



# COLBY FREE PRESS

## Election 2007

# Voters close door on center proposal

By John Van Nostrand

Free Press Publisher

Colby Community College wrestling coach Steve Lampe said the college will obviously continue without voter approval of the proposed gymnasium and wellness center.

He is not sure what the college, or Colby, will be like in the future without it.

"It doesn't surprise me it lost," he said. "I am disappointed."

Thomas County voters Tuesday turned down the college's proposal to build a new 2,400 seat gymnasium, auxiliary gymnasium, wrestling room, locker rooms and exercise rooms priced at about \$15 million.

Voters had two questions to an-



Lampe



Kreider

swer related to the proposal's funding. One question was for approval of \$4.49 million in general obligation bonds. That lost 1,740-821. The second question was for \$10.5 million in certificates of participation. That lost 1,741-723.

If approved, property taxes would have been raised for the next 20 years.

College officials said both ques-

tions must have passed for the project to continue.

"This is not a good deal for me," Lampe said about the results and his wrestling program of the past 31 years. "I've been in a rathole situation for most of my career here."

Trojan basketball, volleyball and wrestling teams play at the Colby Community Building, about two miles from campus. If approved, the new center would have been built on campus and would have been used as a tool recruit students.

The condition of the community building and certain campus facilities makes recruiting student-athletes difficult, Lampe said. The team practices in a makeshift room above the college's swimming pool. Without contemporary, attractive facilities, Lampe said he fears

how many students will be interested in attending Colby Community College.

"I am concerned about our future," he said.

Colby Community College President Dr. Lynn Kreider said he was disappointed the proposal was defeated, but happy for what the college did.

"We ran a wonderful campaign considering the voter turnout," he said. "All had the information and we brought a lot of new awareness to the college."

Kreider, who began the job in July 2006, said he has no plans to revise the proposal and try another vote.

### Repeat history

Colby Community College Board of Trustees Chairman Don

Kready said the center proposal was very similar to what happened in Colby decades ago. In 1954, Colby voters, in a 427-395 vote, approved \$350,000 to build the community building.

"I'm disappointed," Kready said about Tuesday's vote. "It would have been a boon to Colby. Not too many of us are around when the community building was built, and that had some opposition. What would Colby be like without the community building?"

The community building has held countless number of sporting events, concerts and other events.

Included in the college's proposal was to build a new, 260-bed dormitory. The current student living centers date back to the late 1960s. With the thousands of students who have

lived in them since, they are showing their age and use.

College officials said they would pursue more grants and other funds rather than property taxes to build the \$5 million dormitory. Kready said the dormitory proposal is another way to attract more students.

"The competition for students is high," Kready said.

Kready said even his own children, who were college-age some 25 years, were aware of the condition.

"There is a need," he said.

Kready did not want to speak for the board if the board will continue to pursue either a new gymnasium or a new dormitory. Kreider said he would like to review the dormitory proposal, but has no plans to use property taxes for funding.

## Turnout exceeds 90 percent

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

The unofficial results from Tuesday's election are in and voter turnout could have set a record.

Of 5,506 registered voters in Thomas County, 2,389, or 93.33 percent cast ballots in the election. Of those, 815 people used advanced voting.

There was also an unusually high number of write-ins, 643, in this election.

County Clerk Shelly Harms was pleased with the election — with voter turnout, and the election itself.

"I'm very pleased," Harms said. "And I think if we took a poll of the community, they're happy we've gone back to paper ballots."

During the mid-term general election in November, voting equipment from Voting Technology International did not function properly. The vote count was postponed several hours.

Since, that equipment was sent back and new equipment was purchased from Diebold, which allows for either computerized voting or using a paper ballot.

For electronic voting, the ballots are fed into a scanner. Voters use a touch-screen to make their selection then after the questions have been answered, the ballot is returned to the voter to submit.

"We've had a fast tabulation," she said. "It's gone good."

There was a slight delay in the vote count after the polls closed Tuesday because of the number of write-in votes. Those all had to be hand counted. Unofficial results came out at about 10 p.m.

Problems Tuesday were small Harms said. They did receive phone calls from people asking where to vote, and from people asking if they were registered to vote.

Harms was at the Colby Community Building for a few hours and said voters never had to wait long.

Deputy Clerk Barb Hopper said the provisional ballot number is not known yet. Those ballots will be counted during the canvassing by the county commissioners at their meeting at 9 a.m. Monday at the courthouse.

Hopper explained provisional ballots are from voters who registration is uncertain. For example, if someone moves into the county two weeks for an election and shows up at the polls to vote, they will be al-

lowed to fill out a voter registration card and vote.

However, their ballot will be placed in an envelope and the reason will be stated on it.

Harms said one issue that came up during the election is thoughts of consolidation.

She was approached, and asked to consider consolidating the polls to one central location in Thomas County.

Harms said the community building could be used, as well as advanced voting. Extended hours at the courthouse and weekends before the election could be an option.

"We are seriously considering it," she said.

The cost of fuel and having to haul fragile, valuable voting machines outside the community are two reasons why consolidation may be an option.

Harms also had to hire seven people, to move and set up equipment for Tuesday's election in Brewster, Rexford and Colby.

Consolidation would allow her to cut back on the number of pool workers, and it would be easier to haul the equipment a few blocks instead of across the county.

## College chairman resigns

By John Van Nostrand

Free Press Publisher

Even though Tuesday's election is over, the Colby Community College Board of Trustees will be looking for another member.

Chairman Don Kready, who had been on the board for 28 years, has resigned. Kready is moving to Topeka this week for family reasons. Kready's term expires this year and did not file for re-election. Kready, 78, had lived in Colby for 49 years.

Kready, who did not want to comment further about his resignation, speculated the board will appoint someone to take his place. A reception in his honor will be held at 3 p.m. April 26 at the student union on campus.

"Don was a great person. I'm sorry he is leaving," said college President Dr. Lynn Kreider. "Every sun has to set."

"He will be missed."

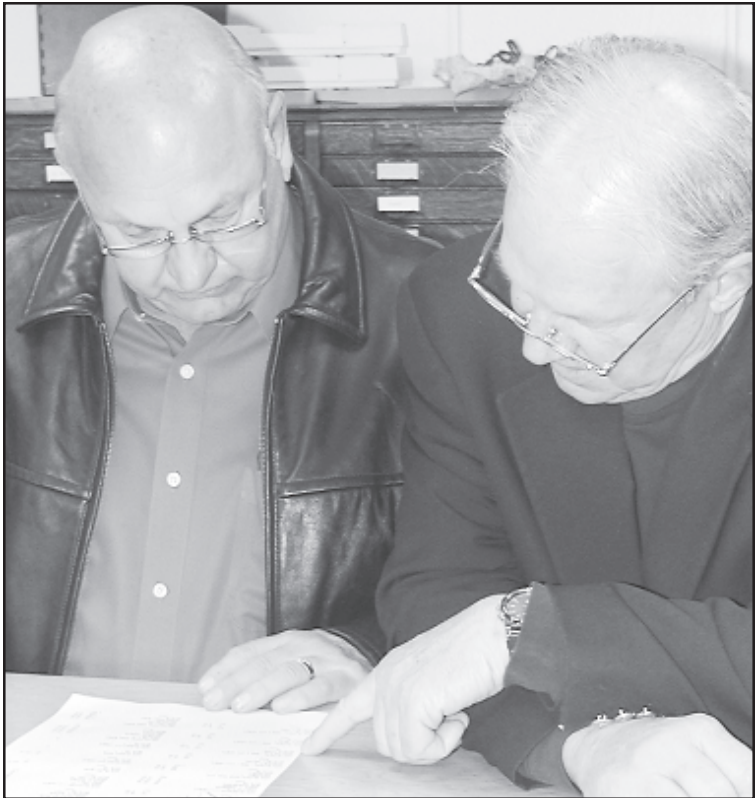
There were four candidates for three seats. Thomas County voters approved incumbent Mark Winger, Bill Biel and Arlen Leiker to the board. Biel received 1,590 votes; Winger, 1,498 and Leiker had 1,230 votes.

Incumbent Larry McDonald, who had served one term, received 642 votes and will not return.

Those members will begin their four-year terms July 1.



Kready



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Bill Biel, left, new Colby Community College board of trustees member, and Jim Oliver, right, looked over election results Tuesday at the Thomas County Courthouse.

Winger was appointed to the board in February 2006 to finish the term of Larry Arehart who moved. Winger was unavailable for comment.

Despite voters turning down the proposal to build a new gymnasium on campus, Biel said he is anticipating improving the college in other ways.

"I was disappointed the building didn't pass. It would have moved the college forward. There are still positive people. I am looking forward to being on the board. I know the college has plans for the future. We have a good community college," he said.

Even though the center proposal was on the ballot, Biel said education is still priority.

"I want to make sure we have quality staff for the education of the students," he said.

Leiker said he is interested in

talking to people to find out what they think of the college.

"I'm going to go out and talk to some people. I want to try and build a consensus. I represent those people," he said.

Leiker declined to comment about the board taking another look at the center proposal but said the dormitory is still a need.

"The college is a business and we have competitors. I'd like to know what others have done for dorms. I am considering taking people to our dorms to show them what they are like and find out what we should offer these students. The more we offer, the easier recruiting. It's that simple and I know there is a line in there."

McDonald said he was proud of his time on the board.

"I'm glad I had the opportunity to be there. I know I made some positive changes," he said.

## Incumbent Colby mayor wins

By Patty Decker

Free Press Editor

Almost two-thirds of the voters in Colby made it clear Tuesday who they wanted as the city's mayor for the next four years.

Incumbent Ken Bieber had 840 votes counted to Jim Smith's 589 with 36 write-ins. Provisional ballots are still to come.

"These are unofficial results," said Thomas County Clerk Shelly

Harms, "until all provisional ballots and write-ins are counted."

Both Bieber and Smith spoke about the election.

"I want to thank everyone who voted for me," Bieber said.

As for the next four years, he



Bieber

briefly outlined what is important.

"I continue to see economic development as our key issue and will do all I can to get businesses going at the east exit."

For example, Bieber cited Bosselman's, a Nebraska-based truck stop, with plans to build a facility at Colby's exit 54 on Interstate 70.

Smith ran on a platform of reform

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## Standing room only

One of Thomas County's new electronic voting machines prepares a ballot Tuesday while voters wait their turn at the Colby Community Building Tuesday. Voter turnout was at 93 percent. The ballot was highlighted by Colby Community College's proposal to build a new gymnasium and wellness center, which was defeated.



JOHN VAN NOSTRAND/Colby Free Press

## Golden Plains waits

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press

With election numbers unofficial until Monday, who will take the four open seats on Golden Plains School Board is still an unanswered question.

"Nothing is official until the canvassing is over," said Deputy Thomas County Clerk Barbara Hopper.

After polls closed in Thomas County and Sheridan County on Tuesday, incumbents Paul Bruggeman, Mark Miller, Jay Todd and newcomer Jeremy Schiltz look to be elected to the board.

In Thomas County, Bruggeman received 67 votes, Miller took home 63 votes, Todd received 70 votes and Schiltz won 33 votes.

Add to those numbers Sheridan County's 58 votes for Bruggeman, Miller's 41 votes, Todd's 54 votes and Schiltz's 84 votes, and unofficial totals are Bruggeman, 125;

Miller, 104; Todd, 124; and Schiltz, 117 votes. Other combined totals for candidates running for the seats were Joe Broeckelman, 101; Brent Ginther, 48; Terry Moss, 82; and Leroy Spreser, 80 votes.

Hopper said there were more than 600 walk-ins in Tuesday's election and numbers across the county could change significantly.

A walk-in vote is cast by someone whose voter registration is not current because of a move or having not voted in a significant amount of time. Walk-in ballots are considered provisional until canvassed by the board of county canvassers, which is made up of Thomas County Commissioners Ken Christiansen, Paul Steele and Byron Sowers.

Votes will be canvassed at 9 a.m. on Monday in the commissioners' room located on the first floor of the Thomas County Courthouse located at 300 N. Court in Colby.