



COLBY
FREE PRESS

City begins using water treated at plant

By Patty Decker

Free Press Editor

After months of testing, the city is now using water from wells located near the former Ace Services site in Colby as part of its main drinking water supply.

Prior to April, the Environmental Protection Agency, Kansas Department of Health and Environment and the City of Colby worked together cleaning up and removing the chrome that infiltrated the water supply east of downtown Colby.

After more than a year of testing and funneling out impurities using 11 wells for that purpose, along with the original city well, they are now successfully sucking the plume and treating it for human consumption.

“We test twice a day, seven days a week, along with sending samples to Salina once a week and the federal government running their tests,” said Jim Helus, water treatment plant operator.

The treatment facility is located at 500 E. 4th (east of the former Golden Hardware) and about 1.1 to 1.2 million gallons of water are run through the plant every day, he said.

The dozen wells are all located to the east of the plant to contain the contaminated plume as the process of purifying the water will continue

for several years.

The plume is explained is the chrome substance on top of the water and the wells are pumping in the middle of that substance, he said.

As the circle (plume) gets smaller, the well will continue expanding back out.

As for when the contamination is completely gone, is the decision of the feds with the Environment Protection Agency.

“We are pumping 400 gallons a minute,” Helus said, “with one check after another making it impossible for contamination to get by us.”

Within the water treatment plant there are three vessels, he said, with one taking chrome out, another vessel to lag and the third off line. The third vessel goes on line when the lead in the lag tank readings get too high and goes off line and tanks the change out. During the summer months, the treated water is being moved into the city’s water supply as needed and typically in the winter, the 1 million gallons per day are funneled to the Prairie Dog Creek.

“This water is treated as well and is as pure as the drinking water,” he said. However, because the contamination needs to continue being



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Jim Helus, operator of the Water Treatment Plant in Colby, checked over the many safety mechanisms in place to insure that all treated water leaving the facility is clean and ready for human consumption.

treated, that’s why it is rerouted to the creek. Helus said the facility is “impressive” and for those curious

about it and wondering why the water is going down the creek at times, they might want to stop by

and visit. “When the water tower is full, then the treated water goes down the creek, except without the

chlorine,” he said. For those who would like to tour the plant, Helus encourages them to call 460-4480.

Commissioners hear first of many budget requests

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

It’s that time again. Budget time. And the Thomas County Extension office made its annual budget request for 2006 fiscal year at this morning’s county commissioners meeting at the courthouse.

Dan O’Brien, of the Northwest Research-Extension Center, Dave Evert, a member of the Extension board and Extension agents Doug Musick, Joe Leibbrandt and Dianne Gerstner were all on hand.

O’Brien said last year’s request was for \$107,000 and this year they

were asking for \$112,000, partially to help cover the cost of an additional agent.

He said they hired Leibbrandt on a temporary basis last year to fill in for Musick while he was deployed to the Middle East with the Kansas Army National Guard. Then, family and consumer sciences agent D’Ette Scholtz took a position in Nebraska last spring, leaving the office without an agent.

O’Brien said they froze hiring in July of last year then later decided to start looking for an agent to replace Scholtz, and hired Gerstner to

do that. Gerstner’s first day was today. They will also retain Leibbrandt on a temporary basis for two to three years, he said, which will give the county three agents until it decides to go back to two.

Chairman Ron Evans said he thinks they’re doing a good job, and has no complaints.

“We’ll see what we can do,” he said, adding they will hear budget requests from more than 25 entities before they’re done planning the county’s budget for next year.

“We’re not playing favorites,” Evans said. “We’re not going to

slight anyone.”

The subject of consolidating extension with another county also came up. Last year, the commissioners heard a request to consolidate with Rawlins County. Evans said he knows it will come up again.

“I think it’s the wave of the future,” he said. O’Brien said he would change one thing about how it was presented last year. Instead of meeting with the commissioners from each county separately, he would get them all together at the same time, which he thought would cut down on confusion.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Dave Evert, a member of the Thomas County Extension board and Dan O’Brien of the Kansas State University Northwest Research-Extension in Colby, made their budget request earlier today.

Bountiful bargains



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Mandy Edmundson and Kayla Skiles organized items at their garage sale Friday. There were one of several around the community over the weekend. Garage sales have taken their place with other community traditions and generally attract good size crowds.

Thomas County takes hard line on department’s use of credit cards

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

County departments will have to change how they use credit cards. The Thomas County commissioners, at their meeting this morning, mandated that all departmental cards be turned in to County Clerk Shelly Harms.

Chairman Ron Evans said the cards can be checked out as needed and instead of having so many cards running around, departments can use the county’s charge accounts at local businesses.

“We’re going to tighten the reins

on credit cards,” he said. “This is our deal and we’re sticking to it.”

The decision was made because the topic came up at educational meetings attended by commissioners Paul Steele and Ken Christiansen and Harms where counties were cautioned about the dangers of credit card use and petty cash funds.

Evans said he wants a report at the end of this month’s meeting on Thursday, June 30 to see if everyone complied and how things are working.

The commissioners also received

a report from road department supervisor Clair Schrock on how their summer projects are moving along.

Schrock said they’re mowing and doing other summer maintenance and will continue those efforts leading up to and during harvest. They are getting ready for harvest in their own way — laying asphalt and other road maintenance, but will stop once harvest starts and begin again when it’s over.

He said his department will also furnish a few workers to help the city pour concrete on Horton Avenue.

Disc jockey questioned in disappearance

ORANJESTAD, Aruba (AP) — A disc jockey on a party boat who has been detained in the disappearance of an Alabama teenager appeared today before a judge who was to decide whether there was sufficient cause to continue holding him.

Attorney General Caren Janssen would not comment on how the judge ruled after the half-hour hearing with the detainee, whom his employer has identified as 26-year-old Steve Gregory Croes.

Croes pulled the white T-shirt he was wearing up over his head to cover his face as he was led into the court in handcuffs. He was later whisked away in a police car.

Croes was taken into custody early Friday, a day after giving po-

lice a statement in connection with the disappearance of 18-year-old Natalee Holloway, who vanished May 30 while celebrating her high school graduation with other students from Alabama.

Croes said he knew one of two Surinamese brothers also being held in the case because they went to the same Internet cafe, his employer, Marcus Wiggins, has said.

It was not known what other connection he may have had to either the brothers or a fourth young man in detention, the son of a justice official in Aruba. Nobody has been charged in the case.

Holloway, of Mountain Brook, Ala., disappeared in the early hours of May 30, the last day of a five-day vacation with 124 students cel-

ebrating their high school graduation. Her passport and packed bags were found in her room.

Joran van der Sloot, 17, and two Surinamese brothers Deepak Kalpoe, 21, and Satish Kalpoe, 18, were among the last people reported to be with Holloway the night she disappeared. The three friends said they took Holloway to a northern beach but dropped her off at her hotel, where they claim she was approached by a security guard.

On Saturday, a judge ordered Joran van der Sloot and his two friends to stay in jail for at least another week.

Under Dutch law, which Aruba follows as a Dutch protectorate, authorities can detain people for up to 116 days without charging them.

