



14 pages

COLBY FREE PRESS

Friday

August 11, 2006

50¢

Volume 117, Number 127
Serving Thomas County since 1888

Airport plans future

By John Van Nostrand
Colby Free Press

For Colby and Thomas County to grow, the runway at Colby Municipal Airport needs to grow according to airport manager Mark Ostmeyer.

The airport advisory board is finishing its master plan, a proposed list of needs and priorities for the airport over the next 20 years.

“We just set some goals for five, 10 and 20 years,” Ostmeyer said. “Things you want to put some action on.” Ostmeyer said runway renovation and expansion is high on the list.

Ostmeyer is hoping within five years work will begin on lengthening and widening the airport’s paved runway.

The runway is now 5,100 feet in length and proposals are to extend it to 5,600 feet.

“We need to accommodate larger jet traffic,” Ostmeyer said. “And we need to attract more jet traffic. My ultimate goal is to get the runway to 6,100 feet.

“The runway is also 75 feet wide and plans are to make the runway 100 feet wide.

Ostmeyer said runway changes will make Colby’s airport better for larger jets to land and take off from. He said those jets may be from corporations interested in expanding or opening businesses in or near Colby and Thomas County. It’s not just business owners potentially flying to and from



JOHN VAN NOSTRAND/Colby Free Press

Colby pilot Richard Westfahl prepared his airplane at Colby Municipal Airport before taking off. The airport board is finishing its master plan that includes a proposal to lengthen the current run-

way and add a crosswind runway. Airport management says runway improvement would make the airport, and Thomas County and Colby, more attractive.

Colby. Lives may be on the line too.

Medical-related flights are a common occurrence at the airport. In June alone, Ostmeyer said the airport had more than 20 medical flights. Most of those flights were to Denver, Colo. Ostmeyer said for that service to continue, the airport

must keep up with bigger and faster planes that need bigger and longer runways.

“We have more medical flights than any other town in northwest Kansas.

“The runway proposal will support the medical community,” he

said. During extremely hot days, some airplanes need more runway length to insure a safe take off. “That makes us limited,” Ostmeyer said. In addition to the runway changes, Ostmeyer said another proposal is for the installation of equipment to allow airplane land-

ings by instrument, specifically in inclement weather. Rather than a pilot visually see the runway before landing, a plane’s instrumentation can be used to land.

See “AIRPORT,” page 3

License ruling pending

By Patty Decker
Free Press Editor

The Kansas State Board of Healing Arts is expected to finally revoke a Colby doctor’s medical license Saturday.

Since January, the board has delayed acting upon the allegations of medical malpractice and incompetence on Dr. Victor Hildyard of Colby.

After deciding the charges were substantiated in June, the board delayed the process of revoking his medical license until its Aug. 12 meeting.

Mike O’Neal of Hutchinson, representing Hildyard, said today he and his client will telephone the board on Saturday.

“I cannot justify the added expense to Dr. Hildyard when I don’t think an appearance will make any difference,” he said.

Once the Healing Arts board finalizes its decision, O’Neal said he plans to look to the district court for “justice.”

“I expect the board has now come up with their written reasons for their oral order of revocation from the last hearing,” he said.

“We will wait to receive that and appeal the order to the district court where we expect a fair and unbiased review of the facts the hearing of the facts the hearing of officer reviewed.”

O’Neal said the board failed to make its case against Dr. Hildyard on any patient care issues.

“If the board refuses to issue a stay of its order, we will seek an immediate hearing before the court so that patient care is not unduly interrupted.”

At the June 10 meeting, the board voted unanimously to revoke Hildyard’s license.

Mark Stafford, general counsel for the Board of Healing Arts, said the board will have the final written order explaining why the doctor’s license is being revoked.

The board could also determine how it will decide on the application for a stay, which would allow the doctor to continue practicing until all appeals are exhausted at the district and state level.

O’Neal said in June, it will take the board until August to make up their reasons for not following the ruling of Edward Gaschler, the presiding officer at the board hearing in September 2005.

In January, Gaschler initially cleared Hildyard of 16 medical-related violations.

He found three non-medical violations had warrant.

“The board is out of time noting that it had 30 days to render a final order following Gaschler’s initial order dated Jan. 30, 2006,” O’Neal said.

Lazy days ending

Suzi Calliham of Colby enrolled her daughter Chelsie in school Thursday at Colby High School. Any new students can still enroll by visiting the respective buildings until classes begin Thursday, Aug. 24. For questions on enrollment, call 460-5000.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Rape trial on hold

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

The trial for the man alleged to have raped an 8-year-old Thomas County girl in July will not take place until after a psychological evaluation.

Melvin W. Myers, 59, having no known address, was arraigned Wednesday in Thomas County District Court on five sex crimes.

Myers was arrested at a residence in the 3400 block of County Road B July 14.

Myers’ attorney, Doug Spencer of Oakley, asked District Judge Glenn Schiffner to order a psychological evaluation on Myers to see whether he is competent to stand trial.

Spencer said he questions Myers’ “ability to understand the proceedings against him” and to “properly assist in his defense.”

Myers pleaded not guilty to rape,

aggravated indecent liberties with a child, two counts of aggravated criminal sodomy and aggravated indecent solicitation of a child.

Schiffner granted Spencer’s motion to have Myers evaluated and ordered he be transferred to Larned State Hospital in Larned.

Myers has lived in Thomas County for about seven years under the alias name of Pete Helt. According to Thomas County Sheriff Mike Baughn, using the fake name allowed Myers to reside in the county without authorities knowing he was wanted in Oklahoma on a probation violation for similar charges.

Myers was charged in Oklahoma for the 1999 sexual abuse of a minor child.

Despite state law which guarantees Myers the right to a fair and speedy trial within 90 days of his arraignment, no trial date will be set until after the psychological evaluation.

Little rain, little feed left Emergency grazing allowed in Thomas County

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

Drought conditions are forcing cattle producers to find ways to feed their herds and the federal government has offered help.

Thomas County is one of many in the state eligible for emergency grazing and haying on Conservation Reserve Program land.

Ross Sloan, county executive director of the Farm Service Agency in Colby, said conditions are not good.

“There’s very little grass at all,” he said. “It’s burned up.”

In another week, he said fall crop planted this past spring will probably be “virtually non-existent.”

Sloan said 2004 was the last year the conservation reserve land was

opened for grazing in Thomas County.

Producers can sign up until Sept. 11, when the period ends. Until that date, anyone who has signed up for the emergency grazing and haying can graze, or cut the grass for hay.

Some producers have signed up for the emergency program.

“For most, running cattle isn’t their main source of income. Instead, it adds diversity to their farm operation,” he said.

“They only thing they have to fall back on is the grass from CRP,” he said. “It takes a natural disaster to get released. When things get bad enough we are able to fall back on it.”

He explained how the 20-year-old program works. Farmers can use land that is not ideal for crops and plant it back to native grass spe-

cies, such as buffalo grass, blue grama, Indian grass or sideoats grama.

Legumes, like alfalfa or clover, are also used.

“The program is important,” Sloan said, “because it reduces wind and water erosion, improves wildlife habitat and soil and water quality.”

Farmers are paid up to \$35 per acre for their land in the program, and Sloan said the program operates on a competitive basis, so not all land can be put in.

According to statistics from the federal government, there are about 680,000 acres of farmland in Thomas County, 24,600 acres are enrolled in the program.

“That’s a pretty high percentage,” he said.

For information, call 462-7671.

In bloom

Sunflowers on the west edge of Colby are still standing while other crops and pastures in Thomas County are feeling the effects of drought and high temperatures.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press