



COLBY FREE PRESS

Portion of landfill to close

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press

Thomas County Landfill Director Larry Jumper met with the commissioners Monday to talk about the closing of a landfill pit in 2007.

"We want to do this cooperatively," Jumper said about working with a contractor.



L. Jumper

The commissioners see a cooperative effort between county workers and a contractor which will be hired through a bid process next year as a way to cut in half costs of closing the full pit. The pit covers about 10 acres of ground.

"Our objective is to have our county guys work some overtime if needed and save us some money," Evans said.

Commissioners are hoping to cut the estimated cost of \$420,566 down to about \$250,000 by using county staff.

Jumper, along with Dana Daniels of Miller and Associates of Kearney, Neb., will oversee the closure process.

Daniels talked about various steps required in closing a solid waste pit.

"We are basically looking at having to place an 18-inch law perm layer then place a vegetation layer on top of that," Daniels said. "As we work toward this, we usually leave some waste in place for some time without disturbing it so it can settle. I think sometime next year we can close the pit."

Jumper and Daniels have regular contact with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment to prepare for the task of closing the pit.

Daniels said some of the work to be done includes site compaction, construction of proper filtration layers to keep water from getting to trash, as well as installation of gas vents to release gas created from decomposing trash. The site must be mulched, seeded and fenced.

"Keep Larry informed and Larry will keep us informed," Evans told Daniels. "Larry's doing a good job out at the landfill."

Also at Monday's meeting, Thomas County Register of Deeds Maybelle Moore informed commissioners about some deteriorating microfilm in her office.

"I've got a problem with some from 1972 to 1993," Moore said.

She said plastic dividers between pieces of microfilm are causing the film to become stained. Moore said she will be contacting Mid-Continent Micrographics, Inc. in St. Joseph, Mo., for an estimate on correcting the problem and maintaining the film.

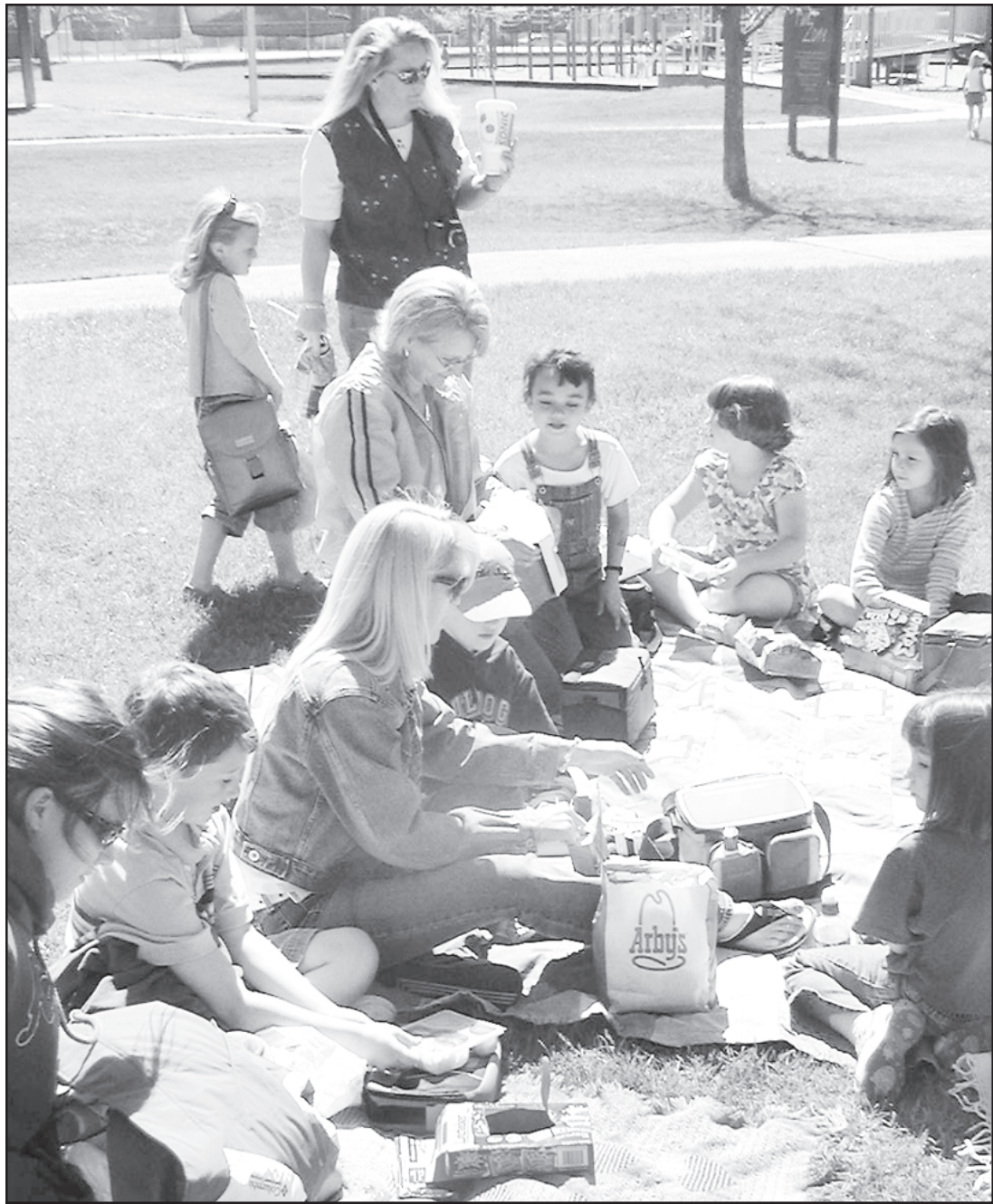
In other business, commissioners reviewed a letter from Kenneth Morgan, program income manager with the Kansas Department of Commerce. Morgan said the amount of Micro-loan repayments allowed from administrative expenses has been increased from 3 percent to 7 percent to help the county recoup expenses of running the program.

The commissioners reviewed the emergency medical March and April monthly reports, the 2006 noxious weed management plan, and a letter from Kevin Wark about bind weed at the fairgrounds which will be sprayed.

Also reviewed was a projected budget from High Plains Mental Health Center and a funding request from that agency. The request was tabled until the commissioners review all budgets.

Approved was a request by Thomas County Health Nurse Juanita Gatz for a smoking pod receptacle to be placed at the entrance of the Thomas County Office Complex on Range Avenue.

Picnic party



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Colby Grade School first graders had a day at Fike Park Tuesday. Students from all grades at the school spent time at the park this week as part of end-of-year activities. Today is the last day of school for students in the Colby School District.

Fire season arrives in county

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

The summer fire season has started.

The Colby Fire Department responded to small grass fires three days this week, said fire chief Bob McLemore.

The latest was Wednesday on U.S. Highway 24 west of Colby.

Tuesday's fire was on Interstate 70, in the ditch near mile post 63.

Monday's fire was near mile post 47 near Mingo.

"They've all been very small," McLemore said. "They're just in spots."

He said the cause of the 170 fires was probably hot brakes on a vehicle throwing sparks. There was no conclusive cause of Wednesday's fire.

Today, the National Weather Service issued a very high fire danger warning for Thomas County. Mc-

Lemore said it isn't the first time this season, and it won't be the last.

"That will probably be the situation, with occasional rains bringing it down for short periods of time," he said.

Earlier this week, the fire danger was also rated as high.

McLemore said warm, dry weather with no precipitation makes for ideal fire conditions.

"People should be cautious and careful," he said.

Oakley ponders electricity sale

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press

Oakley City Council set an Aug. 15 deadline of whether or not to sell the town's electric system.

"We have a definitive agreement on the transmission lines from Midwest Energy," Oakley City Clerk Rose Wessell said.

"We also have an offer on the power plant."

Initially started in March, the city now has two power companies interested in the process. Mayor Frank Munk today said WaKeeney-based Western Cooperative Power Company is also interested in the lines and plant.

"Western Cooperative wants to make us an offer," he said. "They haven't given us a yes or no, but we are waiting to get everything on the table."

The sale is being considered due to expensive upgrades necessary to keep the electric distribution system operational.

According to Wessell, the city currently has 1,000 active meters which generated \$1.8 million in utility sales in 2005.

However, it cost \$1.9 million dollars to furnish electricity to those meters in 2005.

Munk said last year's hurricane season and spiked utility rates prompted the city council to consider selling the system.

Midwest Energy has offered \$2.5 million dollars for the power lines, poles, meters and metering equipment, electric materials and

supplies, digger derrick, street lights and various other equipment and supplies.

Munk said the sale would "control the customer's costs" and "Midwest Energy would have to go to the Kansas Corporation Commission for an increase."

If Oakley does sell its system, Midwest Energy claims it will spend \$750,000 in upgrades the first year and take over all the billing.

"If the city votes not to sell, the city has to spend between \$2 million and \$4 million dollars to fix the lines and the power plant," Wessell said.

Wessell said the city's registered voters would have to approve the sale before it could become final. It's not sure when the issue will be put on a ballot.

The earliest would be the August primary election or a special election.

Logan County Clerk Pat Schippers said city council members must first advise residents of the proposed sale.

"The city has to pass an ordinance saying who the proposed buyer is

and the amount of money of the sale," she said.

"Then the city must hold an election within 40 days of signing the ordinance."

Schippers said if the issue comes down to a special election, state law requires the buyer to pay all the costs of a special election.

She said a vote not to sell the lines, power plant and associated equipment could have a negative impact on the community.

"This would mean an increase in rates to pay back the money and we could have to lay people off," she said.

Wessell said rumors the city would loose control of its power source are not accurate.

"Saying we'd loose control isn't right because we don't have control now because we are purchasing electricity from Midwest Energy already," Wessell said.

She said should the sale go through to Midwest Energy it is likely rates could drop.

"Basically everybody's going to be effected," Wessell said.

2.5 percent increase

Board gives administrators pay raises

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Colby School Board approved various raises for administrators during its meeting Monday.

The board approved a 2.5 percent raise for administrators and an additional \$2,150 each for grade school principal Terrel Harrison and high school principal Rocky Robbins.

Harrison made \$61,047 during the 2005-2006 school year and is receiving a raise of \$3,750. Her salary will be \$62,724 for the 2006-2007 school year.

Robbins' salary was \$64,000 this year and his raise is \$3,750. He will be paid \$67,750 for the 2006-2007 school year.

Also receiving raises were Superintendent Kirk Nielsen, middle school principal Robb Ross and district curriculum director/Thomas County Academy principal Diana Wieland. They each received a 2.5 percent raise.

Nielsen will receive a \$2,157 more next year, raising his pay to \$88,413.

Wieland's salary will go up \$1,618, making her pay \$66,312 next year.

Ross' increase is \$1,687, bringing his salary to \$69,143 for the 2006-2007 school year.

The board went into executive session four times. The first session was for 30 minutes and included high school teacher and head wrestling coach Mitch Beims. The sessions were all on personnel matters and administrative salaries. No action was taken.

Vehicle purchases

The board approved letting bids for the purchase of a Chevrolet Suburban or Ford Excursion and a 41-passenger bus. The bus will replace a 1992 35-passenger bus with 198,000 miles.

The district hasn't purchased a

bus since 2004, but did purchase an SUV last year.

Reports

The board heard reports from the principals and curriculum director.

Harrison said the fifth grade finished credentialing to sixth grade. Fifth-grade teacher Gerri Balthazor said it was helpful to parents because it showed where the students were at the end of the year before moving on to sixth grade this fall.

Harrison added there was 100-percent parent turn out for the credentialing process.

Credentialing was put into effect this school year. Parents received information during parent/teacher conferences in February. The process involves finding out if students meet the necessary criteria to move on to the next grade. If they do, they are considered credentialed.

Middle School Principal Robb Ross said the credentialing idea is "great." The information it provides is valuable.

"It really think it's a step forward," he said.

Curriculum Director Diana Wieland said students at Thomas County Academy are re-enrolling and new applications are being accepted.

The district's wellness policy goes into effect July 1, and the district will be focusing on several aspects of wellness the first year.

Wieland said teacher workshops are planned for June, including one at Colby Community College.

Activities Director Jeff Quenzer said the boys golf team took second place at the Scott City tournament, and six golfers qualified for state. Also, the tennis team didn't qualify anyone for state.

In other business, the board approved:

- The resignations of Colby High School media clerk Kathy Arendt and high school math teacher Terry Scholz.

Sound check



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Colby High School Eagle band members Brittany Middleton and Latrishia Viegra, (with clarinets) and bass clarinet player Jasmine Brown warmed up before their concert Tuesday. It was the last performance of the year for the high school's jazz and concert bands.