



# COLBY FREE PRESS

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## County, sheriff wrangle over budget

By Vera Sloan  
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Sheriff Rod Taylor came to the Thomas County commissioners at their bill-paying session Friday to discuss overtime in his department.

Much of the discussion involved pay claimed by Undersheriff Mark Finley, who put in for more than 342 hours — double a standard work month — in March and 291 hours in April.

“We want to get to the bottom of this overtime,” said commission Chairman Ken Christiansen. “We’ve got the time sheets that show this employee has collected over \$27,000 in the first three

months (of the year), and at that rate, he will be getting over \$100,000 by the end of the year.”

“I don’t have the manpower the last administration did,” Taylor told the commissioners. “This man worked several 24-hour shifts.”

Commissioner Paul Steele said he didn’t think it was possible for one person to work that kind of hours.

“The taxpayers are shaking their heads,” he said.

The sheriff blamed his budget problems on the last administration. He took over the office in January after defeating Sheriff Mike Baughn in a bitter series of elections contests last year.

“Be aware, gentlemen,” Taylor told the

commissioners. “Fraud took place prior to my time. The figures came into the budget before I came into office, and we need to address it. I’ve been isolated, and we inherited those problems.”

Taylor said he had several comments on the salaries in his department. He said people told him couldn’t believe someone would work for \$13 an hour to have someone point a gun at them or spit in their face.

He said that Collin Wood, a special assistant U.S. attorney in Wichita and an expert on property forfeiture, is advising him. Through May, he said, overtime could be paid with money from the drug forfeiture fund.

“We can purchase one vehicle out of

those funds,” he said, “and do a lease-purchase-buy option and allow the dealerships here to bid it them.”

“I really shouldn’t have to come in here to you guys, for every \$250 I need to have, so we need to either increase the budget or hire another man. The last administration had five men and I have only three.”

If the department runs short, he warned, he might have to draft some help.

“If I have to, I can deputize you guys,” he told the commissioners, “and I may need to call you out at 3 a.m. to make a trip out of town.”

Chairman Ken Christiansen said he didn’t think they could get anywhere arguing about the issue, adding that buying

a new vehicle was not going help the department stay within its means.

County Attorney Bruce Flipse read state law on department budgets. He said the statutes say the commissioners are responsible for collecting taxes and budgeting, but the sheriff can spend his budget as he pleases.

“In summary, basically,” he told commissioners, “...you set the budget and he sets the salaries. It’s your responsibility to set the budget and his responsibility to work within it.”

Taylor told the commissioners the department brings in a lot of money and works to recover expense from those who

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## Kids turn out for fishing day

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With a freshly stocked lake and ideal temperatures, Saturday was a perfect day for casting a line at Villa High Park.

More than 100 kids registered to take part in a fishing derby at the Villa High lake, sponsored by Colby Community College and the state Department of Wildlife and Parks.

“We need to spark an interest in being outdoors,” said Barry Kaaz, dean of external affairs for the college. “Kids and parents need to get outdoors together, instead of sitting in front of some game on the computer, and it’s a great time to discover how great the outdoors really is.”

The college and state wildlife officers joined up to answer questions and help kids lean to fish. The college paid for 150 catfish, blue gill and sunfish from Wallace Hartley, a private vendor, to stock

the lake on Thursday evening.

Brian Serpan, a park specialist with Wildlife and Parks in Hays, said the state agency gave a small tackle box kit to each youth who registered.

“We also have fishing derbies at Antelope Lake, in Graham County, and Sheridan Lake east of Hoxie,” he said, “but they’re not nearly as well attended as this one is today.”

Dave Spalsbury, a fisheries biologist from Hays, said the department promotes outdoor interests.

“The opportunities are limited where there are fewer opportunities to put a pole in the water, he said, “ut the department has a special budget set aside to work with kids in healthy activities such as this one.”

“It is just great to see these kids do something outdoors,” said John Strecker, manager of High Plains Co-op, which bought 400 worms from Red’s Bait Shop in Hoxie for

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## Relay for Life raises \$15,000

Cancer survivor Grant Smith (center, above photo), his wife Verda Smith, their granddaughter Abbie Kummer and friend Natalie Oren walked in the survivor’s lap at the Thomas County Relay for Life on Friday. The Relay got underway at 7 p.m. with an opening ceremony that included the national anthem sung by Monica Miller and Karla Haggard (left photo). Fifteen teams and dozens of walkers, including Tracy Munk (left to right, bottom photo), Kristin Brooks, Rachel Budke, Margaret Kummer and Carla Sharp of the Citizens Medical Center Team, walked all night to raise more than \$15,000 for the American Cancer Society.



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

## Colby doctor resigns service at medical center

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After a series of conflicts over the past five years, Dr. Gary Slavens of the Doc’s On-call clinic has voluntarily given up his staff privileges at Citizen’s Medical Center.

Hospital Administrator Janice McCart said Slavens, had given her a letter of resignation May 14. The letter said that Slavens would be voluntarily giving up his privileges at the hospital effective immediately, she said.

Slavens said he and the hospital administration have had many conflicts since he moved to Colby. He said said the latest cane earlier this year when the hospital refused to admit a patient who was giving birth prematurely. McCart

said, however, that the hospital does not refuse admission to any patient. She acknowledged that the hospital and Slavens have had conflicts, but said she had not asked Slavens to give up his privileges.

Despite his resignation, she said, Slavens’ patients currently in the hospital will continue to receive care. McCart said Slavens’ physician assistant, Andy Rose, would be allowed to continue working at the hospital under Dr. Dr. Ladonna Regier.

“People will still receive care .no matter who their physician is,” McCart said.

His patients will still be able to get medical records and outpatient procedures at the hospital, she added, but Slavens said he would

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## Briefly

### Picnic in Park Wednesday

Larry Booth and Friends will play for the first lunchtime concert in this summer’s Picnic in the Park series, sponsored by the Colby-Thomas County Chamber of Commerce, the Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Colby Free Press. Entertainment will begin at noon Wednesday in Fike Park, with events each Wednesday through July 29. In case of bad weather, listen to KXXX/KRDQ Radio. For information, call the Chamber office at 460-3401.

### Bible School coming to Rexford

The Rexford Community Church will have Vacation Bible School from 9 a.m. to noon through Friday for children in kindergarten through sixth grade with the theme “Amazon Expedition.” A program for family, friends and community members will be at 7 p.m. Friday, with refreshments following. For information, call (785) 687-3305.

### Church offers Bible school

Hop on board the Boomerang Express with the Colby Berean Church Vacation Bible School, from 6 to 8:30 p.m. through Friday. The school, for children age 4 through sixth grade, will feature an Australian theme. For information, call Suzanne Murdock at 462-7997 or go to www.colbyberean.com.

### District accepting applications

Friday is the deadline for state cost share money for water resource development and “nonpoint source” pollution-control projects through the Thomas County Conservation District. Eligible projects include terraces, diversions, livestock pipelines, water wells and septic systems. Cost share rate is at least 60 percent, and the landowner limit will not exceed \$7,500 per project. For an application, stop by the district office at 915 E. Walnut or go to www.theconservation.com. For information, call district

Manager Debbie Potter at 462-7482, extension 303.

### Colby dance Friday

The Colby Singles and Couples Dance will be from 7:30-11:30 p.m. Friday at the Community Building in Colby, with music by Craig Stevens. For information, call Lue Duffey at (785) 855-2341.

### Food distribution Monday

Department of Agriculture commodity distribution will be from 1 to 2 p.m. next Monday at the Retired Senior Volunteer Program office in the Senior Progress Center. Those who meet income requirements may receive the commodities, which include tuna, peanut butter, juice, green beans, mixed fruit and blackeyed peas. Distribution is first-come, first-served and participants are asked not to arrive at the office more than a half hour in advance. For information, call the office at 462-6744.

### Red Cross to hold safety class

The Thomas County Red Cross will offer a water safety instructor class from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. next Monday to Friday, June 12, at the Thomas County Office Complex. The class will cost \$180, which includes all materials. For information or to register, call the office at 462-7161.

### Hospital plans to hold meeting

Citizens Medical Center plans a community meeting at 5 p.m. Thursday, June 11, at the southwest corner of the hospital campus in Colby. Supper will be served. Everyone is welcome. For information, call Tama Unger at the hospital’s community relations office at 460-1214.



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