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8 pages

County's K9 car to be repaired

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

Repairs for a Thomas County Sheriff's Department car were on the agenda at the Thomas County commissioners meeting Tuesday. Sheriff Mike Baughn, Undersheriff Jason Moses and Deputy Jane McDougal were at the meeting to discuss the car. K-9 Deputy Marc Finley's 2006 Ford Crown Victoria was damaged during an accident Feb. 13 on Interstate 70. Finley was parked on the shoulder of the road investigating an accident when his car was hit by Franklin, B. Henderson, 44, of Aurora, Colo. Finley and his passenger received minor injuries. Commissioner Paul Steele asked if Finley's dog was in the car when the accident happened. Baughn said the dog, Reveille, was in the car, but was not hurt.

"We need to get that unit back on the road as soon as we can," he said. The right back quarterpanel, right side and right front wheel were damaged in the accident. Damage to the kennel and car was about \$8,500.

Two bids were received for car repairs. They were from Butch's Body Shop in the amount of \$6,963.38 and Van's Body and Frame \$6,820.24. Butch's Body Shop's bid was approved. In other sheriff department news...

Commissioners approved paying \$11,052.85 in back pay among 18 current and former sheriff's office employees.

Steele said hours, sick and vacation pay were incorrectly posted on payroll between September 2003 and September 2006.

Baughn said no one was upset about the back pay, and it was discovered when employees started looking at benefits and hours and realized something was wrong.

Two computers from Mike Albers' computer business for \$4,329 were approved for landfill operations.

Landfill supervisor Larry Jumper said the scale computer, used to run tickets, is not working, and the business computer also has problems.

"We can't operate without it," he said. "We have to have both of those computers to work."

Printers for the county treasurer's office were approved.

Treasurer Donita Applebury asked to purchase two printers from Nextech in Hays. One was approved at last week's commissioner meeting for \$4,000.

Applebury said a printer for tax related information in her office needs replaced, and it will cost about \$3,000.

She had \$1,200 in credit with Nextech, and wanted to apply it toward the second new printer. She also has access to about \$1,800 from other budgets to help with the purchase.

An update on the new household hazardous waste building was given. The building, at the landfill, is complete, but not yet ready to move into.



Steele

A good cause



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

American Youth Soccer Organization players helped Citizens Medical Center Administrator Janice McCart send donated soccer uniforms to African children. Left to right, Keegan Morgan, Konnor Griffin, Gracie Griffin, McCart, Joshua Koon, Abbie Kummer, Jory Koon and Jakob Koon packed up donated American Youth Soccer Organization uniforms Tuesday at the hos-

pital. The uniforms will be sent to the Old Ningo School in Prampram, Ghana, Africa. McCart found a need for the uniforms at the school after a recent trip to Africa, and is working with Tina Harris, AYSO regional commissioner. Uniforms are being collected through Monday, and can be dropped off at Harris' office downtown or the hospital.

All Goodland volunteer firefighters resign in protest of fire chief's actions

GOODLAND (AP) — Stunned by the resignation of the city's 12 volunteer firefighters, Goodland officials are scrambling to ensure fire protection when the mass departure takes effect March 5. The firefighters decided to quit as a protest against Fire Chief Scott Gilmer, whose actions they believe have tarnished the department's image, volunteer Stan Duell said Wednesday. During a meeting Tuesday night, Duell said, Gilmer rejected the firefighters' request that he step down.

Duell cited Gilmer's recent 30-day suspension — for reasons that have not been made public — and his prosecution on a charge of try-

ing to steal cigarettes last July from the wreckage of an overturned tractor-trailer. A jury acquitted him of the charge in December.

"The firemen do not feel safe with him as a leader because we feel he hasn't made good judgments," Duell said. "We are in a life-threatening situation every time that alarm goes off, and we have to be able to trust each individual to cover our backs."

He said the incidents have embarrassed the department.

"We're taking questions left and right and are being ridiculed left and right," Duell said.

Goodland City Manager Wayne Hill said Wednesday he was "ap-

palled, shocked" at the firefighters' resignation and expressed support for Gilmer.

"When he's been here, he's done an excellent job. I don't think (the firefighters) have given him a chance. That's just my opinion," Hill said.

He confirmed that Gilmer recently had returned to work after a 30-day suspension, but he wouldn't discuss the reasons. Gilmer couldn't be reached for comment Wednesday afternoon.

While replacements for the 12 volunteers are recruited, Hill said, the northwest Kansas community of about 5,000 people will rely on help from Sherman County rural

firefighters and Goodland city employees.

"My main concern, obviously, is the health, safety and welfare of my community," Hill said, "and I'm going to do everything in my power and whatever I can to put people at ease that the situation will be handled in a very timely fashion."

Duell said the volunteers sent a letter to the City Commission on Jan. 29 outlining their concerns and asking that the city manager "please remove Scott as fire chief."

Commissioner John Garcia said Wednesday he had received a letter and that it spelled out a variety of opinions on the situation.

Rexford council to help

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

Street conditions caused by December storms topped the list of items at the Rexford City Council meeting Feb. 14.

Council members Mike Johnson, Dennis Allison, Nancy Dahl, Dwight Williams and Dave Williams, serving as acting mayor in Bill Dible's absence, decided they would pitch in and help residents when City Superintendent Bill Scott is overwhelmed by snow removal.

Resident Mary Luna told council members she missed two days of work because streets were not cleaned enough, or soon enough, after the storm which in some areas dumped more than a foot of snow in northwest Kansas. That storm lasted from Dec. 28-31.

Dave Williams said residents should first contact Scott, and if he tells them it will be some time before he can help them they can contact council members.

"If Bill can't get there quick they can call a council member," Williams said.

Besides snow removal, Williams said Scott is working with Federal Emergency Management Agency officials to determine the extent of damage the storm caused.

Williams said Rexford will be applying for a small-project reimbursement, that being less than \$59,000.

"Bill is to meet with FEMA representatives," Williams said.

Rexford city officials are required to document expenses which occurred during a 48-hour period of the storm.

Scott was directed by council members to determine the damage amount to signs, hydrants and streets and let FEMA officials know the total.

The council decided to pay Scott one-half of his monthly salary for overtime hours worked during the storm.

"Number of hours?" Williams said. "I don't know that he kept track of them, I certainly didn't."

According to Jolene Hansen, Scott will be paid about \$1,000 for the overtime hours.

Sheridan County takes note of minutes

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

Who is supposed to take notes during Sheridan County Commission meetings opened conversation at the Feb. 12 meeting in Hoxie.

While reviewing minutes of the Feb. 5 commission meeting, Commissioner Keith Kennedy asked County Appraiser David Stithem whether he is qualified to sit at the commission table for official purposes. Kennedy said his understanding of state law was only a county clerk or deputy clerk can record what goes on in commission meetings.

While state law requires county clerks or a deputy to attend commission meetings, it does not require notes of the meeting be taken. However, Kansas has a tradition of county clerks or deputy clerks taking notes at commission meetings and creating official minutes.

Assistant Attorney General Theresa Bush said there is a distinct difference between notes taken at public meetings and official minutes resulting from those notes.

"County clerks are not required to take notes at all county meetings," Bush said. "However, they usually help to prepare the official

minutes for county commission meetings, and so often do take such notes, but not as part of the Kansas Open Records Act or the Kansas Open Meetings Act.

Bush said an attorney general opinion states a county clerk or deputy can take written notes or tape recorded notes which are later transcribed into official minutes.

State law also requires the clerk's office be at the county seat and the clerk have general powers of a notary public. And all county seals, records and commissioners' paperwork must be on file in the clerk's office.

"If a county clerk does keep notes at a public meeting so she can later create the official minutes, personal notes and draft documents may legally be closed under state statute," Bush said.

Stithem said County Clerk Paula Bielser appointed him as a deputy about 10 years ago. He said as part of routine business he is in the clerk's office frequently.

Stithem is paid by the county not only as the appraiser, but as information technician who works on the county's computer systems and equipment. He is also the county's training officer for the emergency medical service.



JOHN VAN NOSTRAND/Colby Free Press

David Kruse, right, applies ashes to the foreheads of a congregation member at Trinity Lutheran Church Wednesday during Ash Wednesday services. Ash Wednesday is the first day of Lent concluding with Easter April 8. Lent reminds Christians of the 40 days Jesus Christ spent in the desert.

Colby eyes state
Page 8