



COLBY FREE PRESS

Polls open Tuesday from 7 to 7

Plans for viaduct discussed

By MAXINE NELSON

Colby Free Press

Removal of the old railroad viaduct on K-25 will cost the county approximately \$40,000, but it will receive \$240,000 worth of asphalt from the state, as well as other benefits, estimated road supervisor Chris Bieker at the Friday morning meeting of the Thomas County Commissioners.

Bieker, John Galli and Lester Haremza of Morgan Township discussed arrangements with the commissioners. Part of the detour is on a township road. Plans are tentative, and can still be changed by the state.

The state wants to put a 6-inch overlay on the existing road which will be used for the detour to allow for heavy truck traffic. Bieker said the state wants the county and township to prepare the detour, which will go east from K-25 on Veterans Memorial Drive to Country Club Drive, and then south to the railroad track. Bids will be let in February 2003 and the county needs to get started on its part of the project next summer.

Commissioner Glen Kersbrock said the corner at Veterans Memorial Drive and Country Club Drive will have to be rounded to allow for heavy trucks to pass. The field there belongs to Midwest Energy, but the county has a 60-foot right-of-way for the road. Some of the trees will have to be removed.

Galli said the township does not have a lot of money, but has some equipment and they could move dirt. He said several culverts will be needed to manage the drainage, and asked if the state would provide them.

Bieker said if the county did not take care of the detour, the state could detour traffic through Goodland and bypass Colby entirely.

The commissioners told Bieker to ask the state about the culverts; who will engineer the project; and who will make the specs, etc. The group questioned what to do in case there is a fire north of town, and an unusually long train is on the tracks, whether there had ever been an accident on the viaduct, and where all the dirt will be put which is removed.

This project will be carried out by the Kansas Department of Transportation, and plans have not yet been finalized. The commissioners told him to keep in touch and let them know when he gets more information.

Bringing characters to life



Kathy Baird, Title I teacher at Brewster Public Schools, was among many teachers at the school to kick off a reading project last Friday. The idea of dressing like characters in books was part of the event, which Baird said was well-received by the students. Baird took the role of Yanosh in Yanosh's Island. Another teacher, LeAnne Ensign played a tourist who took students on a trip through Amish country.

PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Perfect weather to greet county voters Tuesday

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

Registered voters in Thomas County will be deciding the fate of numerous candidates when they go to the polls Tuesday. The National Weather Service is calling for near-perfect weather with partly sunny skies and highs around 75.

Here are the voting locations: For those in East Hale and Barrett Townships, the voting location is the East Hale Township Hall in Levant; West Hale and Kingery residents will vote at the Brewster City Hall; Gem, Lacey and North Randall voters will cast ballots at the Gem Community Building; voters in Rexford, Smith, Menlo and Wendall will vote at Rexford City Hall.

The polling location for Colby residents in Ward I and Ward II will be at the Colby Community Building with Ward I voters on the north end and Ward II voters going to the south end.

The townships of East and West Morgan, along with voters in Wards III and IV, will be cast ballots at the National Guard Armory in Colby.

According to Tracey Perkins, county clerk/election officer, there is also a small number of Thomas County voters in S. Randall and Summers who will cast ballots in the mayor's race in Oakley. The polling location for those registered voters will be at the Mingo Co-Op.

The following is a list of all the candidates and positions they are seeking:

Colby City Council
• Ward IV — Mark Beringer (unopposed)

• Ward III — Eugene Wieland (unopposed)

• Ward II — Michael Shirley and John Bremenkamp (vote for one)

• Ward I — Herb Sunderman (unopposed)

Colby School Board Officers
• At-large unexpired term — Wilburn Holloway (unopposed)

• At-large regular term — John Cranston, Gerald Fulwider, Dale Herschberger, Tracy Rogers, Gary Seemann and Gary Walker (vote for three or fewer)

Colby College Trustees
• Curtis Stephens, Daryl Strecker, Cleona Flipse, Kenton Krehbiel and Thomas Hill (vote for three or fewer)

Rexford City for Mayor
• William Dible, Rexford (unopposed)

Rexford City Council
• John Gould, Michael Johnson, Travis Vaughn, Gidget Mosier, Robert Vaughn, Mark Basgall, David Williams, Mary Carroll and Vernon Vance (vote for five or fewer)

Brewster City Council
• Ed Hutton and Dwayne Randolph (three positions open with two candidates running unopposed)

Gem City for Mayor
• No one named

Gem City Council
• No one named

Menlo City for Mayor
• No one named

Menlo City Council
• No one named

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U.S. surveillance plane collides with Chinese fighter

BEIJING (AP) — The U.S. ambassador to China said Monday that American officials were being denied contact with the crew of a U.S. Navy surveillance plane, more than a day after a collision forced it to land in China. He called the delay "inexplicable and unacceptable."

Three American diplomats had arrived on Hainan island and were making their way to an air base where the EP-3 plane landed Sunday after colliding with a Chinese fighter jet over the South China Sea, said Ambassador

Joseph Prueher.

There was no indication if Chinese experts were trying to examine the EP-3's sophisticated monitoring equipment. American officials have insisted that the Chinese have no right to enter the aircraft.

Prueher said China had no legal basis to hold the 24 crew members. He complained that top Chinese officials were not taking part in official contacts.

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Goodland man aboard plane in mishap

GOODLAND (AP) — A Kansas couple said they were told their son, a Navy pilot, was among those on board a U.S. plane that made an emergency landing on an island in the South China Sea after a collision with a Chinese fighter jet during the weekend.

"He was one of the three pilots on

the plane," Goodland resident Judy Vignery said late Sunday night. "We don't know who was flying."

She and her husband, Ron, were watching CNN reports about the incident and waiting for further word about their son, Lt. j.g. Jeff Vignery.

They got a call about 11 p.m. on Saturday from their son's wife, Julie, who

reported he was on the plane. Jeff Vignery grew up in Goodland and was in the ROTC program at the University of Kansas.

"He loves to fly," his mother said. She said her son has been stationed in Okinawa since February, making flights in a Navy EP-3 surveillance plane.

Briefly

Weather: Thunderboomers

Thunderstorms are expected to rumble through the Colby area tonight, according to the National Weather Service. Cloudy to partly cloudy conditions, a 50 percent chance for thunderstorms, overnight lows around 40 and southeast winds 10-20 mph are the expectations. Tuesday, dry, partly sunny, highs near 75 and southeast winds 10-20 mph. Wednesday, partly cloudy, dry, lows 35-40 and highs in the 70s. Thursday, dry, lows 40-45 and highs 65-75. The weekend temperatures for Colby: highs, 63 on Friday, 56 on Saturday and 75 on Sunday; lows, 30 on Saturday, 25 on Sunday and 29 this morning, climbing to 40 by 8 a.m. There was 0.10 inches of precipitation on Friday, giving Colby 0.38 inches for the month, and only 2.9 inches of snow. The records for April 2: 86 in 1921 and -1 in 1936. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

Dishwasher cause of fire

An apparent dishwasher malfunction sent the Colby Fire Department to the home of Don and Marilyn Surmeier, 660 west 7th on Friday morning.

Firefighters initially found light smoke showing from the house, but entry crews encountered heavy smoke once inside, said Service Officer J.L. Ellis.

"Most of the fire damage was contained to the kitchen area," said Ellis, "but the smoke damage was pretty extensive."

Fire damage was extensive around the dishwasher and cabinets nearby, leading investigators to believe the dishwasher may have malfunctioned. Surmeier told fire department officials he returned home shortly before 10 a.m. and called the fire department.

"The time of day was fortunate," said Fire Chief Bob McLemore. "A lot of people run their dishwashers after they

go to bed. If that had happened at night in a home without smoke detectors, the result could have been a fatality."

Firefighters had the fire out within minutes and were on the scene for about two hours, cleaning up and investigating the cause. Two fire trucks and 15 firefighters responded to the blaze. No damage estimate has been given.

Another drug bust on I-70

A traffic stop Thursday on I-70 resulted in confiscation of about five pounds of "Canadian bud" marijuana by Thomas County Sheriff's Deputies. According to the sheriff's office, a deputy stopped a vehicle driven by Aaron Wiig, 26 and David Bangert, 25, both of Carboro, N.C. for a lane violation. The pair had conflicting stories and were acting "very nervous."

The Colby Police Department's K-9 unit was called in and hit on the car. The marijuana was found in the trunk. According to the sheriff's office, it carries a street value of \$5,000-\$8,000 per pound.

Preschool enrollment this week

PuddleDuck Preschool enrollment for children 3 to 5 years of age is planned for Wednesday and Thursday from 4 to 6 p.m. at the facility, 520 W. 5th St. For information or questions, call Amy Jennings at 462-2603 or 462-8388.

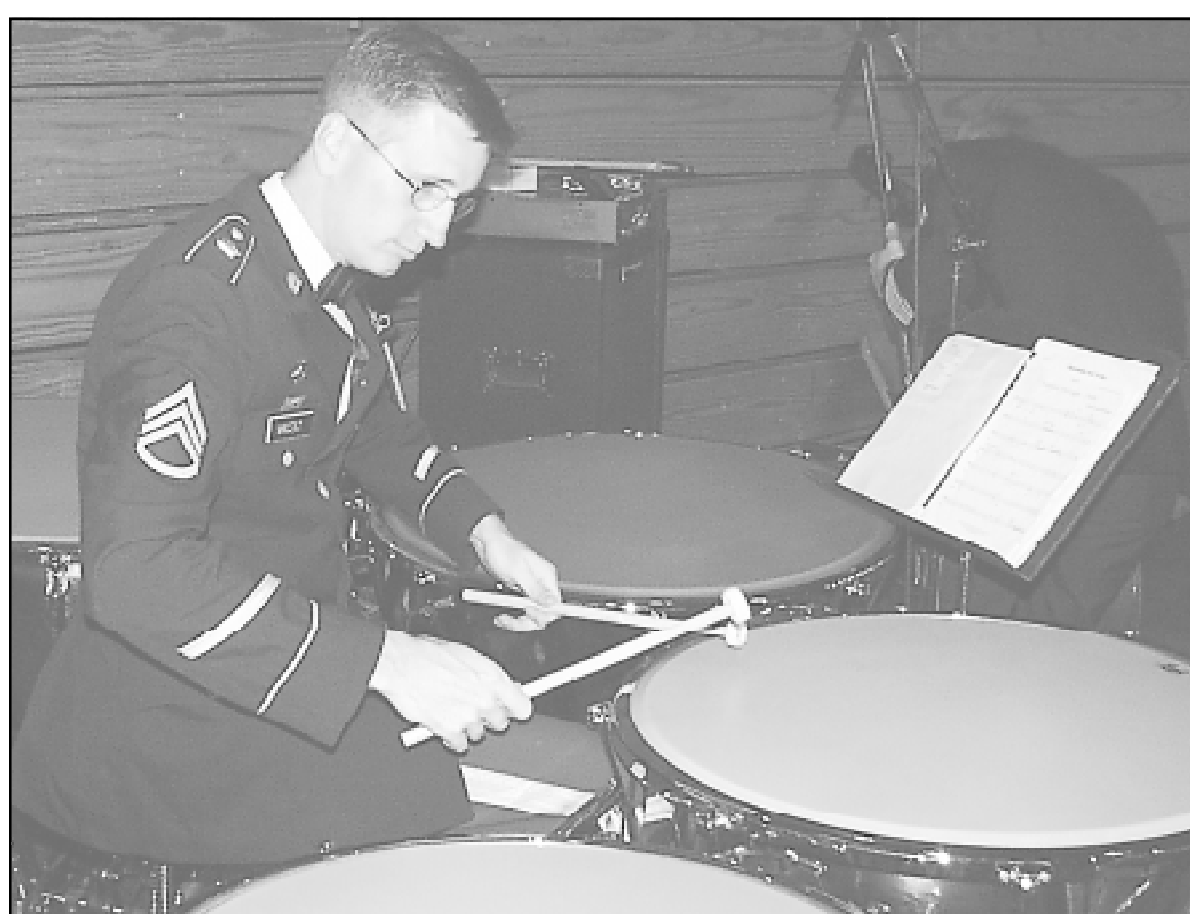
Free compost available

The Thomas County landfill has compost to give away free to whoever will come and get it. If there are any questions, call Larry Jumper, landfill director, at 462-8139.

Preschool screenings planned

A free screening for preschool children is scheduled from 9 to 11:30 a.m., Tuesday, April 3, at the Golden Plains Elementary School in Selden. To make an appointment, call the school at (785) 386-4560.

A gala event



JAY KELLEY/Colby Free Press

S/Sgt. Scott Vincent warmed up for the U.S. Army Field Band and Soldiers' Chorus concert at the Colby Community Building on Saturday. About 1,000 people attended the free performance sponsored by the Western Plains Arts Association and Colby Free Press.

