



COLBY FREE PRESS

Albers to be honored at city council meeting

By JAY KELLEY

Colby Free Press

Mike Albers will be recognized as a recipient of an Environmental Hero Award from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration at the Colby City Council meeting at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday at City Hall.

Albers, the technology director for Colby, is also an active ham radio operator and director of Skywarn Operations in Thomas County.

He is being honored for his work in that area during the last 20 years.

Also on the agenda will be a report on aid sent to Hoisington after a tornado struck that city.

City Manager Carolyn Armstrong, along with building official Greg Swob and Albers will brief the council on Swob's work with the state assessment team sent to gauge the damage and Albers' assistance with communications.

Armstrong also said some city equipment, including dump trucks and bucket trucks have been sent to Hoisington.

Also on the agenda are:

- An update on annexing and rezoning the area south of the Comfort Inn.
- A presentation of the 2000 audit with approval of an audit contract with Adams, Brown, Beran and Ball.
- Approval of street closings for the Rod Run and Prairie Heritage Day.
- A discussion of expansion for the recycling center.
- An agreement with the Kansas Department of Transportation for work at the intersections of Fourth and Franklin and Fourth and Range.

The good, bad and the ugly: legislators try to fix budget

By JOHN HANNA

Associated Press Analyst

TOPEKA (AP) — You can put lipstick on a pig, but it's still a pig.

That old Kansas axiom, sometimes repeated at the Capitol, is worth remembering as legislators work on a plan for solving the state's budget problems.

Three senators and three House members have been negotiating over the last spending bill of the year, after their respective chambers approved rival proposals.

Both proposals relied heavily on gimmickry — accounting changes, confiscating money that's not normally used to pay general government expenses, putting expenses off and a few decisions legislators found questionable.

The final product is likely to get the state through its 2002 fiscal year, which begins July 1, without creating new and bigger problems for fiscal 2003. But it's not likely to be something for which legislators will want to be remembered.

"I don't know how ugly the House got; my guess is somewhat uglier than us," said Senate President Dave Kerr, R-Hutchinson. "We were ugly enough."

Senators and House members are trying to close a \$206 million gap in the budget for fiscal 2002.

Before they recessed on April 6, legislators approved a bill containing \$9.11 billion in spending, most of the 2002 budget. Gov. Bill Graves signed it last week.

The bill appropriates \$4.66 billion from the general fund, which is where the state deposits most of its tax revenues and the largest source of money for Kansas government programs. The increase in general fund spending would be \$230 million, or 5.2 percent.

But the state can't afford to spend that much, not with the amount of revenue it now expects to collect in fiscal 2002. That's why the budget gap exists.

Graves and legislators agree that the state should add staff to the Department of Revenue and step up the collection of delinquent taxes. Doing so raises between \$37 million and \$45 million for fiscal 2002.

They also agree that the state should use the \$160 million in extra federal nursing home funds it expects to collect through September 2002 to pay for services now financed with general fund revenues. The most likely figure is \$50 million for 2002.

That still leaves a gap of at least \$111 million to fill. That would be a tough job, but Graves and legislators have made it nearly impossible.

Graves has declared that he wants legislators to finance as much as possible of the 2002 spending that's al-

ready been approved. He wants no significant cuts. The governor has proposed \$117.6 million in tax increases, but legislators have been at best reluctant to embrace the idea. Senators' plan assumed only a \$10 million tax increase for insurance companies, and House members have said flatly they won't increase taxes — though they did pass a bill increasing traffic fines to raise money for the state.

And both chambers have rejected proposals to legalize slot machines at dog and horse racing tracks.

What's left, then, are the tricks. For example:

—Both plans rely on an accounting gimmick to get around a state law requiring a budget to leave an amount in the general fund equal to 7.5 percent of expenditures. They take aid to local governments and, instead of treating it as spending, subtract it from revenues. The change lowers spending on paper — and the amount of money that must be set aside.

—Both chambers have embraced the idea of delaying the last payment of the 2002 fiscal year to some hospitals and clinics that provide medical services to the poor.

—Both plans also assume the state will tell oil and natural gas producers that they must pay their severance taxes within 30 days.

—House members were pleased with themselves for preserving a \$4.4 million increase in aid to cities and counties, to help with road projects and keep local property taxes down. But their plan took more than \$10 million in liquor excise taxes that normally go to the same cities and counties.

—The Senate plan uses \$50,000 from the state's share of the settlement of national tobacco litigation for the Kansas Sports Hall of Fame in Abilene. The money is supposed to be used for programs that promote the health and education of children.

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — A proposal that has cleared the House may be the legislative equivalent of a speed trap.

The bill would increase fines for traffic violations, tripling the portion of each fine that the state collects. The state's fine for driving 45 in a 35 mph zone, for example, would increase to \$30 from \$10. In all, the measure would raise \$16 million a year for the state.

It's one of several bills lawmakers are discussing as the 2001 session nears its end. They are trying to close a \$206 million gap between expected revenues and spending already approved for the state's 2002 fiscal year,



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Christina Brackett, 7, of Colby, sang along with others at the Colby Community Building on Sunday night during the first of four evening meetings with Pastor Jerry Johnston

Featuring Jerry Johnston

Hundreds attend first night of crusade

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

The *Crosses of Columbine* were used in the first of four Christian family assemblies held at the Colby Community Building on Sunday night. More than 700 people attended the event highlighted by Jerry Johnston, who has addressed over four million students through his LIFE school assemblies.

According to Johnston, his presence is to support local churches in renewing hope for all people — and particularly for those troubled teenagers.

He spoke on Sunday about how the nation's young people are falling apart and how times have changed. It used to be that teenagers got in trouble for chewing gum or talking in class, he explained, but today, the problems are far more serious.

Quoting from Ecclesiastics 3:7, "...a time to be silent and a time to speak," Johnston said this is the time to speak — the truth. Referring to the Columbine tragedy, Johnston spoke of the many untruths surrounding the incident, adding that what parent wouldn't see the pipe bombs, diagrams, blueprints, and other materials laying in plain view in the garage of one of the two gunmen. He also spoke of other tragedies at other schools and places in recent years.

Among the people at Sunday's event, was one student who survived the Columbine tragedy. Mark Taylor, who was shot seven times, was there receiving a standing ovation.

In his discussion, Johnston talked about tragedy and why does God allow this to happen as in the case of Columbine?

"There is tragedy because sin is real and very much at work," he said. Just as there is volition of will to come here tonight, there is also the same volition of will not to come."

He added that every person is born with a sin problem and only God can rework and recreate people.

"We need to put Christ first in our family and wake up Christianity," Johnston said.

At his next gathering tonight, beginning at 7 p.m., Johnston said he will be speaking on the question of, "Why are our young people taken up with the paranormal?"

On Tuesday, he encourages parents, grandparents and future parents, to particularly consider attending. His topic will be on how to save your kids and grandkids from ruin. Wednesday night's message will be about why marriages fail and why they succeed. Thursday will be a "pizza blast," and he plans to speak about his own life and how he came to find Christ.

Everyone is invited to attend any and all of Johnston's addresses, which begin at 7 p.m. in the Community Building.

Johnston is being sponsored by the Greater Northwest Kansas Crusade and for information on upcoming events or questions, call Jon Jones, family event coordinator, 462-3730.

Up, up, and . . .



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Emily Noeth, 10, who is a fifth grade student at Colby Elementary School, found time on Saturday to fly a kite with her mother, Sharon; older sister, Catherine; and her grandmother, Rita Udziela from Littleton, Colo.

Senate chair says traffic fines bill in mix

which begins July 1.

"That's probably going to be mentioned in our mix," said Senate Ways and Means Chairman Steve Morris, R-Hugoton. Both chambers have approved appropriations bills that eliminate the hole in the budget. But some of provisions in each plan require permanent changes in state law — and therefore separate bills.

The House approved the bill increasing traffic fines on a 64-61 vote Friday, sending it to the Senate. On separate 63-62 votes, the House also passed bills to:

—Allow the Department of Transportation to issue \$277 million more in

bonds to help finance highway construction projects over the next eight years. Using bonds would free up \$20 million in tax dollars in fiscal 2002.

—Suspend payments to a fund that pays benefits to the families of state employees who are injured or disabled on the job, to save \$9.2 million in fiscal 2002. Legislators say the fund has more than enough money in it.

—Require oil and natural gas producers to pay their severance taxes within 30 days instead of the 60 days allowed under current law. The change would create a one-time, \$6 million bulge in revenues in fiscal 2002.

The Senate approved its own version

of the death and disability bill Friday on a 21-19 vote.

The House votes came after members had approved their plan for fixing the budget.

House leaders said it was easier to pass the budget plan because it contained many provisions and individual lawmakers were bound to like at least a few.

"The budget has a lot of honey to take with the bitter pills," said Rep. Rocky Nichols, of Topeka, the ranking Democrat on the House Appropriations Committee. "The trailer bills were nothing but nasty, bitter medicine."

Briefly

Weather: Hot, then cool

Looks like we are in for a roller-coaster ride with the weatherman at the controls this week. The Colby region can expect highs near 90 and lows in the 30s. In detail: Tonight, clear, low 45-50 with northwest winds 5-15 mph, shifting to the southwest; Tuesday, sunny, hot, high near 90 and southwest winds 10-20 mph; Tuesday night, partly cloudy, low 40-45; Wednesday, cooler, thunderstorms, high in the 60s; and Wednesday night and Thursday, thunderstorms, lows in the 30s to around 40 and highs in the 60s. Colby's weekend temperatures: highs, 85 on Friday, 83 on Saturday

and 85 on Sunday; lows, 51 on Saturday, 55 on Sunday and 46 this morning. There was no additional precipitation over the weekend, leaving the month's total at 3.01 inches. The soil temperature at the four-inch depth is averaging 68 degrees. The records for April 30: 89 in 1967 and 5 in 1907. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

Pool's boiler repaired

Colby Community College announced today that the

boiler has been repaired at the swimming pool, and the water temperature is now near 90 degrees. Prior to the repairs, the water temperature was around 80, considered quite cool by many swimmers. The pool remained in operation during the boiler's problems.

Bicycle rodeo planned Wednesday

Thomas County Health Department will host a bike rodeo from 3:30-5 p.m. Wednesday, May 2, at the Thomas County Office Complex.

The Colby Police Department and the Pirate's Den will

be assisting. It is for children currently in grades kindergarten through 6th grade. No training wheels are allowed, and children must have their own bike.

To register, call the Thomas county Health Department, 462-4596.

Vocal recital Tuesday night

A vocal recital featuring Amie Kendrick, private voice instructor, and Sarah Berens, Colby High School senior and Kendrick's student, is planned at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, at the Colby United Methodist Church. Everyone is welcome.

