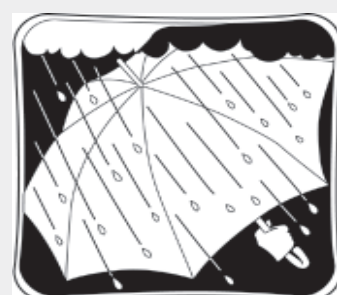


**Weather Corner**



**More snow**

**The forecast**

**Tonight** — Partly cloudy with a low around 22. North wind between 5 and 10 mph. **Thursday** — A chance of rain, snow and freezing rain after noon. Mostly cloudy with a high near 37. East wind between 10 and 15 mph. Chance of precipitation is 30 percent. Little or no snow accumulation is expected. **Thursday night** — Periods of snow. Low around 24. Blustery with a north wind between 15 and 20 mph, with gusts as high as 30 mph. Chance of precipitation is 80 percent. **Friday** — Periods of snow with areas of blowing snow. High near 30. Windy with a north wind between 20 and 30 mph, with gusts as high as 40 mph. Chance of precipitation is 80 percent. **Friday night** — Periods of snow with areas of blowing snow. Low around 19. Windy. Chance of precipitation is 80 percent. **Saturday** — Areas of blowing snow and a chance of snow. Cloudy with a high near 29. Chance of precipitation is 50 percent. **Saturday night** — A chance of snow. Cloudy with a low around 14. **Sunday** — Mostly cloudy with a high near 32.

**Briefly**

**City will not pick up dead tree limbs**

Ice from this week's storm damaged many trees in Colby leaving dead branches that will need to be picked up. City officials have been receiving many calls about the dead limbs and want to remind everyone that crews will not be picking up those fallen tree branches, but instead are urging residents to either call businesses that can do so or take care of the matter themselves. In addition, the city will not be picking up real Christmas trees.

**Commissioners to meet Thursday**

The Thomas County Commissioners will meet at 9 a.m. Thursday at the courthouse. Items on the agenda include a meeting with Jim McGuire at 9 a.m. on maintenance issues; a meeting with Maybelle Moore at 9:30 a.m. with resolutions about fund transfers; approval of payroll and accounts payable and Dec. 18 meeting minutes; fair board appointments; and approval of resolutions. The meeting is open to the public.

**Colby College plans auditions**

Auditions for the Colby Community College spring play will be held from 7 to 9 p.m., Wednesday and Thursday, Jan. 17-18 in the Frahm Theatre in the Northwest Kansas Cultural Arts Center. No experience or advance preparation is required, said Deb Bickner, theater department director. "Those who audition will be reading from the comedy fantasy Card Play, which is a family play suitable for all ages," she said. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to audition. The play performances will be March 2-4.

**County announces closings**

All county offices at the Thomas County Courthouse and Thomas County Health Department in the office complex will be closed Monday, Jan. 1, 2007. The county landfill will also be closed.

**Clerk of district court to close early**

The Thomas County Clerk of the District Court will close at noon, Friday for its end-of-the-year accounting. The office will reopen at 8 a.m., Tuesday, Jan. 2. For questions, call 460-4540.

**Party time**

Youth from across the region are invited to Colby's Rappin' and Rockin' New Year's Eve party.

Concerts will be performed by Christian band Three Chords Wonder and rap artist John Reuben. Both will play in the Colby Community Building. Concerts begin at 9 p.m.

After the concerts participants will be bused across Colby for a variety of activities to be held at Colby Community College, Heartland Christian School and Colby School District buildings. Events include basketball, dodge ball, bowling and a movie.

Doors are expected to open at 7 p.m. For more information, call (785) 443-1994.

**Despite budget cuts, Cottonwood Ranch stays viable**

By Jan Katz Ackerman  
Colby Free Press

Despite budget problems announced earlier this month, Cottonwood Ranch is thriving and supporters hosted an annual holiday open house today.

Ranch curator Don Rowilson said the state's attempt to trim historical site operations has not curtailed visitors stopping by Cottonwood Ranch, a historical sheep ranch located 15 miles east of Hoxie on U.S. Highway 24.

"We have cider, cookies, tea

and coffee inside, and popcorn and fried apples off the chuckwagon outside," Rowilson said treats will be served to guests from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. and from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. today.

The public was invited and admission free.

The Kansas State Historical Society's decision to add 22 employees and nearly double its budget to \$1.14 million dollars made it look at limiting hours at its 17 historic sites during the winter.

Cottonwood Ranch was among those closed for winter,

**"We are officially closed from December to March but all of us curators are required to put in 40 hours a week ..."**

Don Rowilson,  
Cottonwood Ranch

but nearby Historic Fort Hays was not affected.

"We are officially closed from December to March, but all of us curators are required to put in 40 hours a week and I've had as many visitors closed as when open," Rowilson said. "I'm in good shape."

Rowilson said state officials thought they could save money by having him reduce hours he was open to the public. They also wanted him to limit heating of the house, which Rowilson said is "still comfortable."

"We have to keep everything

at 55 degrees and that's warm at this particular site," he said of the stone house heated with propane.

The open house was sponsored by the State Historical Society, the Friends of the Cottonwood Ranch and the Scrappy Quilters, a quilting group which meets in Hoxie.

The ranch's buildings and house were open to the public and quilts were on display inside the house.

For more information about the ranch contact Rowilson at (785) 627-5866.

**Reception to be held for retiring chief**

By Jan Katz Ackerman  
Colby Free Press

Hoxie city officials tabled contracting law enforcement with the Sheridan County sheriff's office and are looking for a new chief of police. On Thursday, they say goodbye to Chief of Police John Bieker who retires Sunday.

After a 27-year tenure with the Hoxie Police Department, Bieker will be honored at a from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. at city hall located at 1024 Royal Ave.

Even as Bieker leaves, Mayor

Lori Horesky is hopeful the city and county will establish a combined law enforcement.

Sheridan County Sheriff Brian Fenner since the death of Sheriff Jim Johnson in late October has said getting the sheriff's office running is his first priority.

"Brian visited with City Attorney Ken Eland and said he wasn't ready yet," Horesky said. "We may revisit it in six months to a year."

Talk of joining the Hoxie Police Department and the Sheridan County Sheriff's Office has taken

place since 2003, and the late Sheriff Johnson supported a joint venture. With Bieker's retirement just days away, the city will be left with no chief of police.

Until a new chief is hired, police protection will continue through the services of part-time officer Jim Bainter.

City Clerk Jessica Spreser this morning only three resumes have come in for the chief of police job. Resumes are being accepted until the end of the year meeting which is scheduled for 7 p.m. Thursday.

**Judge reviews charges**

TOPEKA (AP) — A judge is giving outgoing Attorney General Phill Kline a chance to resurrect criminal charges against Wichita physician and abortion provider George Tiller, but Tiller's attorney predicted that Kline wouldn't succeed. Kline alleges that Tiller performed 15 illegal late-term abortions in 2003 on patients ages 10 to 22 and failed to properly report details about the procedures to state health officials. Tiller's attorneys call the allegations groundless.

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