan and Rovohl seeing Rogers with 62 votes; Herschberger, 45; Fulwider, 54; Seemann, 28; Walker, 45; Stockton, 31; and Cranston, 52.

In West Morgan Township, there were 276 eligible voters with 37 voting or 13 percent and Rovohl Township has 100 eligible voters with 18 turning out.

Barrett, East Hale and Kingery were also combined giving Rogers 6 votes; Herschberger, 9; Fulwider, 4; Seemann, 8; Walker, 8; Stockton, 5; and Cranston, 7. Eligible voters in Barrett total

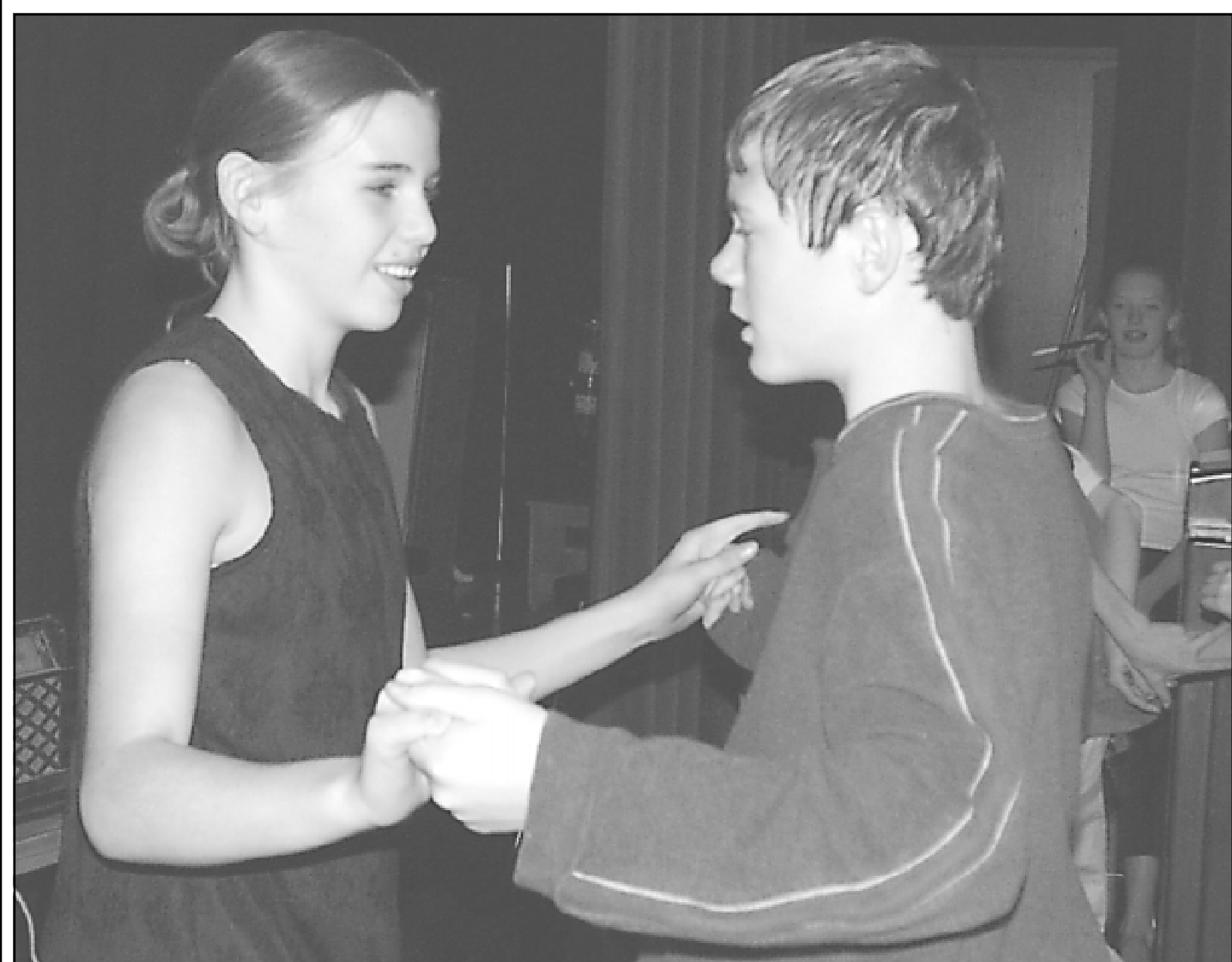
29 with one voter casting a ballot. In East Hale there are 54 eligible with 15 voting and in Kingery Township there are six eligible voters with none voting in the primary.

Advanced ballots were also tabulated giving Rogers, 40 votes; Herschberger, 20; Fulwider, 33; Seemann, 31; Walker, 29; Stockton, 26 and Cranston, 29. The total number of eligible voters in Colby's school district is 4,397 and of that number 574 voted.

In the Brewster race, there are 201 eligible voters and of those 72 cast ballots for nearly a 36 percent turnout.

The same low turnout was pretty much the pattern all across the state with the weather being the primary factor.

Students 'spice' up their lives



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Jennifer Schwindt and Jeff Weiss took part in the Colby schools' tribute to the 20th century, S.P.I.C.E., Songs, People, Inventions, Community/Culture and Events. Schwindt and Weiss were demonstrating

the popular dances of the 1930s in the eighth grade presentation today. In addition to eighthgraders performing, second and third graders teamed up with their older counterparts, presenting 1921-1930.

Better regulation for gas storage needed, expert says

TOPEKA (AP) — The state's regulations for underground natural gas storage need updating, an agency official told legislators at hearing to explore the cause of Hutchinson's natural gas explosions.

But Karl Mueldener, the Kansas Department of Health Environment's director of the bureau of water, told the Senate Utilities Committee on Tuesday that it usually takes six months to get new regulations in place.

"Certainly this incident has given that process a new priority," said Mueldener, whose bureau oversees the current regulations.

On Jan. 17, officials suspect, natural gas leaked from a storage facility seven miles northwest of Hutchinson, built up under the city and erupted above the surface. Explosions killed two people in a mobile home park and destroyed two downtown businesses.

Joe Ratigan, a geographical engineering consultant from Houston, testified on Tuesday the state wrote its regulations for storage in the late 1960s, before anyone began to store natural gas underground.

Ratigan also testified that Kansas does not require the same tests for its gas storage facilities as other states with similar systems, nor does Kansas require an emergency shutdown mechanism in case of leaks.

Senate Utilities Chairman Stan Clark, R-Oakley, said his committee plans to discuss proposing new regulations.

During Tuesday's hearing, legisla-

tors questioned whether Kansas Gas Service should have done more to promote safety. A Kansas Service affiliate company owns Yaggy Field. Officials suspect the gas leak originated from one of the field's 160 storage caverns.

"Is the only way to learn in hindsight?" asked Sen. Karin Brownlee, R-Olathe.

Gene Dubay, president of Kansas Gas Service, told the committee his company followed all the existing regulations and was behind any new efforts to make natural gas storage safer.

Senate President Dave Kerr, who requested the hearings, said people should be warned as soon as a leak is discovered.

"When a prisoner escapes from the correctional facility, we sound an alarm, and everyone in the city of Hutchinson is aware," said Kerr, R-Hutchinson. "There's no alarm that a product has gotten away that could pose a hazard."

In other action Tuesday: —The Senate Assessment and Taxation Committee reviewed proposals to increase tobacco and alcohol taxes to raise extra money for education.

—The Senate Ways and Means Committee approved a proposed \$83.3 million budget for the Juvenile Justice Authority and its youth centers.

—The Senate Federal and State Affairs Committee postponed a debate on a bill to legalize slot machines at dog and horse racing tracks. It had been set for today.

Bush sends Congress \$1.96 trillion 'explosive growth' budget plan

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Bush, vowing to tame the "explosive growth" in government, sent Congress a \$1.96 trillion budget today that would curtail spending in programs ranging from farm aid to transportation to make room for the centerpiece of his economic strategy — a \$1.6 trillion tax cut.

Bush, who embarked on a two-day road trip to sell his program, declared that his 207-page budget plan, called "A Blueprint for New Beginnings," would create a federal government "that is both active to promote opportunity and limited to preserve freedom."

The budget provides "reasonable spending increases to meet needs while slowing the recent explosive growth that could threaten future prosperity,"

the president said in the document.

Democrats complained that his \$1.6 trillion, 10-year tax cut was too generous to the wealthy, saying \$750 billion in tax relief weighted to lower income Americans would be more responsible. They also pledged during the upcoming congressional battle to protect various programs Bush is trying to trim back.

"President Bush's numbers simply don't add up. Ours do. His plan leaves no money for anything except tax cuts. Ours does," said House Minority Leader Dick Gephardt, D-Mo.

Sen. Robert Byrd, D-W.Va., called Bush's budget "sheer madness" that threatened to push the federal budget back into huge deficits.

Democrats contended GOP leaders

were trying to ram Bush's massive tax cut through Congress, scheduling a vote in the Ways and Means Committee on Thursday. "Something with such consequence should not be delivered in such haste," said Rep. John Spratt, D-S.C. and the top Democrat on the House Budget Committee.

Bush's first budget asks Congress to approve spending of \$1.96 trillion for the 2002 budget year that begins Oct. 1, and includes big boosts for favored programs such as education, drug enforcement and medical research. That would be a 5.5 percent increase from this year's projected outlays of \$1.86 trillion.

In discretionary spending alone, Bush is seeking a 4 percent increase over this year. That is slightly higher

than inflation but half the 8.5 percent gain approved by former President Clinton and the last Congress for the 2001 budget.

To provide for the increases in favored programs while restraining the overall figure, Bush proposed outright cuts in 10 agencies including the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Interior, Justice, Transportation and the Environmental Protection Agency.

Bush, citing the weakening economy, urged Congress to speed up the tax relief he is seeking by making the tax cuts retroactive to the first of this year, contending in his budget message that this would "give our economy a timely second wind."

Additional evidence of the faltering economy arrived Wednesday, as the

Commerce Department reported the economy grew at an annual rate of only 1.1 percent in the final three months of 2000, the weakest performance in more than five years.

In addition to \$1.6 trillion in tax relief, the Bush budget would dedicate \$2.6 trillion of a projected \$5.6 trillion surplus over the next decade to reducing the debt and for a future overhaul of Social Security.

The remaining \$1.4 trillion would be used to pay for revamping Medicare, including new prescription drug benefits, and creation of a "contingency" fund that could be used for new spending, added debt reduction or to help create new individual retirement accounts in Social Security.

Bush said in his nationally televised

address Tuesday night that he would create a Social Security commission this spring to study the problem and come up with recommended solutions in the fall.

Breaking from Clinton administration policies, Bush is not seeking to eliminate the entire \$3.2 trillion publicly held debt. His budget proposes to pay off \$2 trillion of that debt but says the other \$1.2 trillion is invested in long-term bonds that would be too expensive to buy back from bond holders. Democrats say the actual amount of difficult-to-retire debt is much lower.

Bush, in his speech and his budget book, highlighted programs where he will seek big increases, led by an 11.5 percent gain, to \$44.5 billion, for edu-

Briefly

Weather: Sun stays hidden

Tuesday's forecast for sunny skies today didn't happen (when this report was being prepared at 11:15 this morning), but the National Weather Service is sticking to their guns and now foresee some sun on Friday and Saturday. So, here we go: tonight, cloudy, 30 percent chance for light snow, lows 20-25 and south winds 10 mph, shifting to the west; Thursday, cloudy, highs around 40, northwest winds 10-15 mph; Thursday night, partly cloudy, lows 20-25; and Friday and Saturday, partly cloudy, lows 15-20 and highs 40-45. There's an outside shot for rain or snow on Sunday and Monday, at this time, but that's subject to change as we get closer to the first of next week. Tuesday's high in Colby was 15 and the overnight lows was 7. An additional 1.5 inches of snow was recorded over the past 24 hours, bringing the month's total to 12.2 inches and the precipitation

total to 0.85 inches. Total snow since last November is 39.2 inches. Total precipitation since last November is 3.44 inches. The records for Feb. 28: 80 in 1932 and -17 in 1960. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

School carnival Sunday

Colby Sacred Heart School's annual carnival, *Under the Sea*, will be from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., Sunday, March 4 at the school, 1150 W. 6th. Many new games plus perennial favorites are planned. The final drawing, organizers said, for the grand prize will be held at 3 p.m. Homemade bierocks, sloppy joes, pies and other goodies will be served in the church basement. Raffle tickets are available from students, parishioners, or at the school office. For information or

questions, call either the school at 462-2813 or Beth Brown, president of the Home and School Association at 462-6665.

Evening of music planned

An evening of musical entertainment will be held at 7:30 p.m., Thursday, March 8, at the Colby United Methodist Church fellowship hall, 950 S. Franklin. Featured entertainment includes the Burgess Family, Sweet Adeline Quartet, Tumbleweed Chorus, McLemore family, Stewart family, Jeff and Brock Wagoner, J.C. Crew and more. A free-will donation will be taken. Everyone is invited.

Public water meeting planned

The public is invited to help plan water resource management when the quarterly meeting of the Upper Republican Basin Advisory Committee meets at 10 a.m., Wednes-

day, March 7, at the Ramada Inn in Colby.

The committee will review the draft fiscal year 2003 Kansas Water Plan. The 200-page document deals with statewide water policy issues and Upper Republican River Basin needs.

The draft plan can be viewed on the Kansas Water Office web site - www.kwo.org. Copies are also available at the Thomas County Clerk's office, 300 N. Court Ave., Colby.

Pancake, sausage feed Saturday

The Senior Progress Center's annual pancake and sausage feed is scheduled from 7 a.m. to 2 p.m., Saturday, March 3, at the center, 165 Fike Park. All proceeds go towards helping with daily maintenance, utilities and replacement items at the center, sources said.

