



COLBY FREE PRESS

6 pages

Reappointments, reports dominate county meeting

By MAXINE NELSON

Colby Free Press

The Thomas County Commissioners approved appointments, reappointments, and calendar for the coming year at their Monday meeting at the courthouse.

Ron Evans was re-elected commission chair; they voted to remain on the same committees as last year; named the *Colby Free Press* as the official county newspaper; and named all banks in the county as official depositories.

The commissioners approved the 2002 calendar, designating the same holidays as last year, and noted the treasurer's office will be closed all day Dec. 31 for year-end bookkeeping.

The commissioners reappointed the following county officers: Kathy Ryan, county health nurse; Dr. Victor Hildyard II, county health officer and coroner; Bettie Hamill, custodian; Joshua Buffington, EMS/911 director; Dr. Victor Hildyard II, EMS medical advisor; John Lygeros, emergency preparedness director; Ken Ptacek, noxious weed director and prairie dog control; Sandy Swob, household hazardous waste director; Bob McLemore, chairman LEPC; Chris Bieker, roads supervisor; and Larry Jumper, landfill supervisor.

The following fair board members were reappointed to terms that end in December 2004: Stan Strange, Colby, West Hale township; Jim Malcolm, Colby, Menlo Township; Nancy Rundel, Colby; and Vera Sloan, Colby.

In other business:

- The commissioners opened bids for 15,000 tons of cold mix asphalt, the county to provide the aggregate. Bids were \$4.90 per ton from Jay Core of Hays, \$4.35 per ton from Heft and Son of Greensburg, \$4.85 from High Plains Sand, Kanopolis and \$6.20 from APAC, Hays — all bids to include mobilization — and \$3.90 plus \$39,000 mobilization, from Venture Corp, Great Bend;

- Bieker took the bids under consideration, and returned to recommend the bid of Heft and Son, which totals \$65,250 for the 15,000 tons of asphalt. The commissioners concurred.

- Bieker said the big road projects planned for 2002 are the nine miles south of the Brewster 1-70 overpass, and the elevating of a half-mile on Veterans Memorial Drive, and a half-mile on Country Club Drive to be used as a detour for the viaduct removal by the Kansas Department of Transportation.

- Jumper brought landfill totals for 2001. He said the municipal solid waste average for the year was 15.91 tons per day, well under the 20 tons necessary to keep the landfill open.

He said municipal solid waste collection was highest in November, averaging 18.48 tons per day; and down in December, only 13.60 tons per day. Cash and charge sales for the year were \$187,599.86. Actual money collected Jan. 1 to Dec. 31 was \$175,356.71. Accounts receivable to be collected are \$12,243.15. Cash and charge sales for December were \$11,702.41.

He said he had signed a contract with Salina Scales to maintain the scales at the landfill. Jumper said the city had inquired about paying to store concrete at the landfill and having it crushed. Evans told him to work out an agreement with the city.

Jumper said he needed to upgrade his computer, and the commissioners told him to check with the sheriff's department to see if any of their old computers would be suitable. The sheriff's department had replaced some computers to accommodate new programs.

- The commissioners discussed overtime pay for county employees. The sheriff's department gets overtime based on state statute.

Road employees normally work one hour overtime per day, weather permitting. Jumper was asking about employees being paid overtime when part of the time period was a paid holiday. Commissioner Glen Kersensbrock said he thought the key word was 'worked' and if the employee did not work on the paid holiday, he was not eligible for overtime.

- The Thomas County Highway Department gave the following December work report: Sand production continued at Fulwider Pit.

Another 1,353 cubic yards of mix sand were produced and stockpiled before changing the plant to produce and stockpile 3,124 yards of sealing sand. The plant was changed to produce and stockpile 3,256 yards of road gravel.

Nine hundred and seventy-two yards of gravel were hauled from Fulwider Stockpile and scattered on County Road 412 west (in the south part of county).

Roads were bladed in East Hale and North Randall Townships. Other work included inventoried shop, yard, and equipment. Cut weeds at guardrails and around culverts. Removed tires from ditches. Bladed roads. Checked and put up traffic signs. Checked and put up 911 signs. Serviced and repaired vehicles and equipment.

- The commissioners will attend the Thomas County Free Fair Board meeting Thursday night for election of officers. The meeting will be at 8 p.m. in the 4-H Building.

One of the biggest



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Crews from Commercial Sign Company of Colby placed new signage today at Southwind Plaza (formerly Whites Factory Outlet), owned by Tuffy and Linda Taylor of Colby. The sign stands 71' high and rivals its neighboring sign across the street, Village Inn, as the largest sign in northwest Kansas, said Bruce Bandy, co-owner of the sign company. "In square footage," he said, "there is nothing within a 150-mile radius that is as large as those two signs, including Hays." The only other sign bigger is at Bosselman's Truck Stop in Salina, he said. Today's installation took eight people, a 50-ton crane truck, three Commercial Sign vehicles and less than 30 minutes to lift the 21' high x 36' wide sign to the top of the pole. The sign will be finished early next week and will be complete with Vegas-style flashing neon lights and a time and temperature section. It took two months to build and Bandy said the sign's eye appeal will promote traffic flow off Interstate to the businesses in the plaza. Bandy, along with Stan Schmidt, Josh Eisenbart, Loren Wedele, Daniel Burke, Tim Kistler, Gary Salsbury and Jeff Griffin placed the sign.

Another stop on Interstate 70 yields \$154,155

By JAY KELLEY

Colby Free Press

Thomas County Sheriff's deputies found several hidden compartments, this time with \$154,155 in them, after a routine traffic stop on I-70 Friday night.

Sheriff Tom Jones said the 1993 Cadillac was stopped at mile marker 40 for speeding. Deputies became suspicious when the paperwork and stories

didn't match and obtained permission to search the vehicle.

A drug dog confirmed the presence of drug residue and several compartments were found containing the cash.

Officers rely on a dog to find the compartments from drug residue that is left. "Drugs and money are usually packed together," said Deputy Rod Taylor.

When only money is seized, the suspects have a right to challenge the sei-

zure. Although Kansas has no exact statute covering hidden compartments, the federal law covers any compartment that is not naturally part of the vehicle, such as a spare tire well. If the compartment was used to transport drugs, Kansas considers the entire car to be contraband and it is seized for evidence.

"I've been doing this since 1992, and no one has ever challenged," said Taylor. The owners of the vehicle also have

a right to challenge, but they have to explain why drug residue was found in the car. Kevin Graham, from the state attorney general's office, said the law was probably originally intended for use against shipboard smuggling, but has been applied to smuggling by automobile frequently.

Taylor added that it is almost impossible to remove the residue from drugs, especially marijuana when money has been in contact with the drugs.

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

A Mississippi woman pled guilty to two of seven charges in the District Court of Thomas County last month for her part in the high-speed chase and subsequent theft of a vehicle in August of 2001.

Tina Janice Pearce, 23, was arrested in Angelton, Tex., after authorities there were called on a domestic disturbance at a motel where she and her companion, Kristopher Aaron Lambert, 21, also of Mississippi, were staying.

Following their arrests, Pearce was extradited to Mississippi and then agreed to extradition in Kansas late in November to face multiple charges of aggravated burglary, aggravated assault, kidnapping, two counts of theft and two counts of criminal damage to property.

Pearce waived her right to a preliminary hearing, said Thomas County Attorney Allan Taylor on Monday, and was bound over for arraignment immediately after on Dec. 5.

Taylor dismissed the charges of aggravated assault, one count of theft, and both counts of criminal damage to property. In addition, he amended the kidnapping charge to criminal restraint and aggravated burglary to burglary of a residence with the intent to commit theft. Pearce entered the plea of guilty to both of the amended charges and was then released on a \$10,000 bond to her father, which would allow her to return to her home in Mississippi. Her next appearance in Thomas County will be at 10 a.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 6 for sentencing.

Taylor said that Pearce could be looking at 11 to 34 months in prison for the restraint conviction and anywhere from 5 to 17 months on the burglary. "It will all depend on what the presentencing report shows on this defendant," he said.

Thus far, Pearce has spent about two months in jail following her arrest in Texas. No new information was available on Lambert's arrest from October.

The couple was first spotted on Interstate 70 after authorities in Thomas County were notified of a couple involved in a gas skip from Grinnell.

Briefly

Weather: Warm, then snow

There is a 30 percent chance for snow for the Colby area Wednesday night, otherwise it'll be warm, a glimpse at the forecast from the National Weather Service, indicates. Tonight, cloudy, lows in the lower 30s and northwest winds around 10 mph. Wednesday, cloudy, highs in the middle 50s and north winds 10-20 mph. Wednesday night, cloudy, a 30 percent chance for rain, changing to snow before midnight, with the lows in the upper 20s. Thursday, mostly sunny, with highs in the lower 40s, and Friday, partly cloudy, lows in the upper teens and high in the middle 50s. Stretching it out, Saturday should bring clear skies, with lows in the middle 20s and highs climbing into the middle 60s and Sunday, partly cloudy, lows in the upper 20s and highs in the middle 50s. Colby's high Monday was 62 (not even close to the record high for the date which was 73 set in 1948) and the overnight low this morning was 22, climbing to 33 by 8 a.m. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth is averaging 30 degrees. The records for Jan. 8: 71 in 1965 and -18 in 1988. Today's high for Colby was forecast to be in the lower 70s, which, if that happens could break the old record. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

Lab work continues Saturday

Lab work for this year's Wellness Fair will continue on Saturday from 6 to 10 a.m. Testing will take place at Citizens Medical Center, which will offer lipid profile and glucose tests, a complete blood count, and prostate specific antigen test (PSA). Those planning to be tested will be charged \$5 for the wellness fair registration. Discounted fees for the tests range from \$17 to \$35, depending on the tests taken.

In addition, participants should fast for 10 to 12 hours prior to these tests. For information, call Jeanene Brown, 462-4850.

High school to host blood drive

The Thomas County American Red Cross is sponsoring a blood drive on Wednesday from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Colby High School gymnasium. The drive is carrying a special message and theme, "Unite for Life," and everyone that can give blood is urged to do so, said co-coordinators Jo Frahm and Jackie Stephens. For information or to schedule an appointment, call Stephens at 462-8122 or Frahm at 462-2082.

'Meals on Wheels' needs volunteers

The Meals on Wheels program is in need of volunteers to deliver on Saturdays or Sundays during the odd months of 2002. Anyone who might be able to help in delivery is asked to call Brown at 462-4850.

Midwest recycles Christmas trees

Midwest Energy will accept Christmas trees at the Midwest Energy office, 1125 S. Range in Colby until Saturday, Jan. 18. For questions, call 462-8251.

Chamber luncheon next Friday

The Thomas County/Colby Chamber of Commerce luncheon will be held at noon on Friday, Jan. 11, at the Ramada Inn. Highlighting the meeting will be Melly Schmidt, director of Kansas 4-kids. "Melly has a long and distinguished career both in politics and public education. The luncheon is open to all chamber members and guests. For information, call 462-3401.

Cookie carnival preparations



MAXINE NELSON/Colby Free Press

Clockwise, from left, Tasha Diederich, Nicole Frahm and Chandí Reed prepare for the Girl Scout Cookie Carnival to be held from 1-4 p.m. Sunday at the National Guard Armory. Admission is one can of food for Genesis. The carnival is the last project for the girls' Gold Award, which is earned by Girl Scout Cadettes, and is the equivalent of the Boy Scout Eagle Award, although it is earned by the troop as a whole. There will be games, a cookie walk, cookie eating contest, cooking building contest, cookie guess estimation jars, and other games, said Jo Frahm, leader. The RSVP ladies have baked 600 cookies using the original Girl Scout cookie recipe. The girls will start selling Girl Scout cookies on Jan. 18.

