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Still no Sheridan County vote approval

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

Sheridan County Commissioners did not approve a recount of Nov. 7 election results after a special meeting Saturday. The meeting itself was also questioned.

Despite votes being canvassed, Commissioners David Zimmerman, Ron Schamberger and Keith Kennedy refused to certify the election results with the Secretary of State Ron Thornburgh's office in Topeka.

Brian Caskey, an election officer with the secretary of state's office, said state officials met this morning to talk about Sheridan County's unresolved election.

"Quite honestly this is not something we've had to deal with," Caskey said. "It's uncharted territory and we are going to have to take some time for legal work."

Caskey said today was the deadline for certifying the recounted election totals.

He said the state will not take formal action on the Sheridan County election until County Attorney Mike Haas officially asks Secretary of State Ron Thornburgh to get involved. Caskey said he spoke with Haas Monday and was waiting for a letter from Haas regarding the situation.

When polls closed on Nov. 7, first-term incumbent District 1 Commissioner Ron Schamberger

was the winner with 220 votes. His challenger, Victor Bielser, received 214 votes.

Initially Bielser accepted the loss, but when he learned voting equipment failed to count about 50 ballots, he changed his mind.

Of the 50 ballots not counted, 15 pertained to District No. 1, made up of the townships of Adell, Bow Creek, East Kenneth, Valley, East Saline and West Saline.

After the recount, Bielser was the winner over Schamberger by seven votes, 227 to 220.

Deputy County Clerk Lea Herl said this morning commissioners met at 1 p.m. Saturday. County Clerk Paula Bielser was not able to

attend the meeting so Herl filled in for Bielser.

Herl said Haas was not able to attend the meeting, so Decatur County Attorney Steve Hirsch filled in for Haas.

Schamberger, being one of the candidates of the election, did not sit in on the canvassing process, but had Sheridan County Treasurer Esther Bainter fill in for him.

Despite a formal request by the Colby Free Press which is on file with the clerk's office to be notified of all public meetings, notification of the meeting was not given.

"Steve asked the commissioners several times if there was anyone on the prenotification list who should

be contacted about the special meeting," Herl said. "The commissioners said there wasn't anyone."

Herl and Hirsch both said the commissioners did not follow procedures to inform the public of the meeting.

Hirsch confirmed he asked the commissioners several times about notification of the meeting.

He also said he does not know what Sheridan County's next step in the election dilemma will be.

"I guess since the statutes are silent I don't know the answer," Hirsch said.

Haas isn't talking about the situation.

"No comment," Haas said when

asked what the county's next step will be to resolve the uncertified election.

Haas refused to comment about whether he plans to do about the public not being notified about the special meeting.

State law allows for a fine of \$500 per person per incident for violations of the Kansas Open Meetings Act.

Denying the public's right to know about actions of a governing body such as a board of county commissioners, city council or school board can constitute a violation punishable by a district court. However, it is up to the county attorney to prosecute violations.

Hospice auction breaks record

Patty Decker
Free Press Editor

Thomas County Hospice's Auction held Saturday at the City Limits Convention Center raised about \$44,000 making it one of the best years ever, said Jenni Niblock, auction chairperson.

"We were very pleased with the turn out," she said, "and raising almost \$4,000 more than the previous year."

The event with the theme of "Dream, Art, Believe," was sold out with more than 350 people attending.

The organization has been assisting patients in Thomas County since 1993 with many of hospice's needs funded through the auction because reimbursement does not always cover the costs. The mission of hospice, said Sandy Kuhlman of Phillipsburg and executive director, is providing pain medication and relief while working to help the patient deal with the effect of dying and the impact with loved ones.

Team members provide spiritual counseling, help work arrangements for dependents, answer caregivers' questions and make themselves available 24 hours a day, Kuhlman said.

"Since each person is unique their

care needs are uniquely tailored and that is what hospice care does," she said.

Hundreds of donated items were auctioned as either silent or live bids.

"We appreciated the help of all who worked with us to provide care to people in the Thomas County area," Niblock said. "The support comes in many forms with not one outweighing the other and it's this commitment that enables the terminally ill to obtain needed care locally."

In addition to Niblock, other members of the Thomas County Hospice Advisory board included Amber Barton, Chris Carroll, Melinda Cheney, Darris DeGood, Quintin Flanagan, Scott Gawth, Sherri Matchell, and Luke Tubbs.

For the past several years, the auction has been held in conjunction with National Hospice Month in November.

The following Hospice staff members are: Sandy Kuhlman, executive director; Jennifer Kibbee, financial manager; Julia Schemper, special projects; Pastor Joel Hiesterman, pastoral care coordinator; Amanda McKenzie, volunteer manager; Rosemary Bange, volunteer coordinator; eight registered nurses, Kay Hughes, Karol Ruda,



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Pam Augustine, foreground, Anita Powell, Joel Powell, Jeannie Solko and Dewey Augustine, looked over many items at one of the

Marla Hawbaker, Shelly Willems, Schoenfeld; Sylvia Swarts, registered nurse and oncology nurse; Diane Frickey and Mindy Greene,

silent auction tables Saturday during the Thomas County Hospice Auction.

social work and bereavement; and Taunya Williams, dietary therapy. For questions about hospice ser-

vices, call (785) 462-6710 or stop by the office at 515 W. Fourth St., Colby.

Colby graduate appointed to clerk of local courts

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

A Goodland judge has named a new clerk of the district court for Colby.

Jack Burr, Chief Judge for the 15th Judicial District, appointed Kim Schwarz, 31, as clerk for Thomas County District Court and Colby Municipal Court. Her tenure started today. Counties included in the judicial district are Thomas, Wallace, Rawlins, Logan, Sheridan, Sherman and Cheyenne Counties.

A court employee for the past 10 years, Schwarz graduated from Colby High School and earned a degree as an executive secretary and information processing specialist from Colby Community College.

She worked along side Magistrate Judge Richard Ress in municipal court from 1996 to 1998, and with Jeanene Lee in the court clerk's office from 1996 to 2000. In 2000, Schwarz became administrative assistant for District Judge Glenn Schiffner, a job which she left to become clerk of the district court.

Schwarz replaces Lee, who retired Oct. 31 to spend more time

with her family. Schwarz said she decided to apply for the job because she "likes the judicial area" of the court system.

"Kim has done a superlative job as my administrative assistant," Schiffner said. "Although I will greatly miss her, the clerk's position is just too good of an opportunity for her to pass up. She will be an excellent clerk of the district court and I look forward to continuing to work with her in that capacity."

The job of clerk of a district court is both a working position and supervisory one.

According to Chief Clerk of the District Court Vergie Wente of Hoxie, a clerk of a court provides management of all case processing and miscellaneous court functions. Schwarz will oversee deputy clerks Evelyn Martin and Jennifer Vap, both of who started in 2002, as well as part-time deputy April Riedel who started with the court in September.



Schwarz

"...the clerk's position is just too good of an opportunity for her to pass up. She will be an excellent clerk of the district court and I look forward to continuing to work with her..."

Glenn Schiffner
district judge

"A clerk's job is to coordinate all activities and supervise all personnel," Wente said. "To act as official custodian of records, to have complete knowledge of computer programs, including accounting, docketing, traffic and Internet access." Wente said a clerk of a district court must also maintain the court office under the supervision of a chief judge.

Things to be thankful for



JOHN VAN NOSTRAND/Colby Free Press

Karen and Mike Larmer performed a skit Sunday during the Thomas County Thanksgiving service held at Colby Berean Church. In the skit, Karen played a daughter upset over her lack of finding the right shoes, a dead cell-phone battery and can't find a place to make change for \$20. Mike, who played the father, sent out a mass e-mail about his daughter's troubles. Karen held the dozens of responses from people who know of others who don't have feet to put shoes on, have no idea what a telephone is and could live for days on \$20. The theme of the service was for people to be grateful for what they have.