



COLBY FREE PRESS

10 pages

Deputy fired; commissioners keep dog

By Andy Heintz

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Thomas County sheriff's deputy and K-9 handler Mark Finley was fired by Sheriff Mike Baughn when he reported for work at 8:30 a.m. on Thursday, apparently because he had agreed to serve for the man who defeated Baughn earlier this month. Finley will not be unemployed for long,

however, as Sheriff-elect Rod Taylor says he intends to make him his undersheriff when he takes over on Monday, Jan. 12.

"It serves no purpose to fire him when he will be back on Jan. 12," Taylor said. "He's been a good all-around officer."

Finley said the sheriff told him his dog was going to be sent to the kennel and be sold. However, Thomas County commissioners heard about the issue and inter-

vened. The commissioners became aware of the situation when Finley approached County Clerk Shelly Harms about what had happened. Finley said Harms told the commissioners about the situation.

Commissioner Paul Steele said the commissioners told Baughn the dog was owned by the county and couldn't be sold without their permission. They decided to put the dog under Finley's care for 60 days.

Harms said Thursday that Finley will be

reimbursed for the costs of dog food and medical care.

When Finley becomes undersheriff, he will be bringing his dog back to work with him. He speaks very highly of the animal. "He has seized millions in currency and narcotics for multiple agencies," the former deputy said.

The dog is 7- or 8-year-old Belgian Shepherd, or Malinois. Finley said he had trained the dog.

Finley said Baughn didn't give him any reasons why he was being fired.

"He said he was exercising his right of authority (as sheriff)," he said.

"What really upsets me the most is that Sheriff Baughn knows there are a lot of narcotics cases I've been working on. He knows that he's jeopardizing those with my dismissal."

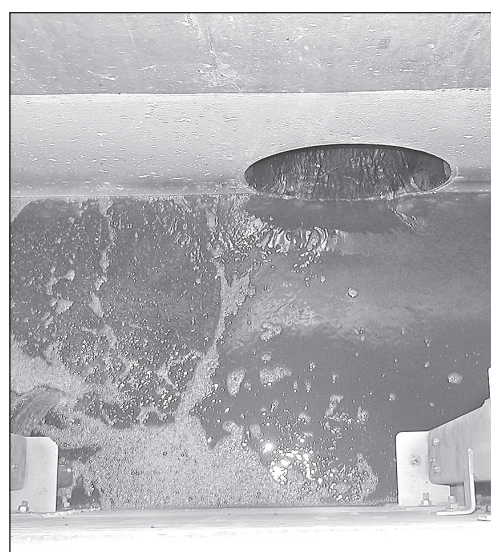
Baughn said the dismissal was a personal matter.



STEVE HAYNES/Colby Free Press

Lead operator Chad Applebury (above) showed off the main computer system controlling the city's new wastewater treatment plant east of town. Graphics show the status of nearly every function at the plant, and the computer can control them from the desk. It even reports failures on the city radio chan-

nel. Applebury led members of the Colby Rotary Club, including (from left) Connie Renner, Relda Galli, County Commissioner Paul Steele and Lailani Thomas of the Convention and Visitors Bureau, on a tour last week. Outflow water (below, left) came out clear and nearly pure.



Electronics keep new plant up and running

By Steve Haynes

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Colby's new \$8.1 million wastewater treatment plant clears sewage out of water pretty much the same way the old one, built in the 1930s, did, using oxygen and bacteria to digest the organic stuff and settling out the solids.

It's not exactly rocket science.

But the way the plant runs is something of a space-age marvel. Every pump, every motor, every blower, every skimmer, every pipe and flow is electronically monitored and tied into a computer in the office that tracks everything.

Any failure, any deviation to the norm is reported, by phone, on the city radio channel. The plant can even track down lead operator Chad Applebury on his cell phone.

Applebury led members of the Colby Rotary Club on a tour of the plant, in operation for more than a month now, last week, showing off the high-tech wonders of its control system.

The plant treats sewage pretty much the way it's always been done, he said. A pumping station at creek level boosts the inflow up to the hilltop plant, where it's screened and liquified. Solid items — metal, plastic, rubber and other stuff that gets flushed — is screened out and dumped into trash bags for disposal.

The rest — Applebury says it is 99.6 percent water — is split between two clarifier basins where bacteria will clean the water in about a day as it makes a circuit. Sewage comes in one side of a wall and air is pumped through the mix. As the bacteria eats up the organic matter, solids fall to the bottom as sludge.

Relatively clean, clear water

moves into a second stage, then is drained off for treatment by ultraviolet lights. Those kill any remaining organisms. The outflow is clean enough to drain right into the creek, he said, and constant testing ensures it stays that way.

Along the way, the computer system monitors flows, blowers, pumps, skimmers and pretty much everything the plant does. Blower motors, for instance, are controlled by varying the frequency of power fed into them, depending on demand. This results in more efficient blowers, using less power.

The plant is fully redundant, he told the tour group. With four blowers, it can handle the town's flow with one clarifier. And there's space to build another, if needed.

Sludge drained off the bottom of the clarifiers is pumped out and concentrated, from less than 1 percent solids to about 3-5 percent solids. Some of it goes back into the round clarifiers to activate the incoming waste with bacteria.

The rest, Applebury says, well that's fertilizer. It's hauled off to spread on city-owned fields around the Colby airport. The plant has space to store two-thirds of a year's supply, if needed.

Waste water won't be wasted — the city plans to water the nearby ballfields with it, and maybe one of two proposed golf courses.

Applebury says the plant, designed by Miller and Associates of McCook, Neb., could last half a century, maybe even as long as the old one.

"It was a big step for Colby to take," he said. "It should last 50 years."

The old plant, north of the railroad near the country club, has served the city well, he said.

"It lasted for quite a few years," he said. "It did what it was supposed to do. That's what we hope to get from this one."

Woodsmen, church team up to help Marine hurt in Iraq

The Colby and Hays camps of the Modern Woodmen of America are joining with the Atwood Christian Church to raise money for a Marine who suffered heat stroke while on duty in Iraq.

A pancake-and-sausage supper is planned for 5:30 p.m. Sunday at the church Fellowship Hall in Atwood. Donations will be accepted at the dinner, or call Shawn Car-

ney at 443-2442 by Saturday. The Modern Woodmen will match up to \$2,000 for the family.

Sgt. Ronald D. Stark II is in a rigorous 10-week therapy program at the Shepherd Center in Atlanta, a private facility that specializes in head and spinal trauma, but hopes to be reunited with his family by Christmas.

Sgt. Stark has logged many

overseas missions and plenty of injuries since he joined the Marine Corps after graduating from Hoxie High School 1988. While in Iraq in January 2007, he suffered heat stroke in 109-degree temperatures. He was transferred to Walter Reed Medical Center in Washington for an extensive physical and neurological evaluation. He was then transferred to a Wounded Warrior

Transition Battalion at Fort Stewart, Ga., where he was joined by his family. He received physical, occupational and speech therapy.

On Sept. 5, Sgt. Stark got a surgically implanted neurostimulator near his spine to help regulate constant pain from a back injury suffered in 2003 and complications from the heat stroke. He has progressed much farther than his

doctors had predicted, and was accepted into the program in Atlanta.

Sgt. Stark is married to the former Katie Bolling of Atwood, and they have three children: Douglas, 14; Elizabeth, 9; and Anthony, 6.

Sgt. Stark is a 1994 graduate of Colby Community College and a 1996 graduate of the University of Nebraska at Kearney, and also a member of the Sam Hubbard

American Legion Post in Atwood.

His mother reports that through the Veterans Air Lift Association, his family was flown to see him recently and then flown back home to Fort Stewart. His birthday is Nov. 22, and he will be flown home to celebrate, and then returned to the hospital. She said the group also will fly him home for Thanksgiving.

Briefly

High school play tonight

The annual Colby High all-school play, "Iphigenia," will be performed again at 7 p.m. tonight at the high school auditorium. A Greek pasta dinner will be served from 5:30 to 6:45 p.m. Tickets for the play only are \$5 for adults and \$4 for Colby School District students and children. Tickets for the dinner theater are \$10 and \$8. For information, call Nancy Rundel at (785) 460-5300.

Turkey, ham on the menu

Sacred Heart Catholic Church will be tempting people with its annual old-fashioned Thanksgiving dinner from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Sunday in the church basement. The menu includes turkey, ham, dressing, mashed potatoes and gravy, corn, rolls, salads and homemade pie.

with iced tea or coffee. For delivery, call 460-7167 or 462-2179. Donations will be accepted.

Pets available for adoption

Colby Animal Clinic has a female cat, three kittens and an adult male black lab ready for adoption. Call or stop by 810 E. Fourth St. All animals have current shots, and costs are minimal. For questions, call 460-8621.

Turkey Trot 5K set for Saturday

The Colby Recreation Department plans the second annual Turkey Trot 5K at 9 a.m. Saturday. Participants predict their time, then try to match it, so they don't need to be fast, just able to finish. Late registration will be at 8:30 a.m. race day at the Community Building. Send or drop off registrations

at the recreation office in the Community Building, 285 E. Fifth St., or call (785) 460-4440 for information. Prizes will be awarded to the top three places.

Red Cross offers class Tuesday

The Thomas County chapter of the American Red Cross will be offering a first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation class from 6 to 10 p.m. Tuesday at the Thomas County Office complex. Pre-registration and prepayment are required. The cost is \$45, which includes all materials. For information, call Sherry White at (785) 462-7161.

Genesis looking for food, money

Genesis-Thomas County is looking for nonperishable food and money to buy items to put in Christmas baskets, which will be distributed to those in need of help during the holidays. Donations can be left at Genesis from 10 a.m. to noon or 1 to 4 p.m.

Wednesdays or at LeRoy's Printing, or Sacred Heart Catholic, First Presbyterian, Colby United Methodist or Trinity Lutheran churches. Send checks to Genesis-Thomas County at Box 214, Colby, Kan. 67701. For information, call (785) 460-7930.

Kids plan musical at grade school

The Colby Grade School second graders will present "Circus, Circus," a musical, at 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. Tuesday in the grade school auditorium. The program is free and everyone is welcome.

City crew trimming trees

The Colby city crew is trimming trees over streets and sidewalks as the weather allows. Trees will be trimmed to 13 feet, 6 inches above streets and trimmed to 8 feet above sidewalks, said City Manager Carolyn Armstrong. For questions, call the city office at 460-4410.

