



COLBY FREE PRESS

12 pages

Plat change okayed by city council

By PATTY DECKER
Free Press Editor

The Colby City Council voted unanimously Tuesday night to approve the final plat of the Dell Addition, which is the area near Comfort Inn. The owner of the addition, Mike Woofter, requested a correction to the plat by moving the road 10 feet south giving more of a sound barrier from the road to the motel.

The council also approved a request by Triplett, Inc., Salina, granting them permission to put in three parking lot lights on the city's easement at their expense. The parking lot lights would be located off South Range north of the Amoco station next to the Ramada Inn.

Carolyn Armstrong, city manager, said Gerry Bieker, public works director, reviewed the request and didn't see a problem with allowing the company to do the lights.

In other council business:

- Armstrong's evaluation as city manager was also discussed in executive session and after returning to open session, the council approved a salary increase from \$62,800 to \$65,000 next year.

- Mayor Warren Hixson approved the reappointment of Charles Schwanke to the planning commission for a three-year term until December of 2004. He also reappointed Roberta Heaton and Armun Jones to a four-year term on the housing authority board until December of 2005.

It's magic: Books turn into cash



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Supporters of Colby Elementary School contributed 4,260 used telephone books toward helping buy needed items for students in the primary grades, said Mary Bates, coordinator of the drive. "This is the last year that Rural Telephone Company in Lenora will be accepting the books so we wanted to make this collection as successful as

possible," she said. Pictured are adult and fifth grade students helping load the boxes full of telephone books that will yield 25¢ per book. Volunteers included Lexie Garcia, Randa Lewis, Kyle Molstad, all fifth graders, and Pat Tubbs, Deann Shields, Krysti Terrell, Rob Stithem, and Don Harrison, adult volunteers.

House fire was ruled accidental

By JAY KELLEY
Colby Free Press

A fire that heavily damaged a house at 985 S. Range in Colby last week has been ruled accidental, Colby Assistant Fire Chief Rick Dickman said today.

Dickman said insurance investigators and Melvin Dale, an investigator with the State Fire Marshal, determined Thursday that the fire started on a stove in the basement.

"The owner had apparently placed a wicker basket on a stove without realizing it had been turned on," said Dickman.

The owner of the house, Cherelle Miller, told investigators she had laid the basket, full of body wraps on the stove and left for lunch a little before noon.

Investigators determined the stove area as the starting point of the fire.

Alan Wade, transportation director for the Colby school system, noticed smoke from the chimney that "didn't look right."

"It was 20 degrees with snow showers, but something didn't look right," he said.

"When he drove into the alley, he saw smoke coming out of a roof vent."

"There was a car in the driveway, so I called it in and beat on the door," he said.

Wade said he didn't try to force the door because the windows were hot and smoke was coming from the eaves. "I didn't want to give the fire any more air," he said.

"I tried to make as much noise as possible, in case there was still someone in the house." No one was home at the time, and no one was injured in the fire.

Fire Chief Bob McLemore said efforts to find the fire were hampered by the size of the house and heavy smoke conditions.

However, he said, firefighters quickly extinguished the blaze once they located it in the basement.

McLemore said he didn't have an estimate on the loss.

Friendly fire accident leaves two U.S. servicemen dead

TORABORA, Afghanistan (AP) — American bombs accidentally killed two U.S. servicemen and injured 20 others in southern Afghanistan on Wednesday.

The friendly fire incident happened when a B-52 seeking to target enemy Taliban forces missed and dropped its ordnance too close to opposition forces and their American advisers north of Kandahar, the last stronghold of the

Taliban, U.S. officials said.

An unknown number of Afghan forces were also killed or wounded, they said. Capt. David Romley, a spokesman for a U.S. task force stationed in the nearby desert, said some of the injured U.S. personnel had been evacuated from the area by helicopters.

High-flying B-52s also pounded the Tora Bora cave complex in the White mountains near the city of Jalalabad on

Wednesday. Reporters at front line positions watched anti-Taliban tanks fire repeated volleys at the caves of Tora Bora, named after this village at the mountains' base.

One tribal commander, Alim Shah, said his Afghan fighters were pursuing a mainly Arab al-Qaida force that was retreating with mortars, rocket launchers and assault rifles to positions above the caves.

"We are trying our best to capture them alive. They are surrounded by us, but they are not surrendering," Shah said.

Shah said his fighters were meeting heavy resistance. It was not clear whether other al-Qaida fighters were inside the vast network of tunnels and caverns carved deep into a mountainside south of Jalalabad in Afghanistan's rugged east.

Moreover, there was no sign of bin Laden, who is accused of masterminding the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on the United States. As the battle for Tora Bora raged, Afghan factions in Germany approved the appointment of respected Pashtun tribal leader Hamid Karzai as an interim prime minister to head a 30-member broad-based post-Taliban Cabinet that will take power on Dec. 22.

Condit has problems getting signatures

FRESNO, Calif. (AP) — For the first time in his political career, Rep. Gary Condit faces the possibility of paying money to get his name on the ballot if he decides to run for re-election.

With three days to go, county election clerks in his district said he had failed to turn in enough signatures to waive a \$1,451 fee. Of 4,667 signatures that campaign workers collected, fewer than half were certified as registered Democrats living in the district.

As campaign workers continued collecting signatures, Condit had

1,939 of the 3,000 certified signatures required.

"He never had a problem before," said Sandra Lucas, chairwoman of the Stanislaus County Democratic Central Committee.

"They always collected thousands and thousands and thousands that are valid. People would line up to sign them. It's different this time."

Condit's popularity in the district has plunged since he was romantically linked to Chandra Levy, a federal intern who vanished in May. Condit is not a suspect in her disappearance, but police sources have said the married

man admitted having an affair with her.

Condit also is dealing with a redrawn district this year. California's population increase under the 2000 census gave the state its 53rd House seat, requiring redistricting. Condit's district ended up with 40 percent new voters. The conservative Democrat has until Friday to declare whether he will seek re-election.

Condit's daughter, Cadee, who is working on his campaign, said just last week that people were very supportive and volunteers had little trouble collecting signatures.

Judge jails 43 more striking teachers

FREEHOLD, N.J. (AP) — Forty-three striking teachers were spending their first night in jail early Wednesday for defying a judge's back-to-work order, while their negotiators continued contract talks with the school board.

A judge has now sent 47 Middletown Township teachers to jail for defying his order; four were jailed Monday, the rest on Tuesday.

"You are holding the keys to the jail," Superior Court Judge Clarkson S. Fisher Jr. told one group of teachers before sentencing them to one-week jail terms Tuesday.

"Any time you want to come out, let

Any time you want to come out, let me know and you are out."

Judge Clarkson S. Fisher, Jr.

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Fisher and a second judge were scheduled to hear additional cases on Wednesday morning, when more teachers were expected to be locked up if a contract agreement is not reached by then.

More than 700 teachers in Monmouth County's largest school district

walked out Thursday, unwilling to continue working without a new contract. The previous one expired June 30.

Classes have been called since the strike began.

An issue in the contract negotiations is a board of education proposal that would require the teachers to pay more for their health insurance.

State's Cosmosphere creates Christmas sky

HUTCHINSON (AP) — The Kansas Cosmosphere and Space Center is offering visitors a chance to look back to the time when Christ was born.

Twice a day until the end of the year, "The Star of Bethlehem" will recreate the celestial happenings at the time of the birth of Christ on the 40-foot domed walls of the center's planetarium.

Using computerized star logs and the planetarium's star projector, it is possible to show that something un-

usual was happening in the skies around the time Christ was born, said Max Ary, president of the Cosmosphere.

"Was there something in the sky that heralded the magi to the nativity?" Ary said. "We take people back and show them the exact sky over Judea that day." However, Ary said the heavenly show wasn't on Dec. 25. It was in the spring of 6 B.C., which research shows is more likely the time when Christ was

born, he said. King Herod was alive at the time of Christ's birth and his prophets foretold the birth of a new king in Bethlehem, Ary said. Herod died later, at the time of a solar eclipse, and it is possible to place the date of his death accordingly. That produces the more accurate, earlier birthdate of Christ, Ary said. The wise men were astrologers who knew Jupiter and Saturn were to converge at that time, Ary said. They did not know that Mars would join the

lineup and likely were stunned when all three planets aligned, he said.

He described the alignment of Jupiter, Saturn and Mars as one of the rarest celestial sites, happening about once every 800 years. The next time it occurs should be in the year 2408, Ary said.

"It was not the 'big star' that we see on Christmas cards ... but the grouping of three planets was very meaningful to them," Ary said.

Briefly

Weather: Not bad at all

It's December and anything can happen at any time, but the forecast for the Colby area now through Sunday looks pretty good. Tonight, clear, lows in the middle 20s and winds out of the west up to 15 mph. Thursday, partly sunny, highs in the middle 50s and west winds 10-20 mph. Thursday night, partly cloudy, lows in the lower 20s. Friday and Saturday, partly cloudy, highs in the middle to upper 40s and lows in the upper teens. Sunday, partly cloudy, lows around 20 and highs near 50. Colby's high Tuesday was 63 and the overnight low this morning was 27. Still no precipitation to report for this month. The soil temperature at the four-inch depth is averaging 36 degrees. The records for Dec. 5: 77 in 1939 and -8 in 1909. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

Flags fly half mast Friday

In remembrance of Pearl Harbor on Friday, Dec. 7, flags should be flown at half mast from daylight until dusk, said Dean Ludlow, VFW member.

Programs on eating disorders

There will be an eating disorders program presented by Carla O'Connor, RN, MA, LCSW, of Kansas City, for students and the general public from 9:15 to 10 a.m., Monday, Dec. 10, in the Colby High School auditorium. In addition, there will be another workshop for professionals from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. that day.

The program for students and the public is free, costs for professionals is \$16 for two contact hours.

Those wanting to register can either call (785) 628-6128 or contact sponsors of the program, Janet Worthy at 462-

8152 or Jeanene Brown, 462-4850.

Soup supper planned today

The Trinity Lutheran Church youth group and Aid Association for Lutherans is having a soup supper at the church on Fifth St. and Country Club Dr. from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m., today. The supper is being held to benefit the Thomas County Big Brothers Big Sister organization.

Chamber selling cut trees

The Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce promotion committee is in the process of selling fresh cut Christmas Trees. They are available in the Thomas County Complex parking lot.

Wellness Fair wants merchants

With the annual Wellness Fair nearing, businesses are

being asked to take part in promoting community health and wellness by covering the cost of the fair registration and or health screenings for their employees who may want to participate.

The fair will be held on Saturday, Jan. 26, 2002, at the student union on the Colby Community College campus. For information or to obtain coupons for employees, call Erickson at (785) 462-3984, ext. 327.

Sorority plans annual gift shop

Mu Epsilon Sorority is sponsoring its annual Santa's Helper Shop on Saturday from 9 to 11 a.m. at Pioneer Memorial Library.

Shopping is open to all children in fifth grade and under. All gifts are \$3 with proceeds going to support community projects.

Christmas ON US!
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(four \$50 instant winners, page 9)

