



COLBY FREE PRESS



Charter School

focus of public hearing

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

The public is invited and encouraged to attend a public hearing scheduled for Monday at 2 p.m. and take part in the discussion of developing a charter school in the Colby School District, said Kirk Nielsen, superintendent.

"The public hearing is designed to gather information on organizing a charter school within the district," he said.

Nielsen said that school officials are looking at ways to shift from a time-based to achievement-based system. In doing so, he said, this would provide flexibility and time to try different and innovative teaching methods that are unable to be done in the regular, time-based educational system.

"Instructors would be solicited from interested Colby Public School staff and would facilitate the program with assistance from paraprofessionals," he said. The need for new staff would not be necessary to start the charter school and existing facilities would be used to establish a technology rich program, Nielsen said. Funding for this type of new program would also be available through a grant.

In addition to the public hearing on

Monday, the regular school board meeting will begin at 6 p.m., which is one hour earlier, so that staff, administrators, board members and the public can attend the Colby High School winter concert at 8 p.m. in the auditorium.

Among the items on the agenda, Terrel Harrison and Diana Wieland, grade school principal and curriculum director respectively, will talk about a petition to establish the charter school and the Colby School board is expected to take action on either approving or disapproving the program.

Jeff Quenzer, Colby High School activities director, is scheduled to talk with the board about a Colby Booster Club project involving renovations to the track and stadium at Dennen Field.

Glen Strait, local architect, along with Nielsen will also continue the discussion with possible action being taken regarding a facilities plan previously talked about.

Other agenda items include approval of early graduation requests and accepting bids on a Suburban or Excursion. Personnel matters include employment recommendations, resignations, supplemental contracts and Nielsen's evaluation.



MICHELLE L. HAWKINS/Colby Free Press

Colby High School FFA members Brandon Mazanec, Katie Wahlmeier, Chris Kistler and Michelle Bremenkamp, along with Hope Daniels and Kraig Cersovsky (not pictured), gave a presentation on parliamentary procedures to the Thomas County Fair Board on Thursday night.

Morris says she apologizes to Garden City mayor

ST. FRANCIS (AP)—An incoming member of the Kansas Board of Education says she's apologized for calling the mayor of a city in her district "an admitted past illegal immigrant."

Connie Morris made the claim about Garden City Mayor Tim Cruz last week, in an e-mail message to an anti-immigration group based in Henderson, Nev.

On Thursday, Morris said she misunderstood a telephone conversation with Cruz last summer. Morris, a St. Francis Republican, infuriated Hispanics during her election campaign with her contention that taxpayers should not have to pay for educating undocumented immigrants.

She beat board chairman Sonny

Rundell, a Syracuse Republican, in the August primary and again in the November election, when Rundell ran as a write-in candidate.

"I find it appalling that a person can break the law and enter the country illegally and end up as mayor," Morris said in the e-mail sent to the Emigration Party of Nevada.

Cruz says he was born in Garden City to parents who also were born in the United States.

On Thursday, Morris said she "evidently misunderstood" some of the statements Cruz made to her last summer. She said she came to that conclusion after talking with Cruz on Wednesday to clarify their earlier conversation.

Premium checks at 2003 fair could be cut

By MICHELLE L. HAWKINS

Colby Free Press

After being denied for a renewal of funding from drug forfeiture money, the Thomas County Fair Board decided at Thursday night's meeting to cut the premium money that will be given for the 2003 fair.

Last year the board raised the premiums over the 2001 rates after receiving money from the Thomas County Sheriff's Drug Forfeiture Fund. Much discussion was held over the issue and members discussed the only reason for the raise in premiums in 2002 was because of the stipulations of the grant.

Board member Nancy Rundell said that money had been tight and reminded the board that in the November meeting, a large cut was made on extras for the rodeo to cut

back on spending. She said that it would only be right to make cuts elsewhere.

"We need to do this, but not because we want to drop them (the premiums)," she said.

Following the discussion, there was a nine to one vote to cut the premium rates back to the 2001 level. Mark Miller, fair board president, was the only "no" vote. There was also some talk that if funding were to come in from another source, it could be possible to change the decision before the printing of the fairbooks, and keep the premiums where they were at for the 2002 fair.

In other business:

- Members of the Colby High School FFA group presented a demonstration on parliamentary procedure.
- Virgil Jones and Melinda Morton,

representatives of the Colby High Plains Lions Club, addressed the fairboard about the demolition derby. They said that the Lions did want to continue to be involved with the demolition derby and will be working with the committee from the fairboard to iron out details for next year.

• It was reported that the seats in the grandstand have been completely painted with two coats of paint. Jim Malcolm, chairman of the buildings and grounds committee, said there are still some places between the boards that need to be painted, but he would finish them up at the weather allowed.

- The contract for the Thomas County Amusement Association was reviewed and approved. Some highlights of the contract dealt with placement of carnival rides and utilities.
- Marty Crampton, chairman of the

race committee told the board it was time to decide what classes of cars to run on the different nights of the fair.

He said there is a possibility of running sprint cars on Friday night along with the bombers and cruisers instead of the traditional late models that they have been running.

• Discussion was held about the barbecue and details for the next fair.

• The committee met with organizers of the Pickin' on the Plains to further discuss the logistics of holding it on the fairgrounds. Committee members shared some of the ideas on details with the other board members.

• It was decided to take bids on putting a roof over one of the concrete slabs on the grounds.

Cities and counties plan to sue over governor's decision to cut local aid

TOPEKA (AP)—Cities and counties plan to sue Gov. Bill Graves over his decision to withhold \$48 million in state aid to head off a looming budget deficit.

That money represents half of the revenue cities and counties were to receive from the state during the state's 2003 fiscal year, which began July 1. Cities and counties operate by calendar year and already have set their budgets for 2003.

The League of Kansas Municipalities and the Kansas Association of Counties announced their intentions during a news conference Thursday. They plan to file a petition with the Kansas Supreme Court, asking it to force Graves to turn over the money.

Planning to join the league and association

“The timing of this precludes any amendment to the budgets and any ability to plug the hole.”

Don Molar, league executive director

are 169 cities and 77 counties.

Osage City Mayor Pat Lawless said cities and counties should be treated like state agencies that have been told to cut their spending. If they were, he said, the cut to local governments would be \$1.8 million.

"We were ready to take our cuts along with everybody else," he said.

Graves issued a statement saying the amount

of money withheld, though half the amount of state aid, is only 0.5 percent of the total expenditures for local governments. He said the reduction is reasonable, given cuts he has imposed on state agencies.

"I'm disappointed these two groups have decided to take this course of action," Graves said in his statement. "I'm confident, as governor, that I did not overstep my authority."

Graves' action frustrates local governments because they've already set their budgets for 2003 and cannot increase property taxes to raise more money. Their only option is to cut spending and services, said Don Molar, the league's executive director.

"The timing of this precludes any amendment to the budgets and any ability to plug the hole," Molar said. "The timing couldn't have been worse." Local officials also worry the money won't be restored, so they will have to consider increasing property taxes for 2004.

Wade Dixon, the Greeley County counselor and the president of the counties' group, said local officials are working with legislators, but added, "As far as having legislators lined up, that's kind of like herding cats."

Local officials argue Graves doesn't have the authority to withhold aid without legislative approval. The withholding was part of Graves' solution to a budget deficit projected at \$312 million on June 30. He also imposed \$78 million in cuts for state agencies, proposed withholding a \$94.5 million transfer of funds to highway projects and suggested the state not provide money to cover extra education and social service costs.

The cities and counties plan to name as defendants Graves, State Budget Director Duane Goossen, State Treasurer Tim Shallenburger, Administration Secretary Joyce Glasscock, Transportation Secretary Dean Carlson, and Dale Brunton, director of the Division of Accounts and Reports.

Briefly

Stockings to be given away Sunday

The Colby Fire Department is reminding everyone that this weekend the "World's Largest Stockings" will be given away to one boy and one girl during the holiday season. For a \$1 donation, anyone can buy a chance at winning the stockings with tickets available at the Colby Fire Department from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily, said Rick Dickman, assistant fire chief. For those wanting to see the stockings, there is one at Santa City and also at the fire department, 585 N. Franklin Ave. The drawing will be held at 3 p.m., Sunday at Santa City, he said. For questions, call 462-4454.

Commissioners meet Monday

The Thomas County Commissioners will meet on Monday morning at 9 a.m. in the commissioners room of the Thomas County Courthouse. As of today, Linda Vaughn and Donna Bennett from Waddell and Reed were the only scheduled guests. The meeting is open to the public.

Brewster school board to meet

The Brewster School District will be accepting bus bids and consider wrestling mats, along with other topics of action or discussion when it holds its regular meeting on Monday at 7 p.m. in the cafeteria area of the school. Other information provided was

that the board will talk about classroom changes, a request to enter the Western Kansas Liberty League and Little 8 League, along with appointing a recreation commission member.

Piano recitals Saturday

The students of Sharon Kriss will be featured in a Christmas Piano Recital on Saturday starting at 10 a.m. at the Colby United Methodist Church. Then at 2 p.m., piano students of Pat Ziegelmeier will perform in a recital in the sanctuary also at the Colby United Methodist Church. Everyone is invited to attend.

College to discuss contracts

The regular meeting of the Board of Trustees of Colby Community College will be held on Monday at 5 p.m. in the board room of the Thomas Hall administration area. The agenda includes approval of a representative to the Northwest Kansas Library System Board, approval of contracts and agreements, payment of claims and the report of the Kansas Association of Community College Trustees meeting. The meeting is open to the public.

Malcolm's pianists to perform Sunday

Piano students of Mrs. Shirley Malcolm will present their winter piano recital on Sunday at 2:30 p.m. at the Methodist Church.

Duttons take the stage on Sunday

The Western Plains Arts Association will sponsor a concert by the Dutton family on Sunday at 3 p.m. in the Colby High School auditorium. Admission at the door will be \$15 for adults and \$5 for students. Western Plains Arts Association season passes will also be accepted.

Amusement Association to meet

The Thomas County Amusement Association will be meeting on Monday at 7 p.m. at the Thomas County Office Complex. This is an open meeting and the public is encouraged to attend.

Pancake Feed scheduled Saturday

The Knights of Columbus will have a pancake and sausage feed on Saturday, Jan. 4, from 7 a.m. until 2 p.m. in the Catholic Church basement. All of the proceeds of the event will go the Thomas County Amusement Association.

Commodities to be distributed

The USDA Commodity distribution is set for Monday at the RSVP office in the Senior Progress Center in Colby. Commodities can be picked up from 3 to 4:30 p.m. Eligible persons receive them according to income guidelines.

WeatherWatch Colby-Oakley area

The numbers

Thursday's high, 46
Low this morning, 11
Year ago today, 44 & 13
Temperature at 11 today, 41
Soil temperature, 35
Records for Dec. 13: 78 in 1921, -14 in 1961

The forecast

Tonight is expected to be clear with lows near 28. Saturday, sunny and mild with highs near 66 and west winds at 10 to 15 mph. Lows forecast are at 32 under clear and mild conditions. On Sunday, temperatures will continue to be warmer with highs again at 66 and lows near 28. The extended forecast is calling for mostly clear skies and warmer temperatures in the mid to high 50s next week.

