



COLBY FREE PRESS

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Rexford continues road work

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

City street improvement is a key topic during meetings of the Rexford City Council.

Now in its third year, the street improvement project is focusing on making a sidewalk in front of Rexford Grain.

Council member Dave Williams said Wednesday council received bids from Majestic Manor Construction of Norton and Western Concrete Works of Leoville. The council bid the project by the square foot including removal and replacement and bid it with the right to reject any or all bids.

Western Concrete Works' bid of \$3.57 a square foot was approved. Majestic Manor Construction's bid came in at \$3.40. City Superintendent Bill Scott said of the two city blocks involved in the project, some of the concrete would be for areas where there has been no sidewalk.

Williams said the primary goal is to create a sidewalk along each street in Rexford.

He said work on the latest project will not start until the city learns what Phillipsburg-based Kyle Railroad plans to do with the adjacent crossing reconstruction.

Should the railroad reconstruct the crossing, the city may have to stand one-half the cost. Rexford has dirt streets, with the exception of Main Street.

In other business, the council has asked City Superintendent Bill Scott to oversee a city-wide management of grass and weed overgrowth, and take complaints about animals.

Complaints about both topics will then be handled on a case by case basis by the council.

At its Oct. 11 meeting, council approved to purchase a new rotary mower from Colby Ag Center.

The council had two mowers from which to choose; a medium duty model for \$7,450 or a heavy duty model for \$8,900.

The heavy duty one was selected. No other business submitted bids.

Council meetings take place the second Wednesday of each month. Other members are Mike Johnson, Nancy Dahl, Dennis Allison and Dwight Williams.

Bill Dible serves as mayor.

Make, take and bake



Kashayla Reiter, of Hays, left, her aunt, Laurie Long of Colby, and Allen Robinson of Hays, got directions from Thomas County extension agent Diann Gerstner during the "Food for Thought"

event at Pioneer Memorial Library. Participants made an apple pie to take home and bake. Long invited her niece and nephew who were visiting during parent-teacher conferences in Hays.

TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Insurance candidate seeking position

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

A candidate for the office of Kansas insurance commissioner wants to give people a choice. Bonnie Sharp, D-Kansas City, hopes to be that choice when voters go the polls Nov. 7.



Sharp

"I don't apologize for being a choice," Sharp said.

She has served in the legislature for the past 10 years as a representative for the 31st District. Sharp has been on the House insurance committee the past six years.

Her work in the committee is what helped her become interested in the position of insurance commissioner.

Sharp said she has worked with incumbent Sandy Praeger while in the Legislature.

Sharp wants to help people with their insurance.

"Many people don't have the specifics on the policy they purchased. Regardless of whether or not people have insurance, it is a topic that affects everyone," she said.

Her strategy is to have the commission be even more of a voice for residents.

"Insurance is a complex issue. For that reason, the office should concentrate on making sure people are treated fairly by the industry," she said.

Kansas has as many as 300,000 residents who are uninsured.

"It's really a national problem," Sharp said.

However, with innovation, needs can be met. For example, a large number of the uninsured are young people out of college or who want to start their own small business.

"Their is no real way to address small business needs.

"If they're healthy, they don't think about insurance, but its absence becomes noticeable after a bad accident or other financial troubles," she said.

Different insurance coverage could be targeted at such individuals.

"One size doesn't fit all," Sharp said.

"Society has different needs. Insurance affects everyone."

During her campaign, she has found many people haven't had a state candidate come visit.

"People feel disconnected from Topeka," Sharp said.

Sharp said she does not accept campaign contributions from the insurance industry as a legislator, and would continue that philosophy if elected as insurance commissioner.

If elected, she hopes to change that by traveling the state and having roundtable discussions to listen to peoples' needs.

That way, they won't have to come to Topeka, and it will be proactive at the same time.

"I've enjoyed my time campaigning. She said it has been an opportunity to meet people and see the state," she said.

She and her husband Elmer have been married 40 years and have one daughter, Stephanie Urban, who is married to Trevor Urban, originally from Oberlin; and two grandsons, Truston and Auston.

The office was formed in 1871 by the Legislature to be an advocate for and the voice of the people of Kansas when it comes to insurance, and regulate the industry in the state.

"The insurance commissioner just deals with insurance," she said. "The job is to make sure Kansas consumers get the benefits they pay for."

Thomas County leadership class begins

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

Selections for the 2006-2007 Leadership Thomas County have been announced.

The purpose of the program is to develop leaders for the future of the county, build leadership skills and raise community awareness, said program director Leilani Thomas. More than 160 have graduated from the program since it began 16 years ago.

The class, the 16th in Thomas County, had its opening retreat Wednesday at the Colby Airport. The class this year has seven adults and three sophomores from Colby High School.

Adults are Don Allen of Brewster, Joan Dingwerth of Rexford,



L. Thomas



C. Black

Eric Eicher, Tom Moorhous, Benjamin Schroeder, Holly Stephens and Denise Stupka-Schieferrecke, all of Colby. The high school students are Cody Finley, Matt Kaus and Emily Terrell.

"Not everyone goes on to serve on a community board or even has to. The point is to make people aware of opportunities, and hope-

fully motivate them to get involved in some aspect of the community," Thomas said.

People are nominated for the class, or can nominate themselves.

"It is a commitment of seven months," Thomas said. "Almost everyone who has participated in the program has enjoyed the class."

This is the third year high school sophomores were selected for the class. Thomas said that age level was chosen because they interact well with adults and will still have two years of school to share what they learned with classmates.

Thomas and fellow program director Cindy Black lead the first session, where class members focused on learning more about themselves, their personal missions and team-building exercises.

Black, a graduate of the second leadership class, became more involved in 1999. She said it is fulfilling to watch people grow.

"It's nice to be part of that positive influence," Black said.

The next session will be Wednesday, Nov. 8 at Colby Community College and will concentrate on education.

Government day is planned for December; the medical community in January; a legislative trip to Topeka in February; March is community development and April is the teach back and celebration.

The class will also work on its class project during the next seven months, and will decide in December what the project will be.

"That's totally up to them," Thomas said. "That's their final exam."

Consolidation law highlights meeting

SALINA (AP) — A new state law that makes county or city consolidations easier will be the focus of a state summit Nov. 1 in Salina, where the issue has become a hot topic.

The meeting, organized by the Kansas Advisory Council on Intergovernmental Relations, will draw city, county and state officials to Salina.

The summit is intended to make government officials aware of changes in the law and how they can operate as efficiently as possible, said Joan Wagnon, chairwoman of the Kansas Advisory Council on Intergovernmental Relations.

"Nobody is saying you have to do it," Wagnon said. "In fact, that's the last thing we're saying. We just want people to know what options are available to them and that there are fewer barriers than there were in the past."

A law approved earlier this year by the Legislature makes it easier for counties and cities to merge their governments by reducing the number of names required on a petition to put the issue to a vote.

But current law still requires legislative approval of city-county mergers. Persuading the Legislature to make that type of consolidation easier will be another function of the summit, said Gerald Cook, president of the Salina Area Chamber of Com-

merce. When Topeka and Shawnee County tried to merge last year, the Legislature required a majority of both city and county residents to approve.

The effort failed when a majority of those living outside Topeka voted against it, even though overall 59 percent of Shawnee County voters approved.

Cook called the dual-majority provision "a poison pill" and "probably unconstitutional."

"That's a result of the Legislature trying to dictate and being a barrier to any type of consolidation, which should be decided by local voters, not by the Legislature," Cook said. "That's one of the reasons there have been so few (consolidation) votes across the state, because nobody wants the legislature dictating it."

The issue is important in Salina, where the city commission has expressed interest in consolidation but the Saline County Commission has not. A study by the League of Women Voters of Salina into the possible benefits of consolidation also has kept the issue alive in the county.

Statistics showing Kansas is among the nation's leaders in government jobs per capita have fueled discussion of consolidation for several years, but the Legislature hasn't approved most measures sought on the issue.

Fire tours help with awareness

By Patty Decker
Free Press Editor

With more than 1,000 children nationwide dying in home fires every year, the Colby Fire Department takes its job seriously in educating local students and others about prevention, awareness and safety.

"We have been visiting children this week in honor of National Fire Prevention Week and we will continue to do so next week," said Assistant Fire Chief Rick Dickman. Using the department's safety trailer, he said, firefighters have either talked with or will be talking to children at Sacred Heart, Colby Elementary, Selden, Heartland, Puddle Duck and Brewster schools.

The safety trailer is a good tool in demonstrating ways to escape,



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Amy Jennings, left, teacher at Puddle Duck Preschool, and J.L. Ellis, with the Colby Fire Department, right, helped students try on firefighting gear during a recent visit to the fire station.

what to do when a room fills with smoke and how quickly doors and other areas can heat up.

Dickman also wanted to remind everyone that the fire department will be installing, inspecting, or changing batteries in smoke detec-

tors Saturday, Oct. 28. Anyone interested in having a smoke alarm checked or replaced can call 460-4454. If the scheduled date is not convenient, Dickman said, other arrangements can be made.

Correction

In a front page story on Republican gubernatorial candidate Jim Barnett in the Thursday *Colby Free Press*, a Barnett quote on illegal immigration

should have read: "We should not treat illegal residents better than residents."

This was a reporting error. The *Colby Free Press* wants to

maintain an accurate record of our town.

Please report any error or lack of clarity in a news story to us at 462-3963.