



## Bent, but not broken



Midwest Energy crews worked on repairing a utility pole near South Country Club Drive and East Walnut streets that was damaged by a car Sunday morning. A Midwest Energy spokesperson said no power was lost because of the incident. Traffic on

Country Club Drive was detoured to Cherokee Drive while crews repaired the pole. Information about the car was not available by press time today.

JOHN VAN NOSTRAND/Colby Free Press

# County weighs siren repairs

By Kevin Johnson

Free Press Reporter  
kjohanson@nwkansas.com

Moves to fix tornado sirens in Thomas County moved forward as Emergency Management director brought forth a cost estimate for repairs on existing sirens to Thomas County Commissioners.

The cost to repair the two broken sirens in Thomas County, a project that will be undertaken by Blue Valley Public Safety out of Missouri, will be \$950 per day, as well as the cost of parts. It was estimated by Engel it will take at maximum two days to fix the sirens, which will run the Thomas County about \$1,900 not including the cost of parts.

Engel also brought forth a maintenance plan with Blue Valley Public Safety to maintain the 10 sirens in Thomas County as part of an annual maintenance program as well as an "if needed" basis that will have a 96 hour response time for sirens that need repaired. The cost of the maintenance contract will be an additional \$1,900 dollars for Blue Valley Public Safety to come out and test and repair the existing sirens.

The tornado siren issue was brought to light during the Oct. 31 Thomas County Commissioner meeting when Engel suggested, instead of repairing existing sirens, Thomas County Commissioners replace the six sirens in Colby with three new sirens that would cover all the areas previously covered by the six current sirens, as well as additional mileage that the six do not cover, which would cost about \$15,000.

"The current sirens are at least 50 years old," said Engel. "They work but they are on their last legs. For the city we would only need three instead of six if we got new ones and repositioned them."

The Thomas County Commissioners decided it would be better to fix the sirens that are not working properly and requested Engel look into an annual maintenance

program for upkeep on the existing sirens.

"So we would get an annual inspection, plus they would come fix the sirens if we needed?" Thomas County Commissioner Ken Christiansen asked Engel. "Yes," Responded Engel. "But what we have on the front burner is getting our two sirens that we have down repaired. That needs to happen within the next couple of months. We have one that is not working correctly and one that is not working at all."

Thomas County Commissioner Paul Steele asked if Blue Valley Public Safety would come look and assess all the current sirens for \$1,900. Engel said he would ask but that it was \$950 a day, plus parts, so it could end up costing the county more money to have them look at all of the sirens. "It doesn't sound like it would cost us a whole lot more," said Steele. "It looks like the expense is just getting them out here."

Thomas County Commissioner Byron Sowers confirmed with Engel that, if Blue Valley Public Safety came out and found something else wrong than previously estimated, the cost of repairing would be "above and beyond this estimate."

"They came out here and looked to see what kind of sirens we have and they know exactly what issues they have and they will come ready to help us with what we need to do." It was decided by the commissioners to go ahead with the repair of the two broken sirens within the next few months but to wait on the agreement to contract out Blue Valley Public safety for annual maintenance in order to see if they would drop the price to cover just eight of the sirens since they will have been out to inspect two already.

"That would get us probably one or two years down the road," said Sowers. "Then if we didn't want to go with the maintenance contract, two years down the road we could restudy that and decide if we wanted to go with the maintenance contract or get new sirens."

# Council invites pond owner

By Patty Decker

Free Press Editor  
pdecker@nwkansas.com

The Colby City Council is expected to give its city attorney directions on what options to take regarding a pond near the airport when it meets at 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, in council chambers.

The pond issue was first noticed in October when Mark Ostmeyer, airport manager, saw it while flying over the area.

Based on past conversations with the Tuffy and Linda Taylor, owners of the pond and property, City Manager Carolyn Armstrong told

the council at previous meetings that the area was originally going to be an evaporation basin only.

However, in October, Airport Manager Mark Ostmeyer said while doing some flying he noticed a pond being constructed off of the southeast end of the Colby airport runway where the Taylor's house is located.

Ostmeyer said the concern is ducks and other wildlife hitting an aircraft in flight.

"We already have existing municipal waste water settling ponds on the east side of the airport property," he said, "and the FAA has instructed us to eliminate these as soon as our

new water treatment facility is up and running on the eastside of town about two miles away."

Another concern is with the FFA, Armstrong explained to the city council at its recent meeting.

According to the FFA in a letter dated Nov. 9, "the existence of the pond would be considered incompatible with safe airport operations because of its location approximately 1,700 feet from the airport's operation area and only 650 feet from the extended runway centerline."

Helm also said it is the city's responsibility to ensure it can continue to meet its contractual obligations to

the federal government.

Armstrong sent the Taylors a copy of the agenda inviting them to attend Tuesday's meeting.

Other council agenda items include establishing a date and time for the end of the year special meeting and vacating the public utility easement near the Taco John's site near Interstate 70.

In addition, the council will consider approving retail cereal malt beverages for China Buffet, Dillon Stores, Hong Kong Chinese Restaurant, Kabredlos, Loves Country Store, Service Oil Company, Wal-Mart Stores, Pizza Hut and Oasis Travel Center.

# Accident injures one

A 17-year-old Colby girl was injured in a two-vehicle accident Sunday at Interstate 70 exit 54.

According to a preliminary report from the Kansas Highway Patrol, at 3:35 p.m., Kenneth Robert Skow, 65, of Murtaugh, Idaho, was driving a 1989 Freightliner semi on the westbound exit ramp.

Brena Lynn Jones was driving a

2000 Chevrolet sedan southbound on Country Club Drive.

Skow failed to yield at the stop sign and collided with Jones in the intersection.

Jones was taken to Citizens Medical Center. According to a hospital spokesperson this morning,

She was treated and released, officials said.

# Board meets today

The Colby School District board convenes 7 p.m., today, in the board room of the administration building, 600 W. Third St. Agenda items include report cards on the status of school buildings, reports from building principals, the curriculum director, superintendent and board members. Further discussion of the Thomas County Community Foundation will take place, and the board

will determine interview questions, an interview schedule and appoint an on-site visiting team for the new superintendent search.

A technology and security camera update is also scheduled, along with early graduation requests, approval of the 2008-2009 academic calendar and other personnel matters.

The meeting is open to the public.

# Briefly

## College meets today

The Colby Community College board of trustees will meet at 4 p.m., Monday, in the board room of Thomas Hall. Agenda items include approval of contracts and resolutions; reports from president's administrative council; audit report; faculty laptop computer purchase; January board meetings; approval of additions to policy manual; EduKan issue and disposal of some college vehicles. All meetings are open to the public. For questions, call 462-3984.

## Final scripture event nears

The third and final mid-week soup and scripture

event, sponsored by the Thomas County Ministerial Alliance will be noon, Wednesday, at Trinity Lutheran Church, Fifth Street and Country Club Dr. The program will be "Defined for Love." The Ministerial Alliance is hoping this will bring an added dimension to the preparation for Christmas during the busy season. "Take a lunch break and join us in this time of spiritual rest and reflection," said Rev. Jon Schmidt. For questions, call (785) 462-3497.

## Bellringers still needed

Those who are interested in volunteering for Salvation Army in Thomas County, including helping with kettle donations, can call 460-4596 for more informa-

tion. The kettles are expected to be available in Thomas County through Christmas.

## Volunteers needed

The Colby Senior Progress Center, 165 Fike Park, is looking for volunteers to help with home delivery meals, said Kaila DeBoer, director. In recent weeks, she said, home delivery has increased and extra help is urgently needed. For questions or to consider helping out the current volunteers, call DeBoer at (785) 460-2901.

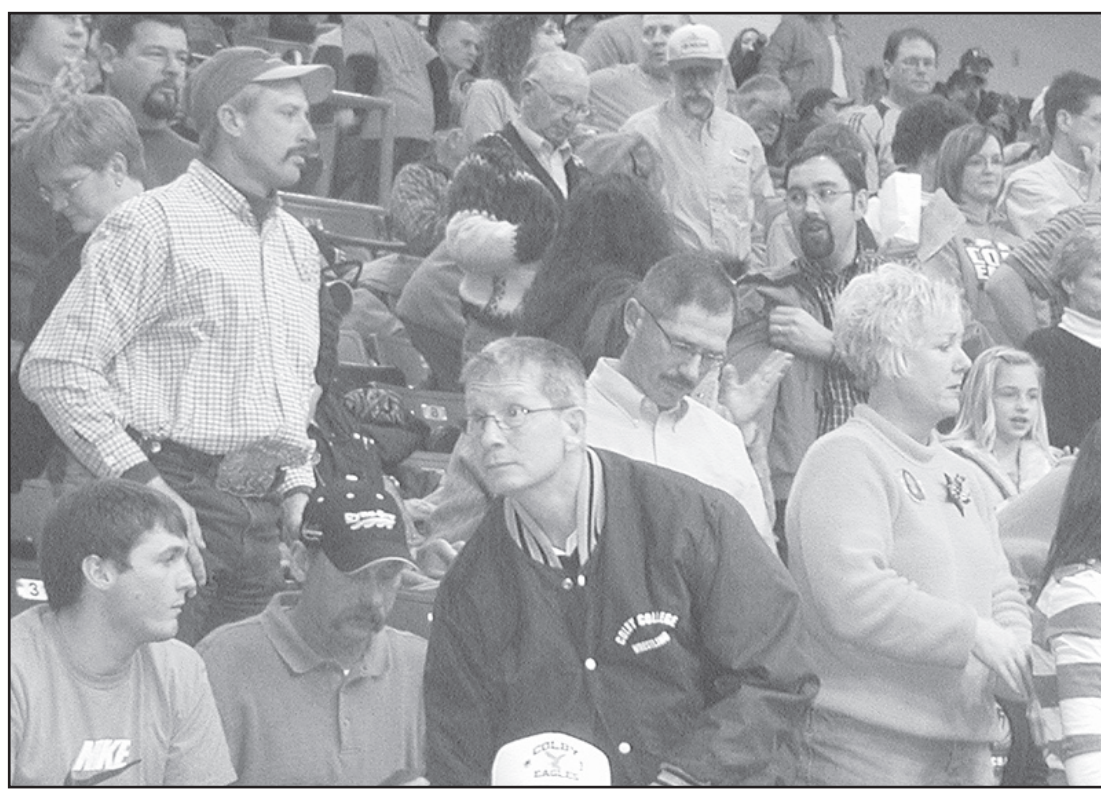
## Responder class forming

Thomas County Emergency Medical Services is

sponsoring a First Responder Class with the sign up deadline before Sunday, Dec. 23. Classes are expected to begin Monday, Jan. 14, 2008 and will continue for about two and one-half months, officials said. A first responder is someone who can drive the ambulance, and one of the people who is first on the scene to assist with care. For questions or other details, call the Thomas County EMS, 460-4585 or instructors: Dawnelle Umberger, 443-0176 or Tammi Engel, 443-2134.

## School concert Tuesday

The Colby Middle School sixth, seventh and eighth grade choirs has rescheduled its concert to 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, in the Colby High School auditorium, 1890 S. Franklin Ave.



JOEY FALKOFF/Colby Free Press

# Plainsman domination

Colby Eagle fans had a lot to cheer about Friday as both the boys and girls basketball teams defeated Oakley at the community building. The girls beat the #1 ranked Lady Plainsmen 57-41, and the boys followed it up with an 80-39 win of their own.