



COLBY FREE PRESS

But it was a struggle Salary increases approved by the Colby School Board

By PATTY DECKER
Free Press Editor

After nearly two hours of debate and one failed motion after another, the Colby Board of Education agreed on a flat five percent increase for its classified employees and a three percent flexible increase for its four administrators at its regular meeting Monday night.

Within the same motion, the board also approved paying employee health insurance benefits on a 10-month basis rather than 9-month and paying five days sick leave with a 15-day accumulation rather than 10 days for classified staff.

The total cost in raises for the 91 classified employees across-the-board, which takes in custodial, transportation, secretarial, food service and paraprofessional occupations would amount to \$60,613 more effective July 1, 2001. Increases in salary for the administrative staff to include all three building principals and the activities director/assistant principal would be \$6,706 with distribution of the raises at Colby Superintendent Kirk Nielsen's discretion.

Costs associated with the benefit portion of the increase for classified employees was estimated at \$7,500 on health insurance and a potential liability impact of \$12,000, should all those eligible for the additional sick leave choose to take it.

Consequently, the total impact following the board's action for salary increases and benefits was estimated at \$86,819, according to estimated fig-

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Gary Walker
Colby School Board member

ures by Jo DeYoung, business manager.

The final motion passed by a vote of 4-1, with board members Cathy Gordon and Cindi Kriss absent. Stan Molstad, board president, and members Bill Miller, Wilburn Holloway and Gary Walker approved the increases and benefits with Gerry Fulwider casting the dissenting vote.

Although none of the board members disagreed with the benefit portion of the package for its classified employees, there was strong disagreement on pay increases.

Walker said he was concerned about the growing gap between administrative salaries as opposed to the salaries paid for classified workers.

It was noted that from 1974 until now the average custodians pay has increased 138 percent, but the superintendent's pay during that same period increased 218 percent.

"I don't think we pay these people enough," Walker said, "and the gap keeps getting wider."

Walker proposed a six percent increase or about \$72,000 for classified staff, but added that's probably still not enough. Other motions ranged from three percent for administrative and

classified to just about every other combination in between. Each of the motions failed in close calls nearly every time, with normally three of the five members approving a specific motion.

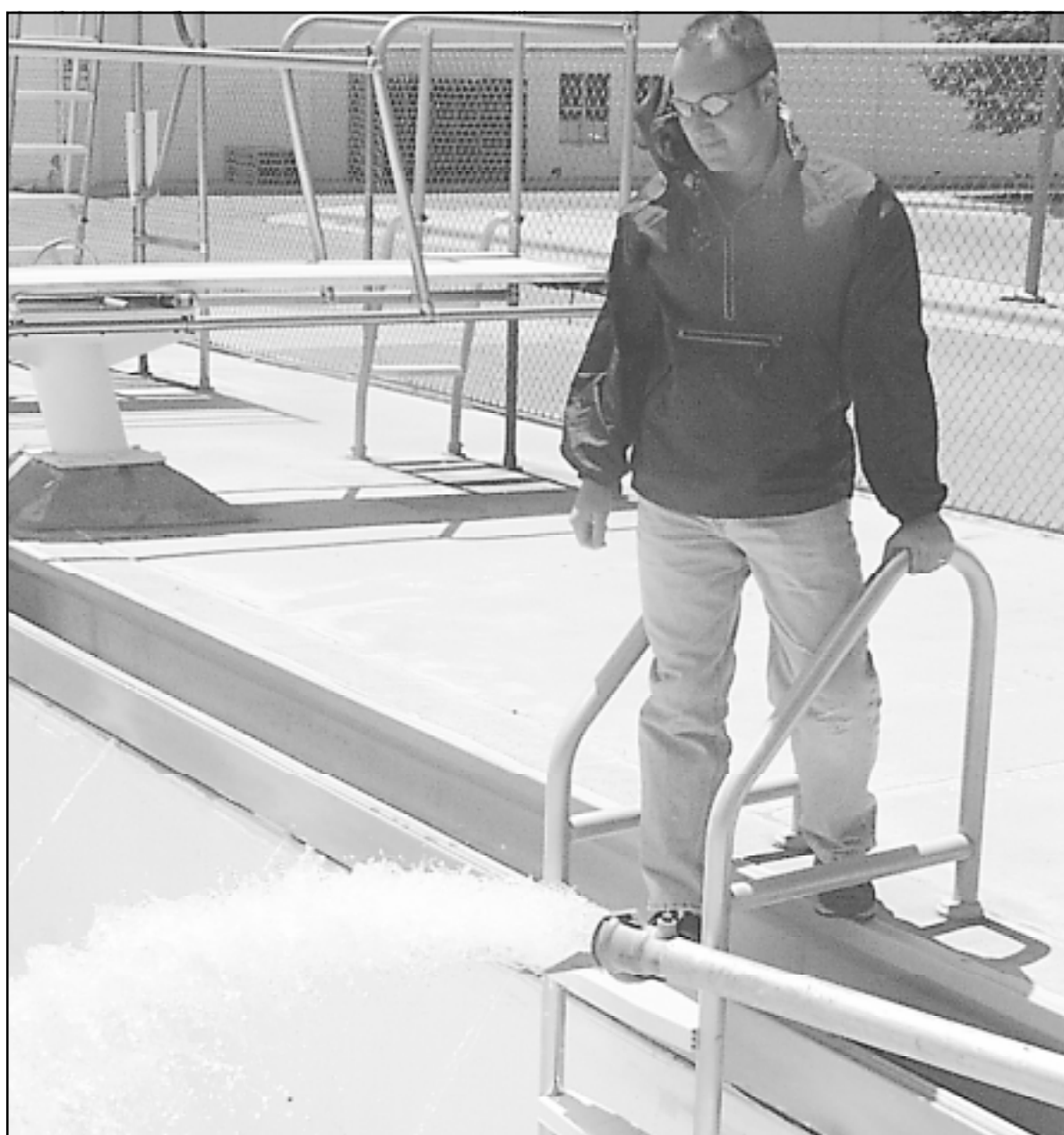
The original recommendation by Nielsen, which held the longest discussion of about one hour, called for a four percent salary increase for both classified and administrative personnel, allowing the superintendent discretion, along with the two other aforementioned benefits. It failed with only two board members, Miller and Fulwider approving and Molstad, Holloway and Walker against.

Other board members talked about budget concerns next year, teacher negotiations and the question of flexibility by the superintendent.

After seven motions failed, Miller suggested to table the discussion either until the next board meeting, or until the July changeover, or even until more board members were present. Those ideas were also squelched.

Prior to the board reaching a majority vote, however, there would be 12 other motions and of those two were either rescinded or withdrawn before a favorable agreement was reached.

Water rising on East Fifth



JAY KELLEY/Colby Free Press

Summer is coming and the city of Colby is getting ready. Recreation director C.W. Cheney looked on as city maintenance crews filled the municipal pool, 200 E. Fifth. Opening day is Saturday and hours will be 1-6 p.m. Saturday, 1-5 p.m. Sunday with a family night from 5-8 p.m. Monday through Wednesday will be 1-6 p.m. and Thursday will be 1-8 p.m.

Budget shortfall explained by Brewster superintendent

By JAY KELLEY
Colby Free Press

BREWSTER — The Brewster School District has a cash flow problem, but they will get through it by being frugal for the rest of the year, according to Superintendent James Garner.

Garner said, in a letter to board patrons, that unplanned cost increases had made a spending freeze necessary until the end of June.

Garner said teachers' salaries, health insurance, a trip to state for the basketball team and rising fuel costs all contributed to the shortfall.

"These expenses came at the end of the year,"

said Garner. The total in unplanned expenses was \$54,702.61.

According to Garner, an unbudgeted salary increase of five percent for teachers in March cost \$22,500. Classified personnel were also given a three percent raise, although only \$700 was budgeted.

An increase in paraprofessional salaries and having about twice the number of paras as usual also contributed. The district spent \$13,778.932 more on special education paras and \$5,611.34 more on special education substitutes than last year.

Higher health insurance costs also hurt the district budget.

Fuel costs were up \$6,000, but Garner said, "We were lucky." The old rate expired in November and the district was forced to accept a new, higher rate.

"The new energy efficient boiler helped," Garner said.

Also on the list of unplanned expenses were more than \$6,000 for the Dodge City Tournament of Champions and the state basketball tournament, Garner said.

Negotiations and legal fees cost the district

about \$6,400 more than planned.

In response, the school board decided to let school out four days early, saving about \$3,000. Garner said the decision did not affect required hours of education.

"We would have had 1,180 hours by May 24," he said. Garner defended the recent purchase of a \$25,000 metal building and a new gym floor with the tight money situation.

"The building was needed to protect our investment in our school vehicles," he said, citing increased insurance and repair costs from hail and weather damage.

Garner also said the money for the five-year lease-purchase came from the capital outlay fund instead of the general fund.

The gym floor also came from capital outlay money, and "was a wise, prudent decision that provided facility use for many years to come."

"Capital outlay money can only be spent on equipment, construction, repairs or remodeling," he said. The capital outlay fund generates about \$40,000 a year, but Garner said it can't be used for salaries or the other items creating the budget dilemma.

Senate pushes toward passage of \$1.35 trillion cut

WASHINGTON (AP) — Senate Republicans say a delay in final passage forced by Democrats won't thwart their drive to get an 11-year, \$1.35 trillion tax cut package to President Bush by the end of the week.

"The people that do not want a tax bill are trying to use every delaying tactic they can," said Senate Finance Committee Chairman Charles Grassley, R-Iowa. "It's not going to happen. We're going to persevere."

The Senate planned to resume votes on amendments Tuesday, with final passage possible during the day.

Talks then would begin with the House on the ultimate bill. Republican leaders had insisted on getting the Senate bill finished Monday night, but after five hours of roll-call votes on 16 amendments it became

clear Democrats were in no mood to cooperate.

"There is a lot of frustration out there," said Sen. John Breaux, D-La., a supporter of the bill.

Yet amendments to derail or substantially change the legislation, which is supported by a pivotal group of Democratic moderates, were unsuccessful.

The bill features the core of Bush's original tax cut plan, including across-the-board income tax cuts, but has elements designed to get a majority in a Senate divided between 50 Democrats and 50 Republicans. "We have to reach a compromise that is sustainable by 51 votes," said Sen. Max Baucus of Montana, a key co-sponsor and ranking Democrat on the Finance Committee. "I think we have a good bill. It has a lot of give and take."

Visit to Hoisington prompts updates on county's emergency preparedness plan

By MAXINE NELSON
Colby Free Press

Thomas County Commissioner Ron Evans told the other commissioners at their Monday meeting about the trip he made to see tornado damage at Hoisington.

He had met with Hoisington's emergency officials and said he wanted to see the Thomas County Emergency Preparedness plan updated to incorporate what had been learned at Hoisington.

Evans is making plans for a meeting of emergency personnel in Thomas County to hear a speaker from Hoisington, and update the county's plan.

Among suggestions are moving the Emergency Operations Center from the basement of the City Building to the Thomas County Office Complex which is larger, has more parking, and

is more accessible, and contacting the Humane Society to arrange for a central location for rescued pets.

Suggestions he has received include a larger gas tank, or auxiliary tanks, on the Mobile Command Center.

Evans said he had just learned the county commissioners are responsible for all emergency situations in the county, even if they are in the city.

"I am excited about disaster readiness," he said. "We can do a better job of being prepared."

In other business:

- The commissioners voted to accept the bid of 9 cents per minute from S&T Telephone for long distance calling for the county.

- Nex-Tech had made the same offer, and Southwestern Bell had declined to bid.

- The commissioners learned that Kelley Detention Services will not continue to operate the juvenile detention center at WaKeeney.

- They voted to pay a natural gas bill of \$1,924.55 from Midwest Energy Inc. for the recycling center. The county had agreed to pay the monthly gas bill at the center, but had not been billed. The amount covers a 13-month period.

- Evans questioned a bill for \$1,275 from the district coroner for an autopsy on Harvey Lee Hall, who shot himself when a highway patrol officer stopped him on I-70.

Hall was wanted on a warrant in North Carolina. Sheriff Tom Jones said the autopsy was done in order to protect the county from possible liability because the shooting occurred in Thomas County.

Evans wanted to know if an inquiry had been made if the decedent had insurance or relatives who would pay for the autopsy and cost of burial.

The matter is being referred to the county attorney to see if the citizens of Thomas County are liable for the bill.

- Jones said a tax sale is being planned for 9 a.m. on June 25, and Jim Smith is willing to be the auctioneer for the same fee they paid him last time.

The commissioners will meet at 1 p.m. next Monday, a change of meeting time which will continue for an estimated eight weeks because Commissioner Glen Kersenbrock is taking medical treatments in the mornings.

The commissioners meet the first three Mondays, and the last business day of the month in the commissioners room of the courthouse. All meetings are open to the public.

Briefly

Weather: Highs in the 70s

The weather for the next few days can be summed up in one word, nice! Tonight, partly cloudy, low around 40 and northwest winds 5-15 mph. Wednesday, partly sunny, high 70-75 and northwest winds increasing to 20-30 mph and gusty. Wednesday night, clear, low in the lower 40s. Thursday, dry, sunny, high in the lower 70s. Colby's high Monday was 61 and the overnight low this morning was 38, climbing to 51 by 8 a.m.

The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth is averaging 63 degrees. There was no precipitation within the past 24 hours, leaving the month's total at 2.38 inches. The records for May 22: 98 in 1939 and 29 in 1931. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

Council to discuss viaduct project

The Colby City Council will meet at 7:30 p.m., today, in council chambers of City Hall. Items on the agenda include a proposal for contract gas; approval of agreement between the city and Rural Fire District #3 for fire services; an authorization for contracting with the county on communications services; a discussion on the viaduct project and possible executive session regarding litigation. For information, call 462-4410.

School packet deadline nears

Colby Parent-Teacher Organization is taking orders for school supply packets until Tuesday, May 24, according to Pam Sager, spokesperson.

Orders and donations may be sent to Colby Grade School,

210 N. Grant, Colby, Kan., 67701.

Music Boosters to meet

The Colby Music Boosters will meet Wednesday, May 23, at 7:30 p.m. in the commons area of Colby High School. Anyone interested in supporting the band and vocal programs is welcome to attend, organizers said.

Band performs tonight

The Colby Middle School band concert is planned for today, at 7:30 p.m. in the Colby High School auditorium. Everyone is welcome to attend.

Landfill schedule noted

The Thomas County Landfill will be open from 9 a.m.-2

p.m. Saturday, May 26, and will be closed Sunday and Monday, May 27-28, for the Memorial Day weekend.

For information, call Larry Jumper, landfill supervisor, at 462-8139.

College board meeting today

The Colby Community College Board of Trustees will meet at 5 p.m. today in the board room of the Thomas Hall Administration Building.

The agenda includes a program review, consider bus bids, medical insurance, review the comments received at the student-trustee dinner, pay bills, and resignations.

They will also consider a swim club request to use the pool, discuss negotiations, and any other item any member may want to discuss. The meeting is open to the public.

