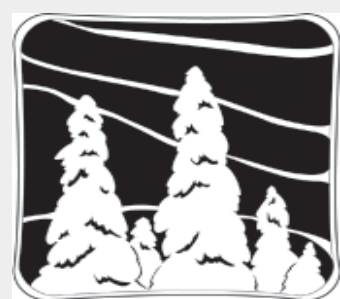


**Weather Corner**



**The forecast**

**Tonight** — Mostly clear with a low around -3. Wind chill values between -10 and -15. West wind between 5 and 15 mph. **Saturday** — Partly cloudy with a high near 19. Wind chill values between -5 and 15. West wind between 10 and 15 mph. **Saturday night** — Partly cloudy with a low around 3. West wind around 10 mph. **Sunday** — Partly cloudy with a high near 29. West wind between 5 and 10 mph. **Sunday night** — Partly cloudy with a low around 8. **Monday** — Partly cloudy with a high near 28. **Monday night** — Partly cloudy with a low around 8. **Tuesday** — Partly cloudy with a high near 30. **Temperatures**  
Thursday's high, Low this morning, -4  
Records for this date, 71 in 1963, -15 in 1902  
Precipitation past 24 hours to 8 a.m. today, 0.00  
February's precipitation, 0.00  
A recorded forecast updated throughout the day is available by calling (785) 899-7119. Current temperatures are available by calling 460-8367.

**Briefly**

**School book fair next week**

The Colby Grade School P.T.O. will host a Scholastic Book Fair from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday and Thursday and from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesday at Colby Grade School, 210 N. Grant.

Families, teachers and the community are invited to attend the fair.

The theme is "Catch the Reading Wave on Book Fair Beach."

The fair will offer specially priced books and educational products, including new releases, award-winning titles, children's classics, interactive software, adult books and current best-sellers from more than 150 publishers.

**Families wanted**

High Plains Mental Health Center is searching for families to help with its new program Homeward Bound. The program will serve children with emotional and behavioral problems and their families in crisis situations. Participat-

ing families will provide a home and daily needs for children from overnight to several weeks. Single people are also asked to help with such children. Interested people will take a seven-week training course.

Participating people will be reimbursed. "Colby is a hot sport for this service," said program manager Audrey Harper Schoenberger.

She can be reached at (785) 628-2871 or aschoen@hpmhc.com. Also, Becky Kirchhoff, a program social worker, can help interested people. Kirchhoff can be reached at (785) 346-2184 or rebecca@hpmhc.com

**Pride of the Prairie to play**

The Pride of the Prairie Orchestra is celebrating 25 years of Music on the Plains. The second performance of the season "The Blue Jeans Concert" will be held 3:30 p.m., Feb. 11, in the Frahm Theatre at Colby Community College. The 36 member volunteer orchestra will play a variety of selections in an informal atmosphere.

The Pride of the Prairie Orchestra is under the direction of

Andrew Salvador, Burlington High School band director. Tickets are available at the door.

**Tax help available**

Pioneer Memorial Library, 375 W. 4th, will be the location on Thursdays from 1:30 to 3:30 p.m. and until April 15 assisting with tax returns for the elderly or low to middle income families and individuals.

Alvin Volk is coordinating the project in Colby and will help in tax preparation at no charge. For information, call 460-2645.

**Soup supper to benefit preschool**

Kappa Upsilon is sponsoring a benefit soup supper for Puddle Duck Preschool from 5 to 7:30 p.m. Friday, Feb. 9 at the Colby Community Building.

Items on the menu include chili, chicken noodle and vegetable beef soups, cinnamon rolls, cookies and drinks. Cost is free-will donation. For information, call Amy Jennings at 460-2603.

**Lawmakers float alternatives for university repairs**

TOPEKA (AP) — Alternatives to Gov. Kathleen Sebelius' plan to use Kansas Turnpike tolls to pay for repairs at state universities already are floating among legislators, including a proposal to require college towns to impose special property tax levies.

Sebelius wants to provide \$575 million over six years to the six state universities to help them tackle a backlog of building repairs and maintenance. Her plan includes issuing \$300 million in bonds, then paying them off with revenues generated by higher turnpike tolls.

Some prominent Republicans were searching Thursday for alternatives, only a day after Sebelius proposed her tolls-for-universities plan. Some GOP leaders argue turnpike fees should be used to maintain

and improve the toll road, and the trucking industry views Sebelius' proposed toll increases — 25 percent, phased in over seven years — as burdensome.

"There's always an alternative here to any issue, and so there's several that are in play," said House Speaker Melvin Neufeld, R-Ingalls.

Last year, the state Board of Regents said universities face a backlog in maintenance and repairs of \$727 million, though it later reduced its list to \$663 million when legislators began questioning individual items. Some lawmakers — Neufeld included — believe the cost of truly critical projects is significantly lower and that the regents should be forced to be more selective.

Neufeld and other Republicans note that community colleges receive support from property taxes levied in their home counties. Some question whether it's fair for their communities to pay such levies when Kansans living near state universities don't.

Nor would using local property tax revenues to help finance universities be unprecedented. Both Wichita State University and Washburn University in Topeka receive such dollars, a legacy of their days as municipal institutions.

"Maybe there needs to be a local mill levy where the regents universities are, to help defray those costs," Neufeld said. "That's one thing I think that's on the table."

But if a torrent of criticism greeted Sebelius' proposal involv-

ing turnpike tolls, new local property taxes might prove as unpopular. Wichita State University President Donald Beggs said local property tax levies support community colleges because they're regional institutions.

"A university serves the state," Beggs said. "I think it's a little different issue."

Sen. Greta Goodwin, D-Winfield, cited the same reason for rejecting new property tax levies in university communities.

"I do not think that'd be a popular piece of legislation," she said.

Other legislators said Kansans won't stand for a property tax increase. Sebelius' plan was designed to avoid a general tax increase.

"As I travel around Kansas communities talking to business own-

ers, farmers and residents, they tell me the worst of all taxes is property tax," she said in a statement.

Rep. Dan Johnson, R-Hays, said people in his district already complain that property taxes are too high.

"I don't think that's a good idea. That will really make people mad," he said. "Especially in rural areas."

Neufeld and Senate Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dwayne Umbarger, R-Thayer, said another alternative is giving potential donors tax breaks or other incentives to contribute to maintenance funds. Sen. Jim Barnett, R-Emporia, said: "I think if the state would control its spending, we can take existing revenues and pay toward the regents' deferred maintenance."

**For the Record**

The following arrests or incidents have been provided by either the Thomas County Sheriff's office or the Colby Police Department. All suspects were booked into the county jail and are presumed innocent until proven guilty.

The Thomas County Jail is used by the towns of Colby and Oakley and Logan and Thomas counties.

**Thomas County Sheriff's office**

**Thursday, Jan. 18**

**Parole violation:** Matthew Loren Rivera, 24, of Goodland, was arrested at 11 a.m. in the 1500 block of West Fourth by the Colby police for a parole violation with the Kansas Department of Corrections.

**Giving worthless check:** Darla Anne Nichols, 20, of Colby, was arrested at 2:33 p.m. at the 200 block of North Court for giving a worthless check.

**Driving while suspended:** Terrence Ronald Kiefer, 26, of Colby, was arrested by the Colby police for driving while suspended at Franklin and Cedar.

**Friday, Jan. 19**

**Driving under the influence:** Tanner Joseph Emerick, 21, of Colby, was arrested at 4:14 a.m. on Highway 24 for driving under the influence.

**Colby Police Department**

**Saturday, Jan. 13**

**Service rendered:** An officer provided an escort from McDonald's at 1:25 a.m.

**Criminal threat:** An officer gave information at 10:21 a.m. to a person regarding a criminal threat.

**Domestic problem:** A person called the police at 3 p.m. about a possible domestic problem in the

200 block of Mission Ridge.

**Service rendered:** A caller at 10:43 p.m. notified police that he saw steam or smoke coming from South Range.

**Service rendered:** An officer provided "IdentAKid" for the Wellness Fair at Colby Community College.

**Sunday, Jan. 14**

**Criminal damage:** A person told police at 12:52 a.m. about kids damaging the bathroom at Colby Bowl.

**Service rendered:** Police provided an escort for McDonald's at 2:09 a.m.

**Service rendered:** Assisted the Thomas County Emergency Medical Services at 2:06 p.m. in the 600 block of North School.

**Criminal threat:** A person called about being threatened at 2:36 p.m.

**Possible theft:** Someone called about the theft of items at 5:32 p.m. in the 1100 block of S. Franklin. Items were returned.

**Domestic:** A woman called from McDonald's at 8:02 p.m. that her husband refused to bring children back.

**Hit and run:** A person called police about a hit and run at 8:12 p.m. in the 100 block of North School.

**Service rendered:** An officer assisted a motorist at 10:45 p.m. on Experiment Farm Road.

**Money issues add new problem for Fort Riley leader**

FORT RILEY (AP) — He has two brigades with critical missions in Iraq, including 3,400 soldiers leaving over the coming days. Inquiries from reporters and VIPs from around the world come weekly, if not daily.

Maj. Gen. Carter Ham also is overseeing the return of the 1st Infantry Division to Kansas. And if that's not enough, he's just learned that Congress may not commit to earmarking money the post needs to finish \$1 billion worth of construction to deal with the influx of soldiers.

"Certainly, it's less than ideal, but that's what our senior leaders are engaged in. We monitor that very closely," Ham said Thursday.

The House voted earlier this week to strip more than \$350 million in Fort Riley construction spending out of appropriations bills. The money was earmarked last year by Congress, but removed at the behest of the new Democratic majority.

Among the projects are barracks, headquarters and hangar complexes for a combat aviation brigade that will be deploying to Iraq this year. They also include completion of airfield improvements and construction of the division headquarters.

"Do the decisions go the way I personally think they should go?

Certainly not," Ham said. "But that's our system, and for soldiers it's OK because you always come back to that oath we take to support and defend the Constitution of the United States."

As division commander, Ham oversees the training of soldiers to go to war and the Army's No. 1 mission of training advisers to work with the Iraqi army. Both tasks come as the division grows in number at Fort Riley, expected to be more than 18,000 by 2011.

Ham commanded soldiers in Iraq in 2004 before moving to the Pentagon. He became the 1st Division's commander — and Fort Riley's — in August.

"It's been an interesting ride since the first of August, but it is fairly common for what is going on inside our Army right now," he said during an interview.

Changes include moving away from the Army's tradition of division-centered operations to brigade forces, which can rapidly deploy with all the soldiers and support structures necessary for combat. The first of those brigades, the 4th of 1st Infantry, leaves for Iraq over the next few weeks as part of Presi-

dent Bush's plan to increase the number of troops by 21,500.

Other units will be leaving this year, including the Combat Aviation Brigade and medical and supply units. Later this spring, a brigade of 1st Armored Division now conducting adviser training will begin converting to a combat brigade of 3,800 soldiers.

The conversion was accelerated by a year, and Ham said it could be complicated if facilities aren't ready. The fort might have to find temporary offices and homes for soldiers on post or in surrounding

communities — and it might have to lower soldiers' expectations about what awaits them.

"Soldiers will be OK with that as long as we tell them," he said.

Since August, Fort Riley has seen a steady stream of military and civilian dignitaries, including former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, Army Secretary Francis Harvey and numerous Army generals. Last week, Gen. Babaker Shawkat Zebari, Iraqi army chief of staff, visited the transition team training. Zebari also had a three-hour meeting in Manhattan.

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