



COLBY FREE PRESS

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At commissioner's meeting Communication contract questioned

By TISHA COX
Colby Free Press

Thomas County's 2005 communications contract was one of the items on the agenda at Tuesday's end of month meeting of the county commissioners.

Undersheriff Mike Baughn and Kathi Wright and Martin Rinehart with the county's emergency medical service discussed the contract, approved at a November meeting, but the three had some reservations about it. They were concerned about budgetary shortfalls at the end of next year because both EMS and the sheriff's office authorized what was spent last year when costs have gone up.

"This was something we all over looked," Baughn said.

Wright said she had no problem with paying salary but had issues with paying social security, disability, health insurance and worker's comp.

"We're in the red before we even get started," she said.

Rinehart suggested negotiating for just the salary, but commissioner Ron Evans said the insurance and other benefits are part of salary.

He said part of the problem was that the county received the contract later than usual. Commissioner Glen Kersenbrock said it's cheaper to contract for services rather than

the county provide its own.

Evans assured them they don't have to worry if they do have any shortfalls.

On another matter, the county found out it probably won't have to deal with funding shortages.

The commissioners discussed the county's involvement in work on Horton Avenue, for which grant money is available.

County road supervisor Clair Schrock told the commissioners the county received tentative approval for a grant for some of the roadwork on the \$413,000 project, for which the county would be responsible for \$105,000.

However, there is a catch.

Schrock said there are two options — waiting until 2008 for funding or seeing if it can be moved up, or going ahead and doing the project and absorbing the cost.

Evans said the project would be extending Country Club Drive where the pavement ends at I-70 and paving the road until it meets Horton Avenue, which runs east and west in front of the Oasis Travel Center. He said the city plans at some point to finish Horton from the Oasis to Country Club Drive.

Schrock also wanted to know if the commissioners have interest in going in on the city's contract with Penco Engineering, but Evans said

the county will do its own work.

The commissioners also dealt with several other matters, including a 15-minute executive session to discuss personnel matters at the health department. After returning to open session, they approved the hiring of an additional employee for the health department.

Kersenbrock also asked department administrator Juanita Dewey if they've received any flu vaccine.

Dewey said no adult vaccine is available but some pediatric doses are available when parents bring their children in for shots.

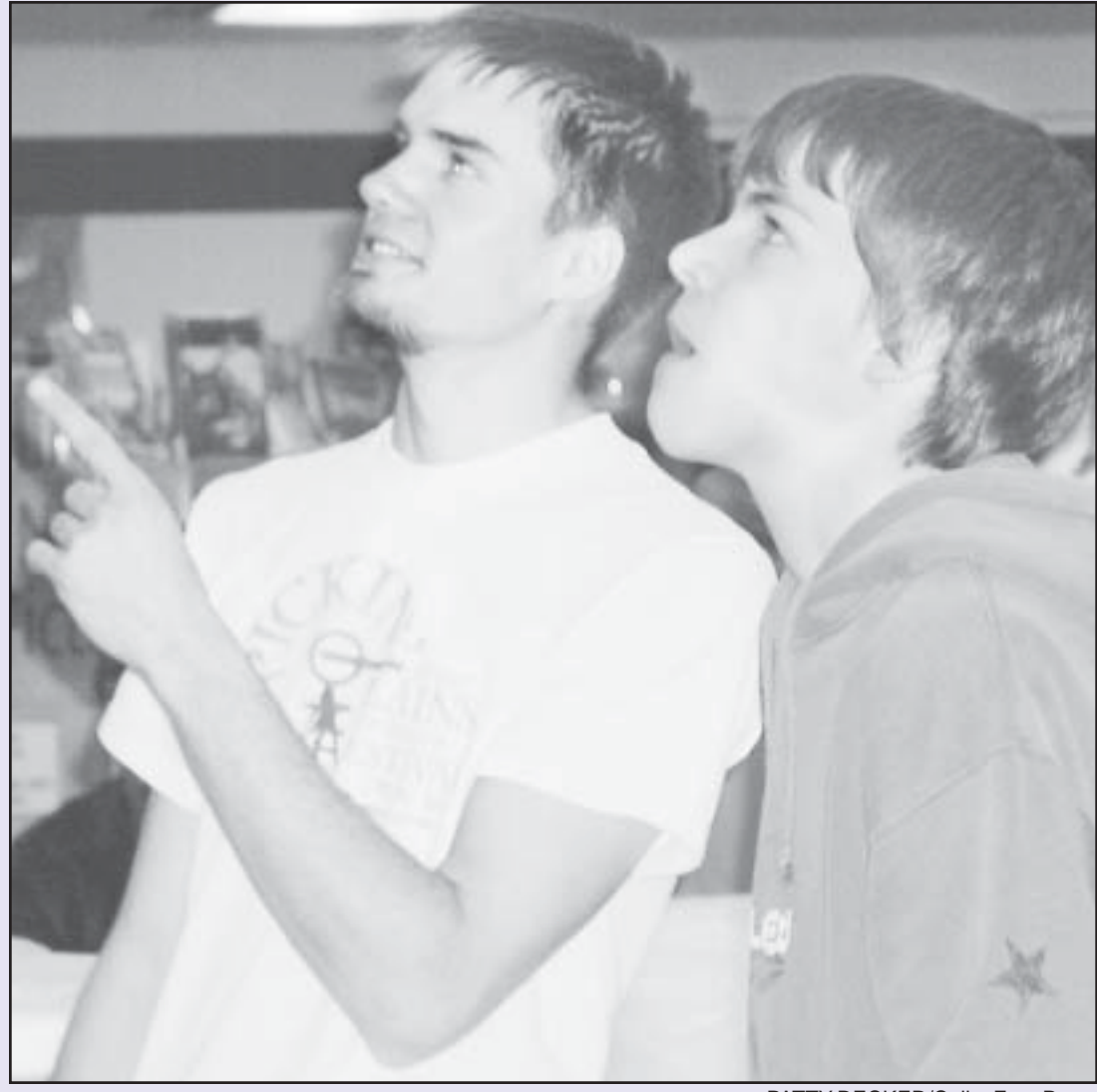
She also said Thomas County clinics received 1,380 doses of vaccine that was distributed to high-risk individuals, which was considerably less than the 3,000 people considered at risk in the county.

The commissioners also approved a hazardous materials contract with the Colby Fire Department. Fire Chief Bob McLemore presented the contract, which will run through Jan. 1, 2005 through Dec. 31, 2007 and cost \$14,800 per year.

He said it's to provide haz-mat cleanup, rescue and also to function as a state rapid response team for chemical accidents.

The commissioners approved Nex-Tech's renewal for \$10,415 for computer support at the courthouse.

Admiring the arts



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

ABOVE: Brandon McLemore, senior, and Matt Hankin, junior, were among more than 50 people attending Tuesday night's "Bistro" held in the library at Colby High School. McLemore was pointing to one of the many self-portraits created by students in art class, which were on display around the library. The event, said Carol Robison, librarian, is in its second year and offers students and faculty the opportunity to celebrate the arts in all its forms. "It is fun, light and informal," she said, "and a night out to watch local talent." Those participating either sang, danced, read poetry, did skits or played a musical instrument. McLemore and his brother, Blake, played instruments and sang during the event. LEFT: Amy Dickman, junior, shared her talent on the piano during the event.



Parade top event Sunday

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

Everyone is invited to take part in this year's Colby Christmas Light Parade beginning at 6 p.m., Sunday, starting on the south end of Franklin Avenue by TNT Auction. The theme is, "Bringing the Holidays Home."

Whether entering something in the parade or watching the event curbside, the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce is hoping for another great turnout, said Jada Tubbs, executive director. The event started seven years ago and Jon Eicher, who has been involved as a committee member since the beginning, said it gets bigger and better every year.

"The first year, I helped Donnie Hughes, who was one of the original committee members, with lining up the parade entries," he said.

By the third year, Eicher said, the parade committee thought it would be a better parade with an emcee announcing participants and having judges award prize money.

In keeping with that tradition, Tubbs said there are five categories that will be awarded first and second place in business, religious, organization, best lit, and youth entries. In total \$375 will be awarded to the best in each category with \$50 for first and \$25 for second place. "Last year we had more than 55 entries with a lot of people putting lights on animals, trailers, combines, pickups, and even themselves," she said. There were also a variety of the Grinch. Adding to the flair, Jim Brown will be driving Santa and Mrs. Claus in his "Christmas" red 1974 restored Cadillac.

Another highlight at this year's parade will be Wal-Mart and the Chamber co-sponsoring hot cider at the judges' stage, located by Homeland Real Estate and the Sports Shoppe.

"The hot cider will be available for everyone," she said.

Tubbs also wanted to remind everyone there is no cost to enter the parade and there is no deadline.

"We are encouraging and would appreciate anyone planning to be in the contest to call in and give a brief description of their entry so that the emcee can announce them Sunday night" she said.

All parade participants are asked to arrive between 5:30 and 5:45 p.m. near the TNT Auction building so they can be lined up for the event.

Regarding the many people who volunteer their time to the event, Eicher said there are too many to name, adding that every year it's the entire community that makes the parade successful.

However, he did want to recognize Leilani Thomas, director of the Colby Convention and Visitors Bureau, who has always been a "big push" in getting the event organized. The same can be said for the judges, which this year include Mayor Warren Hixson, Colby Free Press Publisher Tom Dreiling and Mike Wiens, BankWest loan officer and co-owner of Someplace Special, along with the emcee this year, Thomas County Commissioner Ron Evans.

Tubbs asks those participating to call the Chamber at 460-3401 with entries, questions or suggestions to make the parade even better.

"For those who haven't ever been to the Christmas Light Parade in Colby, please plan to come — it's fabulous," she said.

Brunch fund raiser Thursday

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

The Colby Women's League is again having its holiday brunch, Thursday, from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., at the Colby Country Club.

Now in its 8th year, the league has held the brunch as a way of celebrating the start of the holidays while at the same time using donations from the event to help other organiza-

tions, said Pat Criss, one of the members.

Everyone is welcome to attend the brunch with donations this year going toward the Colby College ReEntry program, Hospice, Pioneer Memorial Library, and the Prairie Museum of Art and History, she said.

League members include Criss, Anita Hills, Sandy Kriss, Nancy

Saddler, Judith Sears, Melany Shalz, Sidney Strait, Carol Jo Sweat, Becky White and Esther Woofter and each of these people encourages everyone to attend the event.

"Start this holiday season by celebrating with friends," Criss said.

For questions or details about the brunch or making a donation, contact any of the members.

Briefly

Help needed for Christmas baskets

The Thomas County Genesis Board is asking for volunteers to help pack Christmas baskets again this year. The packing will begin at 7 p.m. in the Thomas County 4-H Building on Friday, Dec. 10. Everyone who can is encouraged to volunteer, said Geri Landry, with Genesis.

Library plans holiday activity

Pioneer Memorial Library is sponsoring a 'Make 'n Take' ornaments activity for youth ages 9-13 through the holidays. The first activity begins Monday at 4 p.m. with three more planned on Dec. 6, 13, and 20 at the same time. For questions, call the library at 462-4460.

Council provides out-of-town transportation

The Thomas County van, driven by volunteers, will be attending the out of town Western Plains Arts Council performances. Any person with a council membership may ride the van on a first-come first-served basis. A donation will be required, said Rosalie Seemann, one of the coordinators. Anyone wanting to ride in the van may call the Senior Progress Center to reserve one of the 8 seats between 8 - 10 a.m. the week before the performance. The van will always leave from the Senior Progress Center and Seemann will be the primary driver with Vicki Waldschmidt as backup driver. For questions, call Seemann at (785) 586-2240.

Names sought for 'Heart Tree'

Organizers of the "Heart Tree" are once again seeking names of children who could benefit from having their wish realized during the holi-

day season. The "Heart Tree" was established three years ago in remembrance of Dr. Jeff Jennings, who died suddenly at the age of 29 and prior to Christmas in 2001. The tree symbolizes Dr. Jennings' love for the holiday season, coordinators said. Anyone who might know of a child in need is asked to call Jennifer Van Eaton at Sacred Heart, 462-2179.

VFW Auxiliary meeting schedule

The Veterans of Foreign Wars Auxiliary will meet the second Friday of each month at 2 p.m. at the VFW Post home in Colby.

Heartland SHARE sign-up

Heartland SHARE sign-up continues this week at the State Farm Insurance Office, 905 E. Fourth. The Share for December will be chicken nuggets, bacon, omelettes, chicken pot pies, ground beef, fruits and vegetables, plus two hours of community service and \$17.50. The December special is two pounds of jumbo shrimp and four rib-eye steaks for \$20. For questions, call Gene Griffin, 460-3579.

Wheelchairs and more available at VFW

Officials with the Colby VFW are urging anyone who has borrowed crutches, wheelchairs or other medical equipment and no longer are using these items to return them to the facility, 220 N. Lake Ave. Dale Deaver, one of the VFW members in charge of the equipment, said borrowing medical equipment is free and available to anyone in need of these items for as long as necessary. The VFW is also looking for crutches, wheelchairs, and other medical equipment as donations. For those needing equipment, have donations or need assistance in returning items, call Deaver at (785) 443-1113.

Colby
Ludell
McDonald



Gradual warming trend

Tonight...Mostly clear. Lows mid- to upper-teens. Northwest winds 5 to 10 mph. Thursday...Mostly clear. Highs in the 40s. West winds 10 to 15 mph. Thursday night...Partly cloudy. Lows in the upper teens to around 20. Westerly winds around 10 mph. Friday...Partly cloudy. Highs in the mid 40s. Friday night...Partly cloudy. Lows around 20. Saturday...Partly cloudy. Highs in the lower 50s.

The numbers
Tuesday's high, 32
Low this morning, 4
Year ago today, 77 and 32
Records for this date, 80 in 1917 and -1 in 1985
Precipitation past 24 hours to 8 a.m. today, 0.00
November total, 2.51 inches
November snowfall: 5.5 inches
Soil temperature, 36

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 460-TEMP.

