



COLBY FREE PRESS

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Sewer bill increase sparks petition talk

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

Are people in Colby upset enough about the higher sewer bills to look at an alternative option?

According to Eugene Wieland, council president, there are a lot of people asking him if the city can resurrect the limited sales tax increase instead of charging higher sewer rates in order to pay for the new wastewater treatment plant.

"A lot of people are upset about the higher sewer rates," he said during the council meeting earlier this week.

Carolyn Armstrong, city manager, said she has no problem in researching the lim-

ited sales tax option, but only if a number of people are wanting this.

The research would need to include the level of increase and length of time, she said.

There's no point in looking into this unless a lot of people are serious about the alternative.

"If people are really upset," said Mayor Warren Hixson, "we do have the option of putting this on the ballot. It's at least something worth looking at."

The last time a limited-term sales tax increase was imposed in the city was January of 1997 through December of 1998 and prior to beginning the process, the issue was

voted on by everyone in the city.

After it passed, the two-year limited sales tax was specifically for improvements and expansion of the Pioneer Memorial Library in Colby and the additional 1/2¢ tax generated over \$1 million in that two-year period.

Hixson and other council members agreed that it would have been better if the sales tax had been left in force rather than limiting it to the two years.

"We would have been better off," Hixson said.

Councilman John Bremkamp said he would agree to look at this alternative as well. In order for the council to take these concerns seriously; however, council mem-

bers said they believe a petition would need to be created and submitted to the city.

"We aren't talking about 30 to 40 names (on a petition)," he said, "it would have to be a lot more than that (to begin researching)."

"People need to tell us if they are serious about this (limited-term sales tax)," Bremkamp added.

For those unfamiliar with the issues, the tripling of sewer rates was approved by the city council in early April of 2003 and began with the May 1 billing.

The new rates were \$22 for the first 2,000 gallons of water and \$3.25 per 1,000 gallons of water used above the initial cost.

In most situations, Armstrong said at that meeting in April, the cost will be triple what a resident is currently paying. Prior to the increase, residents were paying \$9 for each 1,000 gallons of water and \$1 for each 1,000 gallons above that.

By raising the rate now, she said, the city would be able to contribute \$2,200,000 towards the project and lower the amount of the loan to around \$6,500,000.

The design for the new plant should be completed by December with bids going out in early spring of 2005.

The location for the new facility will be east and north of Wagoner and Sons, east on Highway 24.

Better than books



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Signs of school winding down for the year were evident when students in the Colby Middle School accelerated reading class enjoyed a bowling and pizza party at Colby Bowl today. Student

who earned 75 points or more were able to participate. The parties are held once each nine weeks. In addition to this party, other events at the school today included movies, birthdays and more.

Commissioners approve five-year county road plan

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

The Thomas County Commissioners heard an update on the road department's five-year plan at today's meeting at the courthouse. The commissioners approved the plan that includes three projects.

Road department supervisor Clair Schrock presented the main projects slated for the next several years as well as input on what those should be.

Commissioner Ron Evans said the top three priorities are finishing three miles of Levant Road south of the I-70 interchange, working on two miles of the same road 10 miles north of Levant and putting down asphalt on Horton Avenue from the Oasis Travel Center to Country Club Drive.

Schrock said Morgan Township might help with the Horton Avenue project when work is ready to start,

but he didn't offer a timetable.

Evans said he was happy with the work the department has been doing.

"I think you guys are doing a good job," he said. "Very seldom do we hear anything and when we do, you go out and take care of it."

In other business, landfill supervisor Larry Jumper was at the meeting to discuss purchasing a used scraper with the road department.

Jumper said one was recently rented and used to stockpile dirt that will be used as cover when the landfill closure project starts. He said renting one worked well but he wanted to explore the possibility of purchasing a used machine.

Evans said the two departments should wait several months when the 2005 budget will be done so they can see how much money they'll have for capital outlay and then proceed. If either department needs a scraper before then, he said one can be rented.

However, commissioner Glen Kersensbrock said a purchase will have to be made at some point.

"Regardless of what happens, we're going to need one," he said.



L. Jumper



Warm's the word

Colby-Oakley-Hoxie

Tonight...Partly cloudy with a 30 percent chance of thunderstorms. Lows in the upper 50s. Southeast winds 10 to 20 mph shifting to the south after midnight. Gusts up to 35 mph.

Friday...Mostly sunny. Highs in the lower 90s. Southwest winds 10 to 20 mph. **Friday night...**Mostly clear. Lows in the upper 50s. West winds 10 to 15 mph and gusty.

Saturday...Mostly sunny with a 30 percent chance of thunderstorms. Highs in the mid 80s. North winds 5 to 10 mph shifting to the east in the afternoon. **Saturday night...**Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of thunderstorms. Lows in the lower 50s. **Sunday...**Partly cloudy. Highs in the mid 80s.

The numbers
Wednesday's high, 86
Low this morning, 60
Records for May 20, 96 in 1956 and 29 in 1931

Year ago today, 60 and 38
Precipitation past 24 hours to 8 a.m. today, 0.00
May total, 0.65
Soil temperature, 69

The sources:
The forecast is from the National Weather Service, and other numbers are from the Northwest Research-Extension Center, Colby. A recorded forecast updated throughout the day is available by calling (785) 899-7119. Current temperatures are available by calling

School board approves contracts; discusses parking lot

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

Contracts for supplemental staff at Colby schools was on the agenda at Monday's Colby school board meeting.

The board approved a list of supplemental contracts for the 2004-2005 school year.

Dewey Augustine, Joel Powell and John Cranston voted against approving the contracts. Board members voting in favor of the contracts were Stan Molstad, Tracy Rogers, Kevan Taylor and Gerry Fulwider.

Cranston made a motion to go into executive session do discuss the list but a motion had already been made to approve the contracts.

The board also discussed recommendations for repairing the Colby High School parking lot. School Superintendent Kirk Nielsen said at the May 3 meeting he would try to get information on options.

He had three recommendations, one from city of Colby street supervisor Gerry Bieker, Elmer Zerr of Zerr Engineering and another from Charles Schwanke.

Nielsen said Bieker suggested using poly-patch on the parking lot, which has been used around the community on Smith Drive and industrial area streets.

Zerr's recommendation was patching the lot until enough money is available to replace it with concrete, and Schwanke's was to patch

the parking lot or use poly-patch.

Nielsen said the poly-patch is expensive but it seems like a good option.

"It's probably worth it," he said.

The board also heard principal's reports. Grade school Principal Terrel Harrison said 53 kindergartners are enrolled for this fall and there will be three five-day a week classes. She said a new teacher will have to be hired because one of the current kindergarten teachers will be moving to help with coordinating a fourth grade technology project between Colby and Brewster schools. The school district received a grant for the project earlier this year.

She also said the school will be

holding its awards assemblies on Thursday and Friday.

Middle school principal Rob Ross said in his report the middle school teachers are gearing up for summer curriculum work and are also getting enrollment for the fall done. He said they'll be using Power School for that and he's optimistic about how it will work.

Ross also mentioned the school will be holding its awards assembly at 1 p.m. Friday.

Brian Kraus, high school principal, said now that graduation is over, the school is concentrating on getting the school year wrapped up.

"I was real pleased with graduation and the behavior of the students," he said.

Finals are Wednesday and Thursday for high school students and on Friday, Kraus said enrollment for the next school year will be the focus.

He also said on Monday he went to Hays High School to look at their surveillance system. Kraus said now that they've seen a system, he will submit a grant request to the Thomas County Sheriff's Office to see if they can get drug money to put toward a camera system for cameras for the outside of the school.

The board also approved two resignations. Laura Krejci, intermediate music teacher at Colby Grade School and Eric Hemmert, the voag teacher at the high school, handed in resignations.

Man sentenced on federal charges from September shoot-out

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

A man who led Colby and area law enforcement officials from five counties on a chase that ended in a shoot-out was sentenced on federal charges Monday at Wichita in

United States District Court for the District of Kansas.

Kena Rice, a spokeswoman with the federal attorney's office in Wichita, said Gerald N. Bryant, II, of Inyokern, Calif. was sentenced to 30 years in federal prison on charges

of possession with intent to distribute and using and carrying a firearm during and in relation to a drug trafficking crime.

Rice said the first charge carries a sentence of 20 years and the second 10 years.

"That will be followed by five years of supervised release," she said.

Bryant and Brian E. Berry, also of Inyokern, were involved in a chase and shoot-out in September. The incident started with a routine traf-

fic stop in Colby and ended on Interstate-70 just inside the Thomas County line when Bryant was shot by law enforcement.

Rice said Berry was granted a continuance on his sentence and no new date has been set.

Briefly

Oakley announces dedication

Dedication ceremonies of the birthplace of the legend of William F. "Buffalo Bill" Cody will be at 11 a.m. on Saturday in Oakley with the unveiling of a more than two-times life-sized bronze statue by sculptor Charlie Norton. In conjunction with the dedication is an exhibit of western art by Charlie and Pat Norton at the Fick Fossil and History Museum in Oakley.

Monument reunion planned May 30

The Monument Alumni School Reunion will be held Sunday, May 30, with a potluck dinner at 1 p.m. at the Monument School.

All graduates and their families, teachers and those who

attended Monument School are encouraged to come and renew old friendships, organizer said.

Share distribution Saturday

The monthly Heartland Share distribution will be Saturday, starting at 10:30 a.m. in the Sacred Heart School gymnasium. There will be extra shares available for those interested.

Scouts seeking donations

Two Colby girl scouts from Troop 162 are making hygiene and comfort disaster relief packages to benefit the Thomas County Red Cross.

Jessica Kennedy and Sarah Oesterreich, girl scouts, have

left boxes at Colby Photo, Pioneer Memorial Library, College Drive Assembly, the Berean Church or the Colby Free Press, for donations.

The deadline to donate items is Friday. For a complete list of items needed for the hygiene and comfort packages, call Deanna Oesterreich, 462-3267.

Flea market fundraiser nearing

The Thomas County Alcohol and Drug Abuse Council is sponsoring its annual flea market, Saturday, starting at 8 a.m., at the old Taylor Motors Building (next to Service Oil), 445 N. Lake in Colby.

All proceeds from this annual event will benefit programs and other materials needed by the council. For questions, call 462-6111.

