

City Council votes down proposed Embark loan

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After delays getting its building finished, the firm is ready to market its services, but short of cash to pay bills until money starts to come in from customers.

Hutfles said the almost \$500,000 the city had already given the business was used to bring the company to Colby. Most of the money was used to rebuild and renovate the former Inlow Interior building, said Bieber.

Assistant County Appraiser Kathy Cunningham said the building was appraised at just \$97,000 when Embark bought it.

The mayor said Embark will have to pay the almost half million dollars back unless the firm creates 130 jobs in four years. If Embark reaches the 130 mark, the rest of the loan will be forgiven, the mayor said.

Cameron said she appreciated all the time the councilmen put in on the issue, but she thought they should have more firm criteria when it comes to lending money to businesses.

"How far are we going to take this?" she asked.

Miller asked what Embark's net worth is. Embark finance director Cindi Kriss said there is no way to know what the firm's net worth is at this time.

Vera Sloan, a former Thomas County commissioner and part-time reporter, told the council she had supported the 1/4-cent increase in the sales tax approved by the voters in 2004, but she thought the first rule of economic development was to use money to retain and expand businesses the town already has.

Lou Hines with Western Sprinklers said he hopes Embark succeeds, but he doesn't think there's a bank in town that would loan the company \$100,000.

David Keck asked what would happen if the company doesn't get the money. Bieber said venture capitalists might provide the

money, but they might gain control over the firm and possibly move it out of Colby. Keck asked, if the city changes the rules now, and Embark doesn't create 130 jobs in four years, would the council just change the rules again?

After the 1/4-cent sales tax passed, the city established guidelines to determine how the money would be spent. City Manager Carolyn Armstrong said the original guidelines prohibited the money from being used to refinance debt, pay salaries or pay administrative expenses.

City Attorney John Gatz told the members the council they can change the rules because it set the guidelines in the first place. Armstrong said the type of businesses to be targeted to receive money were manufacturing, distribution and other businesses that created jobs that pay above-average wages.

In a letter to the Colby Free Press, chief executive officer Michael Brouthers said Gatz made it clear that conditions could be modified by the council, so the policy for the loan didn't have to be based on whether or not the money went to pay for salaries or administrative expenses.

Councilmen Dave Voss said he was OK with the council discussing changing the guidelines sometime in the future, but he was against changing it in this specific situation. Voss made a motion to reject the \$100,000 loan. It was seconded by Mallory and approved by the rest of the councilmen.

Janelle Hills, Embark manager, said today that she felt many people at the hearing didn't understand much about the firm's business.

"The public is overwhelmingly misinformed about our business, the potential it has and the requirements for the use of the city sales tax funds," said Hills.

She said public concerns about things such as taking away employees from other businesses and Embark not taking bids on the renovation of the Inlow building were based on misinformation.

She said only three of the firm's 12 employees had left other jobs here to come to Embark and six had been unemployed. Hills said she appreciated all the time and effort the council had put into helping Embark.

District gets \$125,000 for middle school computers, new tech

From "COMPUTERS," Page 1

until May 15 to respond, she said. If the bill is passed, districts would have to notify them by the third Friday of May, which is May 21 this year. Teachers and administrators would have 14 days to respond.

Harrison said she was told the governor may get the bill this week, then will have 10 days to sign or veto it. Harrison said the district will have no choice but to follow the law.

Another (HB-2486) would increase the number of years districts can keep their school buses. Currently, districts can keep buses for 20 years. The House bill proposes adding five years to that while the Senate wants to add two.

Harrison said the bill is in limbo until the Legislature reconvenes.

In other business:

The board approved resignations from basketball coach Jon McKee and longtime bus driver Lois Sumner.

The board again discussed charging organizations to use

school facilities such as gyms and auditoriums. Harrison and the staff provided some more information, including the in-kind agreements the district has for facility use with the Colby Recreation Department and the kids' wrestling club.

Vice President Tracy Rogers said he thought the savings wouldn't offset the hard feelings in the community.

"I think we need to keep doing what we're doing," he said.

The board took no action.

Harrison said the administration held a community meeting Thursday to organize a letter-writing campaign, but few outside the school staff showed up. Teachers who showed up decided to set up a Facebook page encouraging people to write letters.

The board approved two class recommendations from the coordinating council. The first creates a business essentials class for eighth and ninth graders. The class will count for one of the career class requirement at the high school.

The district requires three classes in a particular career sequence, and the new class will serve as the first in the business sequence.

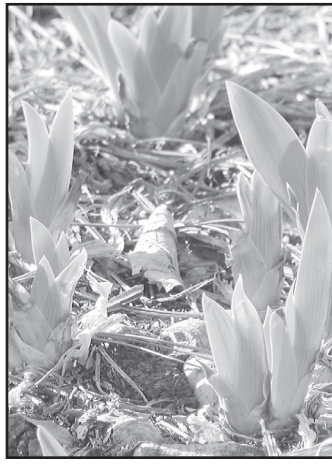
They also approved a change to the speech requirement. The class used to be a prerequisite for de-

bate and forensics. Now students can take those two classes without having to take speech first, and all three will count towards the half-credit of speech all students are required to take.

The coordinating council in-

cludes representatives from each of the 11 academic departments, all four principals, the superintendent, one School Improvement Program representative from each building, and one from the Professional Development Council.

Weather Corner



National Weather Service

Tonight: Mostly clear in the evening then becoming partly cloudy. Lows in the upper 20s. Northwest winds 10 to 15 mph.

Thursday: Sunny. Not as cool. Highs in the lower 60s. Northwest winds around 10 mph.

Thursday Night: Mostly clear. Lows in the lower 30s. Light winds becoming south around 10 mph after midnight.

Friday: Sunny. Highs in the lower 70s. Light winds.

Friday Night: Mostly clear. Lows in the upper 30s.

Saturday: Sunny. Highs in the mid 70s.

Saturday Night Through Sunday Night: Partly cloudy. Lows in the lower 40s. Highs in the lower 70s.

Monday: Windy. Partly sunny with a 20 percent chance of thunderstorms. Highs around 70.

Monday Night: Windy. Mostly cloudy with a 30 percent chance of thunderstorms. Lows in the upper 40s.

Tuesday: Breezy. Partly sunny with a 20 percent chance of thunderstorms. Highs around 70.

Monday: High, 80; Low 36 Tuesday: High, 63; Low 32

Precip: Monday 0.00 inches Tuesday 0.40 inches Month: 0.40 inches Year: 3.01 inches Normal: 3.89 inches (K-State Experiment Station)

Sunrise and Sunset Thursday 7:18 a.m. 8:15 p.m. (U.S. Naval Observatory)

ATTENTION... Colby High School, Brewster High School, Golden Plains High School and Heartland Christian School Senior Parents & HOMESCHOOLERS. Hurry in parents!! Deadline is April 26, 2010!!! The Colby Free Press is now planning the Senior Graduation Tab and will be giving parents a chance to put a baby picture in along with a short message from the family for a small fee. We will automatically feature your student's picture and information, but this will be your chance to put in a baby picture to show how much your senior has really changed over the years! Call Andrea, Heather or Shaly @ 462-3963 for more information or stop by the office at 155 W. 5th in Colby.

LOCAL TV LISTINGS sponsored by the COLBY FREE PRESS

Table of TV listings for Thursday Evening (April 8, 2010) and Friday Evening (April 9, 2010). Columns include time slots (7:00, 7:30, 8:00, 8:30, 9:00, 9:30, 10:00, 10:30, 11:00, 11:30) and program titles.

American Profile: We Celebrate Hometown Life. Stories from hometowns just like yours. Look for us each week in this paper. Includes a photo of Whitney Colette Adams and her parents' message: 'I plan to attend Colby Community College and play softball. PARENTS: Richard & Peggy Adams. It's been a real hoot, Whitney go get em girl, and Godspeed. Love, Mom & Dad'.