



COLBY FREE PRESS

8 pages

Council to review codes

By **Patty Decker**
Free Press Editor

The Colby City Council meets at 7:30 p.m. today in council chambers, 585 N. Franklin Ave. with plans to discuss a proposal to update the municipal code.



Armstrong

Should the council approve, the cost could be \$4,000, which City Manager Carolyn Armstrong said is a reduction of \$2,000 from the normal charge.

"It would cost less since the city started the process in the early 1990s and never completed it," she said.

In addition, the council could consider approving authorization to advertise bids for a water utility truck and change order for pavement maintenance at the Colby Municipal Airport.

The code enforcement officer, Doug Lewis, will also have a prepared report recommending that the council determine if the property at 505 S. Lincoln, owned by Michael D. Lewallen is injurious to the health, safety or welfare of people with homes in that neighborhood.

The council will also consider approval of the Colby High School homecoming parade route starting at Fike Park and going south on Franklin Avenue to Third Street, then west on Third to Dennen Field. Homecoming is Friday, Sept. 15.

The league voting delegates will also be decided. The delegates include Ken Bieber, mayor; Armstrong, and alternate voting delegates are council members Bev Eicher and Pat Mallory.

The delegates represent the city in the conduct and management of the affairs of the League of Kansas Municipalities, Armstrong said.

All meetings are open to the public.

A peachy project



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Katelyn Schacher, a member of the Catholic Youth Organization at Sacred Heart School in Colby, weighed peaches Saturday at the Thomas County Office Complex. The organization is selling fruit as a fund raiser for their service trip and convention as well as community projects. They sold out Saturday.

Authorities capture Colby burglar

By **Jan Katz Ackerman**
Colby Free Press

A string of burglaries in Colby was solved Friday when a witness called local law enforcement officers.

Thomas County Sheriff Mike Baughn said today a Colby resident called in a burglary in progress 3:29 a.m. Friday in the 2300 block of North Range Avenue.

"By the time the deputy arrived the suspects had fled, but they were arrested at 4 a.m. at a nearby residence," Baughn said.



M. Baughn

Two male suspects, a 14-year-old and a 15-year-old, were arrested and transported to Greater Northwest Kansas Juvenile Detention Center in WaKeeney.

He said the two teens, whose names are also being withheld until after formal charges are filed, were scheduled for a hearing today.

Following the hearing, Baughn said Thomas County Attorney Andrea Wyrick would decide how to proceed with the cases against the boys.

"It looks like we'll have eight to 10 burglaries solved in and outside of Colby for both residential and vehicle burglaries," Baughn said.

"We are estimating the property value at between \$10,000 and \$15,000."

New program to help tax credits

By **Jan Katz Ackerman**
Colby Free Press

New computer software will help county officials figure tax credits offered by the state's Homestead Tax program.

Thomas County Treasurer Donita Applebury told Commissioners Ron Evans, Paul Steele and Ken Christiansen a new software program developed by Nextech can assist her in generating tax statements.

The state's Homestead Tax program allows qualified individuals having gross income less than \$27,500 to earn credits toward the first half of their property tax. In 2005, 59 people in Thomas County qualified for the program which resulted in \$10,729 in tax credits.

"Right now, Homestead qualifiers get a letter from the state that has to be given to the county clerk and compared with their taxes," Applebury said.

Applebury said she and Thomas County Clerk Shelly Harms hoped the \$500 one-time set up fee and \$60 user fee would be approved to make their jobs more efficient. She said people applying for tax credits under the Homestead program have to bring all paperwork required to Harms office to see if they qualify for reduced taxes.

"Under the new program with this software, the state will send letters to the county along with information to help adjust the tax statements," Applebury said.

The is one catch to converting to the state's new version of the Homestead Tax System.

That catch is qualifying indi-

viduals must have checked on their most recent income tax return filed they want to participate in the program.

"Basically the state will make the determination whether you'd have to qualify from the tax return?" Steele asked.

"What I think is going to happen this year is the state will do both the evaluation letter and contact the county," Applebury said.

"But, next I think the state will do away with the letter."

The commissioners approve purchase of the new software and told Applebury to proceed with buying it.

In other business, the commissioner approve purchase of a computer for \$910 to be designated for election use only.

Commissioners received a letter from Thomas County Historical Society Board President Rex VanHorn.

He told the commissioners the board members appreciated the additional \$15,000 for the society's budget for 2007.

Sherry White, Thomas County Branch Manager for the American Red Cross, thanked the county for its continued support.

"I would like to express our appreciation to the commissioners for the office space you graciously provide to American Red Cross at the Thomas County Office Complex," she said.

White works part-time as branch manager and has office hours from 8 a.m. to noon. She oversees Red Cross operations in Thomas, Wallace, Cheyenne, Rawlins, Gove and Logan counties.

Expert says U.S. economy slowing down

WASHINGTON (AP) — The economy has slowed down. Gasoline prices hit new highs in early August. And the once-soaring housing sector is rapidly losing altitude, raising concerns it could drag the whole country into a recession.

Just where is the economy headed? Here are some answers to frequently asked questions.

Q: The economy looked so good at the start of the year. What happened?

A: Gasoline prices climbed above \$3 per gallon, leaving consumers with less to spend on other items. At the same time, the Federal Reserve was raising borrowing costs for millions of Americans. The Reserve pushed interest rates up to slow the economy and keep

inflation under control.

The combination of higher energy costs and interest rates put a severe squeeze on consumer spending, which accounts for two-thirds of overall economic growth. The Fed's campaign has been especially hard on areas of the economy that depend on borrowing. Those include housing; sales have been plunging in recent months.

Q: So is this a good time or a bad time to buy a house?

A: After a five-year housing boom that had sellers firmly in control, buyers are starting to have more power. But real estate experts caution that it may take a few more months before stubborn sellers start cutting their asking prices.

New-home prices also have not

come down much from where they were a year ago, but builders are starting to throw in attractive incentives such as free appliance upgrades.

Q: If I bought a house in the last few years using an adjustable rate mortgage at a time when mortgage rates were at four-decade lows, what do I do now if that mortgage is about to get reset to a much higher monthly payment?

A: Experts say now would be a very good time to move from an adjustable rate mortgage to a fixed-rate mortgage.

That is because fixed-rate mortgages have been dropping in recent weeks. After hitting a four-year high of 6.8 percent in mid-July, the 30-year mortgage has now dropped

to a nationwide average of 6.44 percent, according to Freddie Mac's weekly survey.

Homeowners who got an adjustable rate mortgage in 2003 and 2004 at around 4 percent could be facing a jump to 7.5 percent to 8 percent under the terms of their ARM. The new mortgage rate is determined by the index the ARM is tied to, such as one-year Treasury bills, plus any margin the lender is allowed to add. In the current rate environment, borrowers could be facing an increase in their monthly mortgage payment of around \$400 on a \$200,000 mortgage.

That pain could be reduced if the homeowner refinances to a fixed rate now, when those rates are falling.

Cross Canadian Ragweed brings country-rock to Colby

By **Tisha Cox**
Colby Free Press

Colby will get a taste of what some Oklahoma and Texas music fans already know about.



R. Ragsdale

Cross Canadian Ragweed will headline the Celebration on the Plains Saturday.

The celebration will be at the Prairie Museum of Art and History. The gates open at 5 p.m., followed by a barbecue for the first 800 people. The music starts at 7 p.m. with No Parking.

Cross Canadian Ragweed will take the stage at 8:30 p.m.

Cross Canadian Ragweed Drummer Randy Ragsdale said anyone expecting country will be surprised.

"It's not what you hear on the radio," he said.

Many of the band's influences are country, such as Waylon Jennings, Merle Haggard and Willie Nelson. The band has also been influenced heavily by southern rock, and has Neal Young covers in its set list.

Their latest singles receiving radio airtime are "Fightin' For" and "This Time Around." He added XM satellite radio has been a blessing for the group, because its stations tend to play just about anything available.

Ragsdale and bandmates Cody

“More than 250 shows a year isn't unusual. We've cut back some because of family. It's quality rather than quantity.”

Randy Ragsdale,
drummer

Canada, Grady Cross and Jeremy Plato formed the group in the mid-1990s. They all knew each other from school, and grew up together. When they got old enough, they would drive to parties to play. Ragsdale said they kept their guitars with them.

In about 1995, they based the

band out of Stillwater, Okla., and in 1996, started performing at the Wormy Dog Saloon there.

"That was the biggest music scene going on out there in Oklahoma," Ragsdale said.

Since, the band has hit the road hard getting out the word about its music.

"We don't care if they buy it or steal it or whatever," he said. "We want to get it out there."

Purple was their first record on Universal South.

The band has been prolific — releasing nine albums over the past several years. The band signed with Universal South in 2003, and its first release for the label was "Purple." Before that, the band released its albums on its own independent label, Underground Records.

Their first three albums were released in Oklahoma, Texas and Arkansas, but records after that received national distribution.

Their next record is a two-disc live set recorded at Cain's Ballroom in Tulsa, Okla., which will hit the

street Oct. 31.

Touring has been the way the band built its fan base.

"More than 250 shows a year isn't unusual," Ragsdale said. "We've cut back some because of family. It's quality rather than quantity," he said.

Ragsdale said his father, Johnny Ragsdale, is his idol, and helped coach the band. They used to practice in their living room, and he wouldn't let them go to a party until they had practiced.

"He made sure we took it seriously," Ragsdale said. "Looking back now we really appreciate it. He kept us serious about the music."

For ticket information, contact the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce.