



COLBY FREE PRESS

8 pages

Group asks city council for \$15,000

By **Patty Decker**
Free Press Editor

Colby City Council is holding a public hearing at 7 p.m., Tuesday, to decide on a request from the Economic Development Alliance for \$15,000 in Sales Tax Funds.

"The Thomas County Economic Development Alliance has been granted a Rural Business Enterprise Grant of \$118,000 in revolving loan funds and is requesting match money of \$15,000 from the city sales tax funds," said Carolyn Armstrong, city manager.

Whenever a request is made for city sales tax funds, Armstrong said, a public hearing is held.

Two other loan funds exist for Thomas County businesses; however, director of economic development Gerry

Fulwider said each has limitations. For example, the Thomas County Revolving Loan Fund has restrictions on businesses with low to moderate impact and the Micro Loans also have limitations on how much can be lent.

"This will establish another revolving loan fund," said Fulwider. "The board felt it would be good to have this type of loan fund for start up businesses needing help."

If the public has no objections to the request, then the council will vote on the issue.

In addition, the council will have acknowledge its newly-elected officials to include Ken Bieber, mayor; Pat Mallory, Ward I; Beverly Eicher, Ward II; Jim Brown, Ward III; and Jim Tubbs, Ward IV.

Other agenda items include a report from Jeff Friesen, director of Pioneer Memorial Library and

"This will establish another revolving loan fund."

Gerry Fulwider,
executive director
Economic Development

Lynette Koon on recycling efforts and the latest grants received by the Regional Recycling Group.

The council will also consider authorizing two pickups for the water department; hear a request for "Home of Samuel Ramey" signage; and consider an extension of agreement request for Dr. Gary Slavens' temporary location near Dillons.

At the March 20 council meeting, many appointments were made by Mayor Bieber. Those included the appointment of Vern Unruh and re-appointment of Paul Steele to the city's airport board. Five people were appointed to the Code Standards and Appeals Board. They were: Larry Brown, Larry Schlick, Tim McKee, Jeff Unger and Glen Strait. Other boards with reappointments included Scott Hass on the recreation commission; Sharon Steele to the tree board; and Gary Sloan on the zoning appeals board.

Anyone interested in serving on one of the city's various boards is encouraged to call the mayor and in the event an opening comes up, those names would be considered.

All council meetings are open to the public.

For an agenda, call Jo Strange, assistant to the city manager, 460-4410.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Sue Taylor, director of the Prairie Museum of Art and History, looked over an information sheet for one of the many furniture items in the collection. Some of those artifacts will be featured in a new exhibit this fall.

Museum prepares for the future

By **Tisha Cox**
Colby Free Press

Changes in the main gallery are not the only alterations at Colby's Prairie Museum of Art and History.

The museum is making slow, steady steps to meeting its goals according to director Sue Taylor.

"The museum is getting back on track," she said. A series of public meetings one year ago helped. About 50 people attended the three meetings last spring aimed at helping decide the museum's future.

Some of the goals from the meeting were a children's area, more space for activities, a sign on the grounds, more funding and exhibits.

Attendance numbers had dropped off and the museum was down to two full-time employees, but that is starting to change. Those changes are already coming to the forefront.

The museum lost two full-time employees over the years, and did not fill the positions when people left.

What has helped turn things around is more money. This year,

the museum received an additional \$15,000 from the Thomas County Commissioners, bringing the budget to \$80,000.

"That's what we're allowed because we are the historical society for Thomas County," Taylor said. "We hope for the county's continued support."

The tourism committee also gave one-sixth of its transient guest tax to the museum, which totals about \$28,000. The money from the committee and county have helped with operating expenses.

Attendance has increased this

spring, with a steady stream of young families.

The tall LED sign on the grounds installed in November visible from Interstate 70 has helped draw visitors. The sign on the museum grounds was paid for by the Convention and Visitors Bureau's tourism committee. It provided \$100,000 to pay for the sign. Leilani Thomas, tourism director, said the sign has helped get people's attention.

"It's creating reasons for people to stay longer," she said.

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Brewster council agrees to street work; city cleanup

By **Jan Katz Ackerman**
Colby Free Press

Brewster residents will see activity in and around town as spring continues to ease harsh weather conditions.

Action taken by Brewster's city council will allow for rock and sand to be applied to various streets in town and at the cemetery, located one mile west of town in Sherman County.

At the April 10 meeting, Councilman Ron Ribordy made a motion seconded by Jon Eicher to purchase 300 ton of rock and sand from Sporer Land Development.

Of the materials, 225 ton will be paid for from Federal Emergency Management money.

The city applied for \$14,000 federal money after Brewster was included in a disaster area as the result of the Dec. 28-31 blizzard which tore through northwestern Kansas.

"Of the FEMA money," City

Superintendent Mike Schultz said, "Exactly \$4,657.25 is for the roads and the other \$9,395.41 is for the snow removal we did."

Schultz said repair to street and road bases has already started and he expects sand and rock application to begin next week.

A consensus decision by the city council was made to hire summer help to assist Schultz in work done throughout Brewster.

Applications will be accepted until Wednesday and a special meeting will take place Thursday to review the applications.

Schultz said the city-wide cleanup scheduled for April 23 has been postponed until April 28.

Sponsoring the clean up day are the Brewster Community Foundation and the local Lutheran church.

All city council meetings are open to the public.

For those wanting an agenda or questions, call Schultz at (785) 694-2494.

... We'll be back again some day



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Three snow people — a mommy, daddy and baby — were visible at the corner of North Lincoln and West Eighth Street following Friday's spring snowstorm. The three figures were created Friday when students in Colby and the area got a snow

day. The three were recognizable on Saturday, but by Sunday, all three melted away. Barring anymore spring snowstorms and with warmer weather coming, many people will turn their attention to gardening, swimming, and other summer activities.

Field of proposals for Wichita area casinos could get crowded

WICHITA (AP) — One developer wants to turn part of downtown into a destination casino complex, largely by renovating existing buildings. The other wants to build a new complex well north of the city.

And now that the Legislature has approved a casino for the Wichita area — pending approval by Sedgwick County voters — the field of competing proposals could get even more crowded.

"They're going to be saying just about

anything," said Mayor Carl Brewer. "We need to make sure that the message is out there that the city of Wichita is not making any decisions or anything like that."

The state will pick the casino site if the county measure is approved in the Aug. 7 election.

Even though city officials worry that Wichita could be shut out of casino revenue if a complex is built outside the city limits, City Manager George Kolb said Wichita is

trying to work with Sedgwick County, not compete with it.

"We're trying to do what's in the best interest of the entire community," Kolb said.

Former Mayor Bob Knight heads a group pushing for a \$300 million project near the Kansas Coliseum in Park City.

Developer Brian Hamm, president of Toronto-based Nova Growth Corp., counters with a proposal to buy the Century

II convention center and the Hyatt Regency hotel and retrofit those buildings for a casino complex. That project also would cost an estimated \$300 million, although Hamm has not yet made an offer on the hotel and Century II. The latter building, along with Expo Hall, would remain in its current configuration and would stay open to the arts groups that now use it. The project would, however, require relocation of the Wichita Public Library's main branch.

"The city has been thinking about moving it for years," said Hamm's representative, Wichita lawyer Tom Docking. "We're prepared to help them do that. That frees a lot of land."

The city's downtown development corporation and its convention and visitors bureau endorsed the idea of a downtown casino several years ago, and leaders of both groups said their boards soon will consider whether to do so again.