



COLBY FREE PRESS

Getting ready for school



JAY KELLEY/Colby Free Press

Alan Wade, director of transportation for Colby Public Schools, installed an axle on a bus Monday. Wade has been busy getting the buses ready for fall. He said he expected the Kansas Highway Patrol to call him about setting an appointment for annual inspections either this week or next. "We won't have any problems," he said.

No quorum, no meeting

School board reschedules

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

It doesn't happen very often, but Monday night's regular Colby School Board meeting was canceled due to the lack of a quorum. In fact, Colby Superintendent Kirk Nielsen said today, he couldn't even remember the last time something like this occurred.

In order to have a school board meeting, a minimum of four of the seven board members must be present.

The situation last night, Nielsen said, was that four were unable to attend, leaving only three, which prompted the

cancellation. Under the circumstances, he said, it was agreed that all of the agenda items that would have been approved or discussed last night will be held until the next meeting scheduled for Monday, Aug. 20.

The public hearing on the 2001-02 school budget was also rescheduled for Aug. 20 and Nielsen said that will still give the district enough time to submit the necessary paperwork to the state by the deadline date of Friday, Aug. 24.

Following the public hearing on the budget, the board will then decide whether or not to approve it.

"The next meeting will be a long one," he said, since many of the items that would have been reviewed or approved will be added to an already full slate in two weeks.

Some items that will be covered at that time include approval of facility rental fees, emergency substitute requests, establishing substitute teacher daily pay rates and out-of-school district requests.

In addition, the board also plans to discuss negotiations, along with employment recommendations and resignations.

New charter school opens in Haven school district

HUTCHINSON (AP) — A new charter high school opening this fall will join the ranks of virtual academies popping up across Kansas.

Aimed at homeschool families, the Pleasantview Academy, which is enrolling students for a post-Labor Day start date, will offer more than just post-elementary courses over the Internet.

Principal Brian Boston said the school, which will have in-house computers for every student and a certified instructor, is designed to serve as an additional resource for homeschool families to use in educating their children.

It's one of four charter schools opening this fall that indicated a focus on Internet-based learning in its charter petition.

The school will enable high school

students who complete the required courses to obtain the same diploma that Haven High School students receive upon graduation.

"It's going to expand on the alternatives we already offer students," Boston said.

"The idea is for it to be kind of a resource school for the homeschool family."

Boston said those attending the school would learn through a combination of online courses, integrated learning system software and on-site classroom work.

How much or how often a student attends would be determined on an individual basis, although all the time spent on coursework will be logged.

"Because students will take the state assessment tests that every other student takes, parents will be able to com-

pare how their child is doing in relation to others," Boston said.

Even though some virtual schools, such as the one in Basehor-Linwood in Leavenworth County, can offer courses to any student in Kansas, Boston said the Pleasantview Academy will have a primarily local focus.

"Every student will have to spend at least some time on site," Boston said.

"That sort of limits how far away they can be."

"We expect to pull most of our enrollment from Haven, as well as inside Reno and the surrounding counties," he said.

The Moundridge and Elkhart school districts will also open up a virtual school this fall, while Pratt is scheduled to add a virtual school to the already established but newly chartered alternative school in its district.

Sherman County officials ask commissioners for advice

By MAXINE NELSON

Colby Free Press

Sherman County officials met with commissioners here on Monday to discuss having a satellite station for household hazardous waste in their county with the goal of eventually having a station of their own.

Sherman County Commissioners Kevin Rasure and Chuck Frankenfeld, Sherman County Public Works Director Kurt Way, and Sherman County Clerk Janet Rumpel attended the commissioner's meeting, along with Sandy Swob, Thomas County household hazardous waste director.

Swob gave the Sherman County group a tour of the household hazardous waste collection site at 190 W. 4th. Following the tour, the group said they would continue to discuss the matter further before making a decision.

In other business:

• Diana McAdams, who took part in the culinary department in this year's open class event, brought a 'Beary Good' jar of cookies to present to the commissioners. The cookies had won first place at the county fair in the category which calls for a jar of at least six different kinds of cookies made from scratch and individually wrapped. The first place jar is presented to the Thomas County Commis-

sioners after judging is complete. Her jar was decorated with bears, and was one of three entries in the category. Diana is the daughter of Weldon and Toni McAdams of Colby.

• The commissioners spent part of the morning touring the county landfill. Engineering consultant Elmer Zerr had completed a survey of the 40 additional acres purchased by the county Friday afternoon.

The county is expanding the landfill and opening a new cell, and had the land surveyed to find out exactly where the boundaries are. They were unable to find one of the corner markers and the county is investigating.

• Commissioner Ron Evans said the landfill has been averaging 15.64 tons per day as of the end of July. This is well under the average of 20 tons per day which is permitted to keep the landfill open.

If the county averages over 20 tons per day the landfill will be closed, according to state law.

• The commissioners approved closing the county treasurer's office today until 1:30 p.m. to allow employees to attend the funeral of Loretta Schoenfeld, former assistant Thomas County treasurer.

• They approved adoption of a code of conduct suggested by Northwest



MAXINE NELSON/Colby Free Press

Thomas County Commissioner Ron Evans, handed an individually wrapped cookie to Commissioner Glen Kersenbrock while Diana McAdams and Commissioner Duane Dawes looked on. McAdams brought the jar of cookies to the commissioners during their meeting on Monday.

Kansas Planning and Development of Hill City.

• They received a phone call from Randy Dick, Kaw Valley Insurance representative, offering a premium of \$289.56 per month for county health insurance. Employees can go to any

doctor they wish, and it is for an 80-20 percent rate. This would be the premium for a single person which the county pays for each employee. The employees pay extra for family coverage. "Write it up," said Evans.

• The commissioners said they had

decided to go with a 3 percent pay raise for county employees, and next year's budget had been published in the Colby Free Press on Aug. 3.

• Undersheriff Mike Baughn brought a request to purchase a battery tester to better check and replace bat-

teries at the law enforcement center. The commissioners approved the purchase for \$325.

He said there was a washout in the back parking lot, and requested the road department fill the hole. They told him to go talk to Chris Bieker, road supervisor.

• The commissioners appointed Tracey Perkins as their proxy for Western Prairie RC&D.

• They decided to have another hand-rail installed on the north side of the courthouse. They recently had a railing installed on the steps on the north, but that still left two separate steps directly into the courthouse. They will use ADA money.

• They approved a bill from Litter Critters for \$823.82 for line striping and stenciling the parking lot at the court house. The parking lot had been sealcoated Saturday.

• They met with Don Fosdick of Murphy Tractor, Colby, concerning a used grader. The county landfill needs a grader, and he had one that was traded in from Kirwin which he would sell for \$8,800. However, the county did not have the money and declined the offer.

• The next meeting will be at 9 a.m. Monday in the commissioners room of the courthouse. All meetings are open to the public.

Briefly

Weather: No relief

Tonight the weather forecast is calling for lows in the mid 60s to lower 70s under clear skies. Wednesday, temperatures are again expected to reach 95 to 102 with winds from the south at 10 to 20 mph. Wednesday night will be partly cloudy with lows still in the mid 60s to low 70s. On Thursday, temperatures are expected to be a bit lower at 83 to 90 with a slight chance for thunderstorms. *The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.*

Oakley man dies in crash

A 21-year-old Oakley man was killed when his sport utility vehicle crashed into a bridge guard about six miles west of Ellis Monday morning. The Kansas Highway Patrol reported that Mitchell Ottley was westbound in a 1995 Chevy Tahoe when he fell asleep and struck a bridge guard rail twice, vaulting over the bridge. Ottley was dead at the scene. The highway patrol said he was not wearing a seatbelt and the airbag was deployed. Services will be at 10:30 a.m. Friday at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Oakley with visitation from 2-9 p.m. Thursday at Kennedy-Koster Funeral Home in Oakley and a Rosary Wake at 7:30 p.m. Memorials are requested to the Shriner's hospitals.

Colby enrollment Wednesday

Colby Public Schools will hold enrollment for all pre-enrolled kindergarten and returning students, grades 1-12 at the high school commons area from 7 a.m.-5 p.m. Wednesday. New students may enroll in their respective buildings on Friday. The first day of classes is Aug. 22.

Youth group to sell peaches

Colby's Sacred Heart CYO will be selling Colorado freestone peaches at various locations in Thomas County beginning Friday, Aug. 10. The peaches will go on sale at the Relay for Life at Dennen Field, Friday, Aug. 11, from 7 to 10 p.m.; at the Thomas County Office Complex, 350 S. Range, Colby, beginning at 8 a.m. on Saturday, Aug. 11; and also at locations in Selden, Brewster and Rexford from 8 a.m. to noon, and Levant from 8 to 10 a.m., also on Saturday. For questions or details, call Paul or Marilyn Bailey, 462-7356.

Relay for Life registration planned

Registration for this year's Relay For Life participants is scheduled for Wednesday, Aug. 8, beginning at 6:30 p.m. at the State Farm Insurance office, 905 E 4th, Colby. For questions, call Bob Coleman, 462-2724.

Legislators review health care costs

TOPEKA (AP) — Legislators cast a net Monday trying to get a fix on the rising cost of health care for poor Kansans.

What they learned is that the next wave of increases in medical costs is coming.

Bob Day, director of medical policy and Medicaid for the Department of Social and Rehabilitation Services, told a special House-Senate budget committee that after a period of relative stability, health care costs are preparing to increase.

The increases could be comparable to the inflation that hit the industry in the late 1980s and early 1990s, he said. Rising costs, especially those associated with home health care and the state's elderly population, were of particular concern with legislators.

Day said the increases were not unique to Kansas and that other states were grappling with rising costs asso-

ciated with Medicaid.

"We're looking at strategies related to cost drivers that do not compromise quality or access," Day said.

According to budget analysts, Medicaid expenditures from all funding sources have increased from \$544 million in fiscal 1999 to \$730 million in fiscal 2002.

The state's portion of that bill has increased from \$176 million to \$250 million in that period.

Medicaid is the federal-state matching funds program to provide health care to low-income Kansans. Services to children accounted for 35 percent of the costs in fiscal 2000, with the services to frail elderly and disabled representing the bulk of the expenditures. "This is all about utilization" of services, Day said, noting that reimbursement rates were set by the state.

Rep. Kenny Wilk, R-Lansing and chairman of the committee, said it is

important for the state to get a fix on costs and demand for services not for one year, but several years out as baby boomers move toward retirement and put increased demands on the system.

The committee also heard from public health department officials who said the state could take steps to reduce future costs by investing more dollars in preventive measures.

There are 99 public health departments serving the 105 counties, which receive \$2.2 million in state operating grants.

The additional costs are covered by federal grants or local taxes.

"Our state's local health departments need additional funding to help respond in a timely and effective way to the emerging public health problems and needs," said Clyde Graeber, secretary of the Department of Health and Environment.

