



COLBY FREE PRESS

8 pages

Finally!

Colby area awakens to 4 inches of snow

By **PATTY DECKER**
Free Press Editor

Finally! Colby and surrounding areas were hit early this morning with the first major accumulation of snowfall this winter.

Schools were dismissed in Colby and crews with the public works department were out by 4 a.m. clearing the major thoroughfares. Law enforcement officials in the city reported no accidents as of press time and county officers said there were two accidents.

Jim Engel, Thomas County Sheriff's deputy, said the first accident was on Interstate 70 involving a rollover; however when officials arrived just after the incident around 9 a.m., the occupants had already gotten transportation away from the scene. The second accident occurred on Highway 24 involving a pickup and a snow plow at about 9:30 a.m. Details on both were available.

Engel said that even though the snow is melting and for a while will not cause problems for mo-

torists, by nightfall those same roads could again freeze up.

"People also need to watch for protected areas where the wind isn't blowing the snow off the roadways," he said. "In those areas around interstate rest areas or other buildings there is likely to be slick spots and motorists also need to watch out for strong winds that could cause cars to leave the highways."

Within the city, Gerry Bieker, public works director, said he had four people out early to begin clearing the top snow route areas. By 6 a.m., there were seven employees from public works operating three snow plow trucks, two loaders, one grader and a salt truck. Although crews are still out clearing snow from the main streets and depositing it in the vacant area off South Franklin, the majority of the removal is done.

Whenever snow hits the city, Bieker said some of the first roads to be cleared are Range and Franklin Avenues, Fourth St., Country Club Drive, Pine, and Hill to name a few. From there, city



DARREL PATTILLO/Colby Free Press

City of Colby workers were out in full force this morning moving snow from the city's streets. Four to five inches of snow fell overnight, enough for the loader pictured above to make those familiar

crews will move toward the downtown areas and work there way to the side streets.

"We have also been keeping an eye on the Colby Municipal Air-

port, but so far there hasn't been too many problems out there," he said.

Official accumulation from the Northwest Research-Extension Center noted that the total amount

'street-dividing piles' along Franklin Ave. Moisture content from the snowfall was in the range of 0.15 inches. This was the first measurable precipitation in Colby since Nov. 14.

of snowfall was 2 inches (up to 8 a.m. when they record measurements daily), but city officials estimated the snowfall at possibly 4 to 5 inches.

Snowfall amounts around the area varied. Goodland had 5 inches (0.33 inches of moisture), Atwood 5 inches and Hoxie 4 inches.

Chris Bieker resigns post as county roads supervisor

By **DARREL PATTILLO**
Colby Free Press

The Thomas County Commissioners accepted a letter of resignation from the county's roads supervisor Chris Bieker at their Friday end-of-the month meeting. Bieker's resignation is effective Feb. 26. The commissioners went into executive session for 20 min-

utes, and when they came back to open meeting, they approved Claire Schrock as Bieker's replacement effective Feb. 27. Schrock had been the road foreman for the county, and Bill Mariman will move into that position also effective Feb. 27.

Todd Unruh, of Midwest Energy, was on hand to explain the boiler situation at the county's office com-

plex. He said that on Jan. 13, a call had come in that there was no heat at the complex. A subsequent inspection revealed that one of the boilers had a crack, which had caused two tubes to fill with water, which activated an emergency shutdown.

Unruh told the commissioners that both boilers, which are rated at 452,000 BTU, were being used to heat the complex, sharing the load equally. Either boiler by itself had been sufficient to heat the complex. He suggested that a new, more efficient boiler be installed as a backup to the still-functioning boiler, at a cost of \$4,690. The new boiler is rated at 300,000 BTU, and will be wired in to the old boiler, to

function as a back-up. The commissioners voted to have the new boiler installed.

In other business:

- The commissioners gave Oliver and Associates permission to speak with county employees about long-term care.

- The commissioners reviewed a letter from the Kansas Department of Health and Environment concerning the timing of opening the new landfill. There had been some confusion among the commissioners about whether the county could open a landfill at the same time it was closing an old landfill.

The letter stated that the county could operate both landfills at the same time. The letter from the state

also explained that it was not necessary to have a new landfill up and running in a short period of time after an application is approved. The letter urged the county to continue its application process, so that a permit would be in place when the county is ready to build a new landfill.

- Kathi Wright and Martin Rinehart gave the commissioners the EMS update for 2002. They reported that transactions and actual runs were up from 2001, with 681 transactions, up 91 from 2001, and 544 actual ambulance runs. A transaction is when the EMS crews are called out. An actual run is when they actually transport a patient or provide some sort of service. The

peak months for EMS activity in 2002 were June, September, and October.

- The commissioners voted to hold on to a \$1,000 deposit for the Trego County Youth Detention Facility until Trego County actually is the facility again. The agreement between 26 counties in western Kansas and Trego County expired in December of 2002.

The commissioners met this morning to sign the county's bioterrorism contract for county health director Kathy Ryan.

The next meeting of the commissioners will be on Monday, Feb. 10, at 9 a.m. in the commissioners' room at the Thomas County courthouse. The public is invited.

'Take is easy...'



DARREL PATTILLO/Colby Free Press

The Colby Community College Vet-Tech program held a pet wash Saturday at the college, taking care of 60 animals. Dakota the Dachshund getting his nails trimmed by students Abby Linenberger (right), and Aubrey Patrick wasn't overly happy..

Real estate purchase is on council's agenda

By **PATTY DECKER**
Free Press Editor

The Colby City Council will hold its regular meeting at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, in council chambers to discuss and consider approving the purchase of real estate and award-

ing bids for a vehicle for the public power department.

With regard to buying property, the council is expected to finish the details in an executive session and bids for a replacement vehicle that would be used by Corky Delziet,

public power director, will be reviewed. In other council business, action is expected on approving a declaration for participation in the firefighters relief fund for 2003 and approval of agreements to do certain work and/or the occupancy of

the city's highway right-of-way by the facilities of a utility for Southwestern Bell, S & T, Time Warner, and Midwest Energy.

The council will also hear reports and discussions by Carolyn Armstrong, city manager.

Shuttle problem might have been heat tiles

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP) — NASA engineers settled into their long, joyless task of figuring out how space shuttle Columbia broke apart, saying conditions in the shuttle's final minutes point to a possible problem with its critical

heat-protection tiles.

NASA says new evidence shows that the temperature on Columbia's left side shot up and the ship was buffeted by greater wind resistance before it disintegrated over Texas, killing all 7 astronauts aboard.

Those conditions forced its automatic pilot to quickly change course.

The combination of these events suggests that thermal tiles may have been damaged during launch. The shuttle's exterior is covered with

thousands of tiles designed to protect it from the extreme heat of re-entry.

Despite the possible clues, shuttle program manager Ron Dittmore stressed Sunday that the information was only preliminary.

WeatherWatch Colby-Oakley area

The numbers
Sunday's high, 51
Low this morning, 22
Soil temperature, 40
Year ago today, 42 and 9
Snowfall: 3-4 inches
Precipitation: 0.15 inches
Records for this date: 70 in 1909, -17 in 1989

The forecast
Tonight, partly cloudy, lows 10 above, west winds up to 15 mph. Tuesday, cloudy, highs upper 30s, southwest winds becoming east up to 10 mph. Tuesday night, partly cloudy, lows mid teens. Wednesday, sunny, highs upper 30s.

Briefly

Various refunds help available

Rosalie Seemann will be at Meadowlark Manor on Friday, Feb. 7 from 9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m. to assist with Homestead Refunds, Food Sales Refunds and LEAP applications.

Soup supper scheduled Friday

Kappa Upsilon, a local sorority, is sponsoring a soup supper on Friday from 5:30 to 7 p.m., at the Colby Community Building when Colby takes on Oberlin in basketball action. The menu will include chili, chicken noodle, and vegetable soups, along with cinnamon rolls, cookies and drinks. The cost is free-will donation with proceeds going to benefit Puddle Duck Pre-School.

Massage clinic planned

The Physical Therapist Department at Colby Community College is once again having their annual massage clinic to raise money for program activities. The event this year will be on Tuesday, Feb. 11 and Tuesday, Feb. 18 from 5 to 9 p.m.

in the PTA department. Costs are available by calling Pat Erickson, department head, at 462-3984, ext. 260. Students will get a discount. The event is open to everyone and reservations can be made by calling Erickson. Walk-ins are also welcome.

Irrigation conference this week

The Central Plains Irrigation Association is holding its 15th annual conference and exposition in Colby on Tuesday and Wednesday at the City Limits Convention Center and Comfort Inn. Due to the overwhelming response, said Donna Lamm, one of the coordinators, it is necessary to limit registration to 225 people. For those planning to attend, Lamm encourages them to call her at 462-7574 or 462-7140 as soon as possible.

Red Cross announces classes

The Thomas County Chapter of the American Red Cross is offering a shelter operations class to help with local shelters in the event of bad weather or other disasters, said Molly

Oliver, spokesperson for the organization. The class is scheduled for Saturday, Feb. 22, from 8:30 a.m. until 12:30 p.m. In addition to the shelter operations class, the Red Cross is always looking for people interested in learning how to drive the ERV (emergency response vehicle).

Rotary Club plans soup supper

The Colby Rotary Club is sponsoring its annual soup supper from 5 to 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 18, during the Colby-Goodland basketball game at the Colby Community Building. The cost is \$4 for adults, \$2 for children 12 and under. Tickets will be available at the door or from any Rotary Club member.

Landfill hours posted

The Thomas County landfill is now on its winter hours, which are: Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.; Sundays, 1 to 4 p.m.

