



COLBY FREE PRESS

'Improvement tax' decision on council's July 3 agenda

By JAY KELLEY
Colby Free Press

A special election to decide on a five-year, one percent sales tax will appear on the agenda of the Colby City Council on July 3 after the Economic Development Liaison Committee voted to recommend the tax at a Monday morning meeting.

The council, who would administer the tax funds, will decide whether to kill the measure or put it up for a mail-in vote on Oct. 9.

Committee member Joan Albers was the sole dissenting vote, saying, "I'm for economic development, but many of my friends are on fixed incomes."

Albers cited increases in local costs, including electric rates, taxes and the possibility of another increase in gas prices.

"I just can't support it," she said. Gerry Fulwider, Thomas County

economic development director, said he was glad to hear Albers' comments. "Too many times, we think everyone agrees and we are surprised at election time," he said.

Curt Stephens, another committee member, said the proposed use of the tax money would "help define our community."

Approximately 40 percent of the money would be used for matching funds, or "seed money" for recreational and cultural improvements.

The city council would have the final say, based on available funds and citizen input, but possible improvements mentioned were:

- Installation of a pool slide or other enhancements.
- Replacement or relocation of the scout hut.
- Biking and walking paths throughout the community.
- Completion of a cemetery fence

along Country Club Drive.

- Expansion and improvements to the soccer and ball fields.

- Rebates for tree planing on right-of-way and private property.

Committee member Donna Bennett said she thought the sales tax was the fairest way to raise the needed funds. "It's certainly better than a property tax," she said.

Colby Mayor Warren Hixson, also on the committee, said he thought it was a way for Colby to move forward.

"If we don't move forward, we will die," he told the other committee members.

Committee members also agreed that the plan would have to have community support.

"We're going to have to sell the plan to the people," said committee member Larry Barrett.

Fulwider agreed to ask the Chamber of Commerce to help promote.

Transfers okayed; salary hike approved by the school board

By PATTY DECKER
Free Press Editor

The Colby Board of Education approved year-end transfers of \$111,321 from the general fund at its Monday morning meeting.

According to Jo DeYoung, business manager, \$34,000 was transferred into the special education budget; \$4,000 into drivers training; \$30,000 for inservice education; and \$43,321 into food service, leaving the general fund with a "zero" balance.

In addition, the board approved high bids on the sale of three busses, one tractor and a step van.

Wagoner and Sons, Inc. was the high bidder on the 1981 Chevy 65-passenger bus with a bid of \$1,501 and the International Harvester tractor at \$1,251.

Wayne Clark, Burlington, Colo., paid \$3,757.29 on the 1971 MCI 47-passenger bus and Vic Goeken of Selden came in with the high bid of \$1,200 on the 1985 International 41-passenger bus. The step van was sold to Charles Hammit of Hugo, Colo., at \$686.

In other business:

- Bryan Bullington, high school principal and Jeff Quenzer, activities director/assistant principal, reviewed proposed changes to the student handbook on eligibility and high school grading. According to Bullington, the eligibility system is based on one week of grades. The problem, he said, is that

with the change to block scheduling, a student might only have two classes during a particular week for grading purposes, instead of five classes as was the case under the old system. Bullington said the change from one week to two weeks would ensure that the number of class periods would be comparable due to block scheduling. If a student becomes ineligible, they would not be eligible to participate for at least one week. Board members were asked to review the changes prior to the July meeting when all handbooks will be approved. Bullington also briefly discussed the grading scale and possible changes to align with outcome-based learning, which validates whether or not a student has learned the material. More discussion is planned on this issue at a later date. No major changes were made to the grade school and middle school handbooks for the 2001-02 school year.

- Colby Superintendent Kirk Nielsen was approved for a 3 percent salary increase effective July 1, 2001, by a vote of four in favor and one opposed with Wilburn Holloway and Cindi Kriss absent from the meeting. The dissenting vote came from board member Bill Miller. The 3 percent increase amounted to \$2,288, which raised Nielsen's salary to \$78,560 for the 2001-02 year. The salary, according to information provided, does not include an additional \$3,000 he receives in health insurance fringe benefits.

- Three out-of-district requests were approved for Nichole, Brett, Grant and Hailee Spreser and April Riedel to attend and receive transportation from the Golden Plains School District and Michael and Brian Downing to continue receiving transportation and attendance at Colby Public Schools from Atwood. Both Golden Plains and Atwood school districts approved the requests as well.

- The board voted to have its next board meeting at 7 p.m., Tuesday, July 17, at the administration building.

- A public hearing was held regarding the Internet Filtering Act, which is a new federal law requiring that public libraries, schools and other public institutions using filtering to monitor Internet access. According to Phil DeYoung, technology coordinator, the hearing was required in order to continue receiving federal funding and the board, by consensus, approved the filtering.

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- Gary Walker, outgoing board member, received a plaque for his four years of service. In presenting the award, Nielsen and Board President Stan Molstad thanked Walker for his service. Kriss, the other outgoing board member, was not at the meeting. Next month, John Cranston and Tracy Rogers will be installed as the newly-elected members.



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Jim Engle was one of 12 Trojan Amateur Radio Club members participating in last weekend's annual field day. According to Mike Albers, another member, the club will not know the full results of the exercise until later this year.

Club anticipates another strong finish

By PATTY DECKER
Free Press Editor

The Trojan Amateur Radio Club held its annual field day last weekend at the Colby Municipal Airport and was among hundreds of other clubs across North America participating.

Preliminary results, according to organizers, is that the local club will again finish in the top 40 percent of the two-transmitter category.

"We made 1,335 contacts during the 24-hour period," said Mike Albers, club member, "which is down from 1,600 contacts last year, but that's still a good score."

While the event is fun and provides an opportunity for fellowship, Albers said it also gives the club a chance to check their equipment and practice effective radio procedures. In the event of a disaster, amateur radio operators are often called to help by providing communication links to other parts of the state or country when normal communications fail.

According to information provided by the club, amateur radio operators do have a serious face too and the Federal Communications Commission acknowledges that as well.

"Countless lives have been saved where skilled hobbyists act as emergency communicators to render aid," commission officials said.

During the 24-hour event, Albers said a total of nine antennas were set up, along with an emergency generator to power the five computers used during the drill.

"From 1 p.m. on Saturday to 1 p.m. on Sunday," he said, "there were five full-time radio operators making contacts."

Albers said the club is always looking for new members and interested people should call him or other members for information.

In spite of temperatures soaring high into the 90s last weekend, Albers said that everyone had a great time and a lot of fun.

Harvest 38 percent done in state

HAYS (AP)—The wheat harvest is 38 percent complete in Kansas, with cutting beginning this past weekend in northwest Kansas.

The Kansas Agricultural Statistics Service said Monday that the harvest is running slightly ahead of the 32 percent normal for this time of year. It is still behind last year's early harvest when 75 percent of the wheat had been cut by this date.

In northwest Kansas, the harvest has been most active in Rush and Ness counties and the southern half of Ellis County, although some cutting has been reported in Sheridan-Thomas-Logan counties.

"We're pretty much in full swing," said Richard Osterhaus, coordinator for the LaCrosse branch of Midland Marketing.

Osterhaus' observations echoed those of other elevator operators with test weights coming in at or above the benchmark of 60 pounds per bushel. Early reports of yields have been approaching 40 bushels per acre.

Bob Gantz, manager of Bondurant Grain in Ness City, was already so rushed Monday that he could only spare a few moments to talk about the harvest.

"The cutting is terrible," he said. "It looks like the fields are ready, but a ways out it's green."

Weeds have been bad in northwest Kansas, something the Agricultural Statistics Service also noted in its weekly crop weather update.

"We had a bad fall and winter," Gantz said, "and it showing up now." About a third of the wheat acres were

abandoned in Ness County because of poor planting conditions last fall.

"The wheat's not very good," Gantz said.

On Monday, the Agricultural Statistics Service rated the Kansas wheat crop still standing as 9 percent very poor, 19 percent poor, 41 percent fair, 25 percent good and 6 percent excellent. About 65 percent of the wheat is ripe, with 69 percent being the average for this time of year.

Osterhaus said the harvest in the Rush County area is in full swing.

Although the average yield is uncertain, he said some are coming in at more than 40 bushels per acre. But he expects that to drop, closer to 35 bushels per acre, as the harvest progresses.

Fire chief addresses fireworks safety

By JAY KELLEY
Colby Free Press

Colby Fire Chief Bob McLemore is again reminding area residents to practice fireworks safety as Independence Day nears.

"It is against the law to shoot fireworks in the city limits," McLemore said. "It is also hot and dry, so be very careful around wheat, stubble or other crops."

Fireworks will go on sale on Wednesday. The Kiwanis Club is planning its annual display on the evening of July 4. Both serious and minor fireworks injuries increased by seven percent in Kansas last year, according to information supplied by the Kansas State Fire Marshal.

"In 2000, fireworks started 260 fires, including 31 structures or buildings," said Jill Eschete, an inspector with the

office. "Losses totaled an estimated \$1,648,492 in damages."

Some safety rules McLemore recommended included:

- Purchase only high quality fireworks from a reliable, legitimate source.
- Never give fireworks to small children and supervise any use by children.
- Always wear eye protection when lighting fireworks.
- Ignite only outdoors and make sure the area is safe for the use of fireworks.
- Alcohol and fireworks don't mix. Have a "designated shooter."
- Always read and follow label instructions.
- Never point or throw fireworks at a person, building or animal.
- Have a source of water handy, in case of fire.
- Never shoot fireworks in metal or

glass containers.

- Light only one fireworks at a time.
- Never attempt to relight malfunctioning fireworks.
- When lighting fireworks, never position any part of your body over them.
- Never carry fireworks in your pocket.
- Store fireworks in a cool, dry place.
- Never experiment with homemade fireworks. They are dangerous and illegal.
- Bottle rockets and other skyrocketers that are mounted on a stick or wire are illegal.
- It is illegal to shoot fireworks on or under a vehicle, on any public roadway, within 50 feet of a fireworks stand or where fireworks are stored, and gas stations or anywhere liquid glass, including propane is stored.

Briefly

Weather: No relief

Warm, brisk southerly winds and thunderstorms pretty much tell the weather story again for the Colby region through the rest of the week, says the National Weather Service. Lows in the 60s and highs in the 90s can be expected. Colby's high Monday was 98 and the overnight low this morning was 70. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth is averaging 84 degrees. Precipitation remains at 0.41 inches for the month. The records: 108 in 1936 and 42 in 1958. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

Nine-Run-Run planned in August

Now in its sixth year, the Thomas County Emergency Medical Services is again sponsoring its Nine-Run-Run beginning at 8 a.m. on Saturday, Aug. 4 in Colby.

Early registration is underway, said Kathy Wright, one of the organizers with openings in all age groups for the 10K and 5K run, 2K fun run and 2K walk.

The cost of the event for early registration is \$10 for walkers and \$13 for runners and after Monday, July 23, the cost will increase to \$12 and \$15 respectively, she said. All proceeds go to benefit the local service.

To register or questions, stop by the facility at 1245 S.

Franklin or call any EMS member.

Hazardous waste day set

The Thomas County Household Hazardous Waste Committee is sponsoring a collection day Saturday, June 30, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. According to Sandy Swob, director of the facility, this service is available to all residents of the county. Acceptable items, she said, include old paints, stains, varnish, thinners, cleaning products, swimming pool chemicals and batteries. "Used motor oil," she said, "should be taken to the county landfill for recycling." For information, call Swob at 462-4525.

No Free Press July 4th

The Colby Free Press will not publish a newspaper on the July 4th holiday. Employees will be given the day off to spend with family and friends. "Normal operations will resume at 8 a.m. Thursday, July 5 — whatever normal is in newspapering," said Tom (TD) Dreiling, publisher.

No holiday trash pickup

The City of Colby Sanitation Department will not be operating on Wednesday, July 4, in observance of the national holiday. Wednesday's residential grass will be picked up on Thursday, July 5, along with the regular waste route.

