



COLBY FREE PRESS

8 pages

Van offers rides to everyone

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

Need a ride? The county can hook you up.

Through a grant from the state and federal government, residents in Colby can get a ride to the doctor's office or around town when they need it.

Barb Hopper, assistant deputy county clerk, said the service started in 1991 when the county got its first van.

"That was the year the program was initiated," she said.

The county got the current van in 1999, which is driven by Ed Dean.

The van seats 12 people and runs from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

It services the city of Colby and also can be used for special events by appointment only and with an approved driver.

Hopper said a driver must be approved by County Clerk Shelly Harms or the county commissioners. It's been used during the annual Rod Run to shuttle people and she said another example is the Pickin' on the Plains bluegrass festival.

She said they ask for \$1 a trip, which isn't a requirement but they do appreciate the donations.

"It doesn't have to be the elderly or handicapped," Hopper said.

The van is dispatched and scheduled through the Senior Progress Center with director Donna Schielke making the radio calls over the van's two-way ra-



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Ed Dean, driver of the public transit van owned by the county, got ready to go make a run this morning.

dio. Hopper stressed the van isn't a taxi service. It's available to people who need a ride to appointments or to get around town.

The service stays busy, Hopper said.

"He's usually full all day," she said. Hopper is in charge of the service and goes to the quarterly Kansas Department of Transportation

transit meetings and does the monthly report for the state.

The van operates on a state department of transportation and federal grant.

It also receives \$8,000 in operating money from the commissioners.

Hopper had to write a grant and the monthly reports to keep the

money available for the service.

She also has to advertise it in the paper once a week so people know who to call, which is another requirement. They must also meet other state requirements regarding safety and who drives the van.

For information or to schedule a ride, call 460-2901.

City attorney reviews rules of conduct

By Patty Decker
Free Press Editor

The city's attorney reviewed four of the most important aspects of the new League of Municipalities handbook during the council meeting Tuesday night.

Attorney Dave Starkey said there are four areas he wanted to talk about dealing with the statutory laws of municipalities, the budget laws, the role of councilmen, city manager and mayor and open meetings act. In his brief synopsis of the handbook, he said that municipalities is a general term to include government officials whether in the city, county, school, or college.

The statutory laws, he said, are exactly the same. Starkey said he cannot believe how many times he has heard political candidates say that "if elected, they would straighten things out."

Under the statutory provisions; however, there are fiduciary duties entrusted to that official or in other words, certain trusts that the elected official must adhere to based on public confidence and within the guidelines of the law.

By following the statutory laws outlined in the handbook, he said, councilmen can take certain risks and know what the consequences are, which is why it is so important for officials to understand what can and cannot be done, Starkey said.

The main points he wanted to discuss on budget laws included that municipalities must have a balanced budget.

"When the budget law was passed by the legislature in the 1930s, Kansas was in bad shape," he said. "The idea was that once a budget was adopted, municipalities had to live by it until the next fiscal year."

There are ways to amend this, he noted, referring to the cash basis law.

"Financial affairs of municipalities," Starkey said, "are to be conducted only on a cash basis, encumbered or spent."

Cities cannot borrow, but they have the option of industrial revenue bonds which are generated by utility revenues or general obligation bonds, generated by taxes from the city.

In the event of a disaster, such as the recent power truck breaking down, even no-fund warrants can be issued, but those are some of the only ways a city can get money to fund items.

Lease-purchase agreements are also acceptable for large items such as fire trucks, huge pieces of equipment, and the like. In these situations, it is the only legal way to borrow and not violate the cash basis law.

The third issue dealt with the different roles officials play within a municipality. In Kansas, cities are identified as either first, second or third class cities and the category is based on population and each has different forms of government.

"Colby is a second class city," he said and its form of government is mayor, city council and city manager. The mayor, he said, has statutory duties as the executive office of the city and the mayor doesn't vote unless there is a tie.

"The city manager is a profes-

sional hired by the council and mayor and, who serves at the pleasure of the council," Starkey said.

Part of the duties, but not inclusive, is that the city manager will appoint department heads (sometimes with the concurrence of council, but not mandatory) along with the day-to-day operation of the city.

As a council person, each should know what their function is.

"There can be a problem when councilmen as elected officials go to the source of what they see as a concern and try to solve it," he said.

Starkey said that as council members, "if there is something you don't like, go to the city manager."

It would then be up to the city manager to take care of the problem. One thing Starkey said council members need to keep in mind is that 98 percent of what they do is done around the council table during regular or special meetings so that the public can be included in those discussions.

The other percentages are talking to constituents. Council members are not fulfilling their role when they take matters into their own hands. For example, if a council member believes the police are not doing their job and they don't like the remedy by the city manager, there is still another option.

"Remember, the city manager serves at your pleasure and if the city manager is not doing the job you expect, then you can find another city manager."

Regarding the open meetings act, Starkey again reminded the council that when a violation occurs, there is a civil penalty of \$500 for each violation.

He added that it is normal for people to visit, but whenever there is a majority of a quorum discussing the business of the city—that's a violation of the open meetings act. In situations where council members might be aware of a split in a difficult decision, it is also a violation of the open meetings act to call other council members and try to get a block of the council to vote a certain way.

Citing another example, Starkey used current council members. "Say Mitch (Beims) decides to talk with Mark (Beringer) about an issue. Then Jim (Brown) calls Mark (Beringer)—that considered three council members and a quorum and it's also a violation," he said.

E-mails can be a violation of the open meeting act as well, in a similar scenario. The idea is to talk at the council table in order to give all the other council members the knowledge on issues and shared equally.

The only exceptions deemed private or sensitive involve executive sessions (closed door meetings) for non-elected personnel, attorney-client privilege as some examples. However, when council members leave an executive session, the knowledge about that session needs to remain private and confidential.



D. Starkey

Children's classes drawing lots of interest

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

Children in Thomas County have a new outlet for their creativity this summer.

Classes through the Summer Youth Program are keeping kids busy and giving them something to do, said director Clara Berry.

What started out as an eight-week pilot program with eight classes last year has experienced an explosion in growth in its first full year of existence.

Each class was offered three days a week for one hour each.

Last summer, there were an average of 12 kids per class.

That's gone up to 20-27 kids per class this year.

"We had great success with the

children showing up," Berry said. Classes started early in June and run through July. Classes are from 1-5 p.m. four days a week at Colby United Methodist Church, which is a program sponsor and where the classes are held.

Offering such as chess, photography, Spanish, rocketry, cooking with Oreos and more have filled up with children from around the county.

Sixteen classes are offered this year, with sessions on digital photography and Web page design still to come before the summer is over.

"We bought all the supplies so it was possible for all to come," Berry said.

Two individuals paid for last year's classes and this summer, the

entire program is funded through grants. She said Deanna Vogler, a professional grant writer, wrote grants to seven different organizations to secure funding.

With the success of the summer program, there is talk of expanding to after school this fall and she's also been asked by parents if any classes for adults are planned.

"There's been a lot of adults asking," she said, adding there has been a definite need of something for children to do in the summer.

Berry said she's also talked with Pioneer Memorial Library director Jeff Friesen about collaborating on some ideas.

She said the program has gotten help from churches in the community, volunteers, teachers and the

school district has also showed their interest and support.

Before the classes started, Berry said more than 800 booklets were distributed around the county to Gem, Selden, Brewster, Rexford and in Colby, the public schools, Heartland Christian School and Sacred Heart Catholic School.

"It's just been incredible," she said. "It has been really wonderful."

On Sunday, July 31, there will be an open house at the church to show off what the children have learned and made, including a display of photographs, custom frames and other projects.

Berry said some classes are still available.

For questions, information, parents can call her at (785) 460-8267.

The gift of life

Dianna Middleton of Gove, left, waited while American Red Cross nurse Kay Schrauner, got ready to disconnect her from the pint of blood she donated during a blood drive Tuesday at the Colby Community Building. Jo Cheney, one of the organizers, said 123 units of blood were collected from 140 people who showed up to donate. Of those, nine were first-time donors.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Internet system changing

The Colby Free Press is making changes in its Internet system which should make service faster and more reliable.

We are using an upgraded line for inbound and outbound traffic. Dialup Internet customers should not notice any changes or problems.

For those who do, please call

Tom Betz at 785-899-2338, or Evan Barnum, 785-462-3963. They can give you a new domain name server, or "DNS," number to enter into your computer's control panel.

Using the new number may provide faster downloads, even if your computer is working OK. To find out, call Betz.

Colby's Harvest Office ready to help farmers

By Patty Decker
Free Press Editor

The Harvest Office opened its doors Monday for this year's season, said Roger Hale, manager.

Sponsored by the Department of Commerce, Hale said the office is open each day starting at 8 a.m. and will remain open as long as necessary. Located at the Oasis Travel Center on the east side, Hale said he

works with farmers, cutters and farm laborers. In other words, if a farmer needs help with his harvest, he should call the harvest office.

Conversely, if cutters and laborers are looking for farmers needing help, they too should call the office at (785) 460-0800.

Hale said today that some wheat producers in Hoxie have already started cutting.

"We have been getting reports of moisture content at 10, 11 and 13 with test weights over 61, which is very good," Hale said.

This program depends on local public and private sector support to ensure the free service is cost effective to taxpayers, said Joyce Heiman, state coordinator. This year, wheat harvest offices are located not only in Colby, but also Anthony,

Bucklin, Caldwell, Coldwater, Dodge City, Garden City, Great Bend, Greensburg, Kingman, Kinsley, Lyons, Oberlin, Pratt, Tribune, and Wellington. Commerce Workforce Center staff will also operate offices in Hays and Liberal.

Kansas leads the nation in wheat production and wheat flour milled. Last year 314,500,000 bushels of wheat were harvested.

