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County considers flushing bathrooms

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Free Press Reporter

The county may be spending less money on toilet paper, water and cleaning supplies if it closes some of the restrooms at the Thomas County Office Complex. Custodians Darin Bell and Ron Roeder told commissioners Ken Christiansen, Paul Steele and Byron Sowers the complex, located in the 300 block of Range Ave., has 25 restrooms in it because the building formerly being a nursing home.

"We could remove 12 restrooms, possibly two more," Bell said.

The public health department uses 11 restrooms, five of which Bell said he would support closing and making into storage areas. Bell said if the commissioners decide to close the extra restrooms, they too could be converted to storage areas. Bell would like a professional plumber to take out the faucets because of their age.

"Those valves have not been turned for years," Bell said.

Besides the health department, Bell suggested keeping restrooms in the offices occupied by Emergency Pregnancy and Catholic Services, Thomas County Economic Development, Thomas County Extension and the public men and women's restrooms.

"I suggest giving the office

complex staff your list and asking for their input," Steele said.

The commissioners asked Bell to have office complex staff submit their opinion for closing some of the restrooms to Bell or the county clerk's office by March 31 so they can act on the measure.

Bell and Roeder also talked with the commissioners about painting the flag pole at the office complex.

Steele said he favored encasing the current flag pole in white plastic pipe to avoid future painting needs.

Roeder said if plastic pipe was used to encase the steel pole it would need to have drainage at the bottom.

"If water gets in there it would freeze," Roeder said.

Bell said he as researched the cost of painting the pole and only one estimate, from Commercial Sign, at \$300.

"That's to strip and repaint the pole," he said.

Bell said other options are for replacing the pole with either an aluminum or architectural grade metal pole. He said prices range from \$760 to \$1,320. He said wind capacities are also a factor should the commissioners decide to replace the pole.

"Give us choices," Steele said about getting more information and reporting back at 9 a.m. on

March 31.

Bell is also to get prices pertaining to replacement of a portion of water pipe that extends from the water meter into the office complex. A water line break in December has the commissioners evaluating the quality of pipe and they asked Bell to get information and report back to them about it.

In other business, the county will purchase a new belly dump trailer for the road and bridge department.

Road and Bridge Supervisor Clair Schrock met with the commissioners and said the county can buy a truck from Berry Tractor in Garden City for \$31,000.

The tandem axle trailer will haul 21 yards of dirt or sand and Schrock plans to use it as part of the contract hauling operation. Last year, the county raised \$92,000, less fuel and labor, through custom hauling to townships and private individuals.

The commissioners approved the purchase which will be paid for out of the special equipment fund which currently has \$137,104 in it.

"It seems to me it's a service we are providing for the township," Steele said. "It's a collaboration with the county and townships since none of them have the funds to pay for a trailer like this, so we are doing them a favor."

Look what I found?



JOHN VANNOSTRAND/Colby Free Press

Janessa Cheney, 2, scanned Fike Park Saturday morning during the 34th annual Kiwanis Club Easter Egg Hunt. Janessa's mother, Melinda, watched.

Election issue may resurface

By Tom Betz
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A Sherman County bill to allow at-large voting for county commissioners died in the Senate last year, but Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer (R-Grinnell) said Wednesday it could be moved out of committee this week if the commissioners agree on the language.

If the bill doesn't have the support of the county, however, it

might not move. Supporters would have to start over from scratch in the next Legislature. Commissioners could make their decision at their meeting Tuesday.

Commissioners talked about the bill on Tuesday, and asked County Clerk Janet Rumpel to get a current copy of the bill for them to review at the next meeting, which starts at 8 a.m. Tuesday.

The bill would allow voters to decide in an election whether all

voters, rather than just those in one district, should get to vote in commission races. State law does not allow counties to vote at large, so at the suggestion of some citizens two years ago, commissioners asked the legislature for a change in Sherman County only.

The bill was scheduled to be passed out last March, but Ostmeyer said things got wild in the last couple of days and it was set aside.

Murder in the library?

Mike Larmer, left, playing Hercules Perot, and Tom Chain, Inspector Adam Dogleash, were two of many characters at this year's fourth annual Murder Mystery held Saturday at Pioneer Memorial Library. The play, *Murder of the Mystery Detective*, was organized and directed by Kristy Karnes. Other actors included: Luke Tubbs as Sam Slayed; Mark Wahlmeier as Hemlock Bones; Richard Britton, Sir Arthur Conon Hoyle (lying near Larmer and Chain); Gunner Gawith as Agatha Mystery; Adriane Sims as Nancy Prude; and Kutesy Millstone as Linda Van Horn. The event, sponsored by Friends of Pioneer Memorial Library was at a capacity crowd of 75 people and all proceeds go to benefit the library.



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

City to hear talks on golf course, pond

By Patty Decker
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Colby Mayor Ken Bieber appointed Fred Taylor to fill the unexpired term of Jim Tubbs, who resigned in February and the swearing-in ceremony will take place at 7 p.m., Tuesday, during the regular council meeting.

In addition, the council is expected to hear a presentation about the preliminary golf course layout from Ed Collins, one of the golf course organizers.

City Manager Carolyn Armstrong said Collins is continuing to work on an 18-hole golf course and wants to update the council.

Colby couple, Tuffy and Linda Taylor, will also be at the council meeting to continuing discussion on proposed alternatives related to their pond near the Colby Municipal Airport.

The Taylor's were given time to consider alternatives and the council will need to take action

since the city could be in default under grant agreements with the Federal Aviation Administration.

Other agenda items include reviewing a governing body handbook with the addition of a new council member ; 2008 street maintenance projects; a preliminary cost of living adjustment in the 2009 budget; authorizing the abatement of conditions in violation of the environmental code at 1025 E. Fourth St.; approval of a contract with Miller Construction Services for the new fire station; and approval of a Kansas Department of Transportation agreement for resurfacing Kansas Highway 25 from Interstate 70 to 100 feet north of Davis and Zelfer Avenues.

The council could also approve amending personnel handbook pertaining to residency requirements.

All meetings are open to the public.

For an agenda or questions, call 460-4410.

Briefly

Egg Hunt Saturday

College Drive Assembly, 245 W. College Dr. in Colby, is sponsoring an Easter Egg hunt from 1 to 2:15 p.m., Saturday. Registration opens at 12:45 p.m. with lots of games, prizes and music planned. A coloring contest is also scheduled and officials encourage those participating to go to: www.collegedriveonline.com to download the sheet.

Ribbon cutting Thursday

The Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce invites the public to a Ribbon Cutting cere-

mony at 10 a.m., Thursday, for the new Petro Lube Store, 690 W. Horton Ave. "Please come and help us welcome this new business to Thomas County," said Holly Stephens, Chamber executive director. In addition, Stephens is reminding everyone about the Diplomats Ladies Luncheon, Tuesday, March 26 at City Limits Conventions Center. Reservations need to be turned in to the Chamber by Wednesday, and tickets will not be sold at the door. For questions, call 460-3401.

Basketball tourney set

The Colby Lady Eagles are hosting "Battle of the

Back Courts" 3-on-3 basketball tournament, Saturday, April 5. A boys and girls division for ages third through eighth grade is available. For information or an entry form, call 462-5300.

Spring tea planned

Heartland Christian School will host its annual spring tea 2 p.m., Saturday, April 5 at at Heartland Christian School. The speaker is Amy Wilson of Thomas County and who is Miss Rodeo America 2008. Musical guest will be Eternity Focus. Tickets are available at Heartland Christian School, 1995 W.

Fourth St., Colby, or call 460-6419.

Free well testing

The Northwest Local Environmental Protection Group in Colby is reminding anyone with a private well to have them tested, especially with the recent moisture.

Snow and ice, officials said, may have allowed contaminants to leach into a well. The protection group provides free water well testing for nitrates and bacteria. For questions or to make an appointment, call (785) 462-8636 or stop by the office, 350 S. Range Ave., Suite 4, Colby.