



COLBY FREE PRESS

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New activities director hired for Colby High

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

After nearly six months of searching for a new activities director and assistant principal for the high school, the Colby School Board found their person.

During its meeting Monday, the board approved Larry Gabel of St. Francis to fill the position. Gabel is St. Francis' elementary school principal. Gabel has been in administration 22 years.

"We did a couple more interviews," said board president Tracy Rogers. "He (Gabel) was the committee's recommendation for the job." Rogers served on the search committee for the position.

Via telephone today, Gabel, 55, said he looks forward to coming to Colby.

"I've liked Colby," he said. "I hope I hope I can do a good job. I'll sure work at it."

Gabel has been in St. Francis for 32 years. Before that, he spent one year at Abe Hubert Junior High in Garden City as a health and physical education teacher. He taught the same subject for 10 years in St. Francis before becoming principal.

He was also the head wrestling coach.

Originally from Sterling, Colo., Gabel attended Northeast Junior College before going to the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley where he wrestled. He has a master's degree from Fort Hays State University.

Gabel said he met Colby Superintendent Kirk Nielsen at prior meetings and met Colby Middle School Principal Robb Ross through wrestling. Gabel said Nielsen asked if he would consider the Colby job.

"I enjoyed my time in St. Francis and the people. It was a

Beims applies at Holton

According to Dave Powell of the *Holton Recorder*, Colby High School head wrestling coach and social studies teacher Mitch Beims has applied for the activities director/assistant principal position at Holton High School.

Powell said he met Beims when he came to interview for the job.

Holton High School Principal Alan Beam said he could not comment on the matter until after Monday, when the Holton School Board meets.

Beims did not return telephone calls.

At the April 17 Colby School Board meeting, Beims was recommended by a search committee for the same position at Colby High School. However, the motion to approve Beims failed due to a lack of a second.

tough decision to leave, but I am looking forward to a new challenge," he said.

Besides working for the school district Gabel has been the emergency medical services director for Cheyenne County for 16 years and will be until the end of June. He said he will keep his emergency medical technician certification when he comes to Colby, but will focus on his duties for the school district.

His wife, Beth, is a registered nurse at Cheyenne County Hospital and is also an emergency medical technician.

They have three grown children, son Bill, who teaches and coaches at Pine Creek High School in Colorado Springs, Colo.; son, Kelly,



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Colby School Board member Janice Frahm, left; Colby School District superintendent Kirk Nielsen and Colby High School principal Rocky Robbins looked at the high school air conditioning system during Monday's school board meeting. The board also saw the district's computer network hub and maintenance garage.

who is working on his degree in osteopathic medicine in Kansas City and daughter Brandi Jones, who is living in Colby while her husband completes a pharmacy in-

ternship with Wal-Mart.

The job came open in December when the board didn't renew the contract of current activities director and assistant principal Jeff

Quenzer. In April, the board considered high school teacher and wrestling coach Mitch Beims. There was no second on the motion to approve Beims.

County starts budget process

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

With Thomas County's 2007 budget looming, commissioners and department heads Monday discussed the concerns both sides have with the budget.

"We are pretty well locked in with what we have," Commissioner Ron Evans said.

Commissioner Paul Steele said he wanted input from the department heads before planning next year's budget. That budget must be finalized by July 1. Department heads offered input on salaries, benefits and how much employee turn over in their department.

"We are all in agreement that we like having health insurance," County Clerk Shelly Harms said. "We haven't had anyone other than Blue Cross Blue Shield approach us with an idea."

Commissioner Ken Christiansen said it's expected the county's health insurance plan will jump by about \$25,000 in 2007.

"That's about \$38.47 per month per employee," he said.

Evans said the hike in health insurance, coupled with a 3 percent pay raise the board would need \$100,000 for those increases.

Steele said the 2006 budget had areas which were "grossly underestimated."

He said he wants the county commissioners to look at every line item and "be spot on."

Evans disagreed with Steele calling the budget conservative, hoping to find the \$100,000 without increasing taxes.

Evans said he favors rewarding employees for their longevity. "I think that's our problem," Register of Deeds Maybelle Moore said. "You guys need to take care of those of us who have been here a while."

Moore has been a county employee for the past 22 years and was elected Register of Deeds in 2004.

"It would be wonderful if everyone made \$60,000 a year, but that's not reality," Evans said. "I want you to be sympathetic to what goes through our minds, especially in the next 30 days."

Thomas County Undersheriff Jason Moses asked commissioners about their response if department heads offered a solution to keeping turn over and expenses as low as possible.

"We are sympathetic to you guys, but if we can't recruit quality people to fill the jobs we are in the same position you guys are in," Moses said. "My question is this," Moses said. "We, as employees and department heads, understand your position, but my question is if we get together and work together to find a way to increase wages for employees will you buy into that?"

"Yes," Evans said. "But if you say you don't need a new car now and a year from now you say you need a new car, well."

"I'm willing to go along with you," Steele replied. Christiansen agreed to listen to ideas if the group returns.

Evans said Thomas County employees and residents need to appreciate money coming into the county in the form of sales tax. He said he's hoping to avoid raising taxes in order to pay for raises and health insurance costs for county employees. Of the \$72 million dollar county budget, \$2.4 million is for county employee salaries and benefits.



R. Evans

Preparing the ammo



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Rachel Lamm of Colby filled water balloons during the "Photo Fun Day" day camp at Fike Park Tuesday. The event was sponsored by the Thomas County Extension office and local 4-H Council.

Courthouse janitor to receive more help

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

A too large "to do" list prompted Thomas County Commissioners to narrow the focus of the courthouse and office complex custodian and hire more help.

Commissioners Ron Evans, Paul Steele and Ken Christiansen on Monday met with Jim McGuire to revamp his current custodial job description.

McGuire's duties include maintaining the courthouse and office complex on Range Avenue and mowing yards at both places.

"The air conditioning drains are getting clogged and I'm servicing them," McGuire said. "Some day we'll need a couple new wall units."

McGuire said he had been allocating eight hours to just mowing and trimming. Part of that time has been spent on upkeep of flower beds and trees planted by Extension Council staff members at the office complex on Range Avenue.

After a complete review of McGuire's job duties, the commissioners directed him to no longer maintain flower beds or the trees to reduce his time spent on that part of his job.

They also said McGuire is spread too thin and directed him to hire a full-time employee or a couple part-time employees to help.

"I know you've got a lot of stuff on your plate and some of these things, you need to get someone else to take care of for you," Evans said.

"I know you've got a lot of stuff on your plate and some of these things, you need to get someone else to take care of for you."

Ron Evans, Commissioner

McGuire told the commissioners his time on the job could be reduced if courthouse employees would keep windows closed to dust getting inside the building and as a way to decrease heating and cooling expenses. He suggested employees limit the amount of food brought into the building to control mice.

The commissioners directed Thomas County Clerk Shelly Harms to issue a memo addressing McGuire's concerns.

In other business, the commissioners met in executive session for 15 minutes with Jim Harms for non-elected personnel issues. The meeting reconvened at 10:30 a.m. with no action being taken following the closed session.

During an afternoon session, Evans, Steele and Shelly Harms attended a pandemic flu meeting at the office complex on Range Ave. which was hosted by the Thomas County Health Department, Juanita Gatz, administrator.