



# COLBY FREE PRESS

8 pages

## College pool roof decision is put on hold

By MAXINE NELSON

Colby Free Press

Dr. Mikel Ary, Colby Community College president, brought bid proposals for a roof over the college swimming pool to the Monday meeting of the college's board of trustees. The roof needs to be replaced, he said, and then the ceiling above the swimming pool painted. They hope to have everything done before school starts in August.

Roofmasters Co., Inc. of Colby bid the following: \$31,907 for a Durolast white, mechanically fastened system with a 15-year warranty; \$27,809 for a one-ply white modified single ply, fully adhered roof with a 10-year warranty; and \$31,907 for a Genflex Black EPDM rubber roof, fully adhered with a 10-year warranty. Murrays Roofing of Colby bid \$33,450 for a 1/2-inch ISO board over the existing roof, then duro-last membrane with a 15-year limited warranty.

Ary said the architect, Glen Strait, had made recommendations several years ago about what kind of roofs would be best for the college, replacing the tar and gravel roofs in place at that time. He recommended the Genflex rubber roof. The board postponed a decision, and will invite a roofer to meet with them at the next meeting.

In other business:

• The board again considered purchase of a bus. Ary said the "Cadillac of buses" are built in Salina, but have to be purchased from a

dealer in Wichita or Colorado Springs, Colo. He brought brochures on two buses, one for \$57,000 and one for \$87,000. The board asked him to try to have one of the buses brought out for a meeting in May before they make a decision.

• Ary said the walls in the Bedker Memorial Complex are being scuffed by students leaning against them with backpacks. He brought a swatch book of industrial strength Hercules wallpaper which could be applied to the walls

as far up as the top of the door frames. Paul Cavanaugh, the architect for the Bedker Building, had recommended the wallpaper. Ary said the cost would be \$5,600 for the material, but it would prolong the beautify and usefulness of the building.

He said there had been some flooding in the area around the Bedker Building during Friday night's storm. Water from the field south

See "COLLEGE," Page 4

'It won't be long'

## China to release Americans

BEIJING (AP) — China said today it would release the 24 detained crew members of a U.S. spy plane it has held for 11 days, but indicated it would hold the plane pending further talks. The end to the dramatic superpower stalemate came after President Bush sent China a letter saying the United States is "very sorry" for the plane's unauthorized landing and the death of a Chinese pilot.

Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan said the crew would be released "on humanitarian grounds" as soon as "appropriate travel procedures" were completed. In Washington, White House spokesman Ari Fleischer said the two countries were working out details.

"It won't be long," Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Sun Yuxi said. "The procedures are already under way." He added that "the Chinese side has all rights to conduct comprehensive investigation into the foreign reconnaissance plane."

The crew of the high-tech EP-3E U.S. Navy surveillance plane has been held on Hainan since April 1. The plane made an emergency landing there after an in-flight collision with a Chinese fighter jet. The Chinese pilot is missing and presumed dead.

China had demanded an apology. The letter, U.S. Ambassador Joseph Prueher delivered yesterday afternoon to the Chinese Foreign Ministry, twice

used the words "very sorry." The letter appeared to be a complex linguistic compromise worked out during days of arduous negotiations to satisfy China's demand for a formal apology while also accommodating Bush's refusal to offer one for what his government believed to be an accident.

Sun, the Foreign Ministry spokesman, quoted from the letter using the Chinese term for "deep regret" — sei chang bao qian. But a copy of the Chinese-language letter released by the U.S. Embassy didn't use that term, saying instead that Bush expressed "extraordinary sympathy" — sei chang wan xi — to the Chinese people and the family of the missing pilot.

"Please convey to the Chinese people and to the family of pilot Wang Wei that we are very sorry for their loss," said the letter, which was released by the White House. China has accused the U.S. pilot of illegally entering Chinese territory by making the emergency landing without obtaining permission in advance, and the letter goes on to say Washington is "very sorry the entering of China's airspace and the landing did not have verbal clearance."

The American letter expressed appreciation for "China's efforts to see to the well-being" of the crew.

The letter also sets up an April 18 meeting, whose agenda will include arrangements for release of the EP-3E

reconnaissance plane. U.S. officials are operating under the assumption that the Chinese have stripped the plane of sophisticated surveillance equipment.

"My government understands and expects that our air crew will be permitted to depart China as soon as possible," the letter delivered by Prueher said.

In his televised statement, Tang urged Washington to cooperate in settling the dispute and to do nothing that would damage relations between the two governments.

"China puts great importance on its relations with the United States," Tang said.

In the hours before the announcement, China had appeared to be readying its public — whose outrage has been whipped up by increasingly shrill anti-U.S. comments in state media — for ending the standoff. State television reported a statement by Secretary of State Colin Powell saying Washington was "sorry" that the spy plane entered Chinese airspace without permission to make an emergency landing after the collision. And a Chinese admiral was quoted as warning that the nation might have to accept the death of the missing pilot. Experts had said a key condition for winning the release of the crew would be an announcement on the fate of the pilot whose F-8 collided with their EP-3E surveillance plane.

## Take your pick



JAY KELLEY/Colby Free Press

They are all correct, despite the message they appear to be sending. The larger signs on the left of the picture show, by arrow, that you get to Goodland by turning right, while the smaller sign — a detour sign — on the right side of the picture shows, by arrow, that Goodland is straight ahead. The detour signs along Range Avenue are made necessary due to the reconstruction of K-27 north of Goodland to U.S. 36. That stretch of highway will be closed until late October or early November. Many residents in that area are bypassing the official state detour, which runs through Colby, and opting for country roads to reach their destinations.

## First National buys Commercial Federal Bank in Colby, Oberlin

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

Commercial Federal Banks in Colby and Oberlin were bought by the First National Bank of Goodland with the ownership changing the latter part of June, bank officials said this week.

Larry McCants, president of the Goodland-based bank, said they have been eyeing the two banks for some time, but none of the opportunities have worked out until now.

McCants said today that the Commercial Federal Bank in Colby will close and all operations will be moved

“**Colby is the premier community in northwest Kansas and we want to continue being a part of it . . .**”

Larry McCants

president of First National Bank, Goodland

to the Range and College First National Bank location. He also said that he thinks the two full-time employees and three part-time employees currently at

Commercial Federal will stay on.

However, the transaction still has to go through the 90-day regulatory process before the branches can change

hands, he said.

In addition, McCants said he has been talking with several parties on the building currently owned by Commercial Federal and ideas to keep the downtown structure occupied.

If all goes well, by the end of June the bank will offer new services, including full-scale leasing and an aggressive search for farm loans, McCants said, adding that the change will provide more services for the area.

In October, Commercial Federal Bank officials in Omaha announced they were looking for buyers for sev-

eral branches, including the Colby location.

The units didn't have a competitive market share and weren't growing at the pace they wanted.

Officials also said the demographics, or population mix, weren't good enough to keep the bank.

"We are pleased to be able to sell these branches to a company as committed to customers as Commercial Federal Bank," said William A. Fitzgerald, chairman of the board and chief executive officer of the Omaha firm.

There should be no disruptions in service during the changeover, McCants said.

"Colby is the premier community in northwest Kansas," McCants said, "and we want to continue being a part of it by meeting the needs of the agricultural and rural community."

First National is an employee-owned bank with the majority of stock held by its officers and staff.

It has served the people in northwest Kansas and eastern Colorado for more than 105 years, according to information provided by bank officials.

## Briefly

### Weather: Some of everything

The National Weather Service sees some snow, some rain, some clearing, some warming for the Colby area as the week marches on. Tonight, cold, lows 30-35, northwest winds 15-25 mph and a 20 percent chance for some snow. Thursday, partly sunny, a 20 percent chance for some rain, southeast winds 5-15 mph and highs around 55. Thursday night, cloudy, a 20 percent chance for some rain, lows 35-40. Friday, thunderstorms possible, highs in the 60s. Tuesday's high in Colby was 58 and the overnight low this morning was 38. There was 0.07 inches of precipitation during the past 24 hours up to 8 a.m. today, giving Colby 1.89 inches for the month to date.

The records for April 11: 89 in 1997 and 7 in 1989. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

### Large group music contest planned

Colby High School will host the Kansas State High School Activities' Association large group music contest, Thursday, at the school. According to officials, the Colby High School band will perform at 1:30 p.m. in the gymnasium. The girls choir will perform at 2:15 p.m. and the concert choir is scheduled at 2:45 p.m. School officials suggested that Colby music supporters interested in seeing the band and choir performances arrive 15 minutes ahead of schedule in case the day progresses faster than anticipated. For information, call 465-5300.

### Historical Society annual meeting

The Thomas County Historical Society will hold its annual meeting, Friday, April 20, beginning at 6:30 p.m. in the Colby Community College Student Union. Reservations are required and should be made by Friday, April 13, organizers said. To reserve a space, call 462-4590. The meal per person is \$8.50.

### Landfill closes for Easter

The Thomas County Landfill will be closed Sunday for the Easter Holiday, according to Larry Jumper, landfill supervisor.

### Progress Center closed Friday

The Senior Progress Center will be closed Friday, April 13, in observance of Good Friday and on Easter Sunday. According to officials at the center, there will be no meals or transportation available that day. For questions, call 462-2901.

### Fair's meeting date changed

The Thomas County Free Fair Board will meet at 8 p.m. Thursday, April 19, in the 4-H building to make plans for the coming fair. The meeting date has been changed from April 12. The meeting is open to the public.

### Carnival set, volunteers needed

Colby Elementary School's Parent-Teacher Organization is sponsoring a carnival, Sunday, April 22, from noon to 4 p.m. at the Colby Community Building. Jurassic Journey is the theme this year, said Julie Price, one of the organizers. In addition to bringing back the egg toss, many other games and prizes are planned. People are still needed to help. For information, call Price at 462-3506.

### 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.

### Head Start seeks applications

Thomas County Head Start is now accepting applications for the 2001-2002 school year. This is a free preschool program for 3- and 4-year olds of income eligible families. For information, call 462-6067.



JAY KELLEY/Colby Free Press

Susan McMahan is the newest dispatcher for the Colby Police Department. McMahan and other dispatchers talked recently about their jobs as part of National Telecommunicators Week.

## Dispatchers celebrate special week

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

Each year dispatchers at the Law Enforcement Center in Colby take part in activities to raise awareness of the role they play during National Telecommunicators Week, which started Monday, April 9 and will continue through Saturday, April 14.

During this week, many of the local telecommunicators submit articles explaining what their job entails. In addition, Colby Mayor Warren Hixson signed a proclamation honoring the vital contributions these people make to ensure the safety and well-being of citi-

zens in Thomas County.

The following information was provided by Chief Communications Officer Marlene Pfeifer, who gives a brief overview of the people involved in the day-to-day operation.

According to Pfeifer, not much has changed over the last couple of years when it comes to the people manning the radios and telephones.

"I still serve as chief communications officer and dispatch the 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. shift," she said. "I've been a

See "DISPATCHERS," Page 4

