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State budget \$70 million in the hole

By John Milburn
Associated Press Writer

TOPEKA — A new revenue forecast issued Friday estimated a \$70 million shortfall in the state budget year that ends June 30 — counting all previous cuts — meaning lawmakers and the governor will have to slash more, delay payments or use even more federal stimulus money to balance the budget.

“The downward revision only makes the budget hole we have been working with larger,” said state budget director Duane Goossen. “It’s still a situation that can hopefully be managed.”

The projected gap for the 2011 budget, which begins July 1, is now \$450 million, but could grow to \$510 million depending on how state officials solve the current year’s problem.

The figures released Friday reflect a downward revision in current-year tax collections of \$104.4 million from the November estimate. Leading that decline is further erosion in Kansas individual income tax collections, a

reflection of the state’s 6.9 percent unemployment rate for March.

Alan Conroy, head of the Kansas Legislative Research Department and a member of the group that issued the revenue forecast, said labor officials predict the Kansas jobless rate will remain near the current level for the next year. That’s well above the historical average of 4 percent unemployment for the state.

“There are flickers of hope,” Conroy said. “At best, the economic recovery is anemic.”

Goossen said the new figures suggest the state’s revenue declines have bottomed out after three years of falling tax payments. The new estimate is for tax collections to grow next year by 3 percent, or some \$154.3 million.

Democratic Gov. Mark Parkinson issued a statement saying the gap is too large to close with spending cuts alone without harming schools, public safety and social programs.

“Instead, we must implement a temporary solution so that we can

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Entertaining the Chamber



HOLLY WHITAKER/Chamber of Commerce

Scott Cameron, Brock Wagoner and Jeff Wagoner entertained during the annual Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce banquet on Saturday. The Chamber recognized several area businesses, giving Karen O’Neal of Personal Touch the

Community Service Award and naming Glen Kersensbrock of Colby Fertilizer as Business Person of the Year. Jim McLaughlin of Prairie Land Insurance in Brewster was sworn in as Chamber president.

New foliage on new trees



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

The Colby Tree Board planted 25 new trees at Fike Park last week, replacing older trees that had been cut down last year. The board also planted two trees at West Side Park and one at the city ball fields. The board will be planting one more tree at Fike Park for the Arbor Day celebration at 1:30 p.m. Wednesday, April 28.

Bank plans block party Wednesday

By Kevin Bottrell

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To celebrate Community Bank Week this week, Farmers and Merchants Bank plans a block party from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Wednesday at their main building on Fourth Street and at the Dillon’s branch.

Bank Secretary Ashley Moser said this is the first time the bank has organized a block party.

At the downtown office, the Colby Community College volleyball team will serve hot dogs, chips and drinks for lunch. Area organizations, such as the Thomas County 125th Anniversary Committee, will have booths at both locations giving out information.

“We’re trying to incorporate that (the anniversary) as much as we can,” Moser said.

Other booths will include the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce, the Thomas County Community Foundation, the Master

Gardeners, Farm Credit Services and the college’s veterinary tech and dental hygiene departments. Area radio stations will broadcast live from the event.

Moser said the Colby Fire and Police departments and Thomas County Emergency Medical Services will have vehicles on display at the party. The Kansas Highway Patrol will give a crash demonstration using a mechanical rig.

City and county team up for clean up

The city of Colby and the Thomas County commissioners are combining their efforts again this year for a city and countywide Cleanup Week on Monday to Friday, May 3-7.

The city and county encourage everyone, homeowners and businesses, to make an extra effort during the week to spruce up their yards and share in the pride of having a clean city, said Jo Strange of the city manager’s office.

They are asking area service clubs and church groups to help clean up public areas. Among the areas that need special attention, Strange said, are parks, ball fields and all roadsides and entrances to town.

City sanitation crews will follow the regular routes for yard waste and trash pickup, she said, but a crew will be available to handle the extra trash generated by the cleanup for residential customers. This will exclude landlords, businesses and commercial property, where owners will be responsible for handling their own items.

Trash should be boxed or bagged and placed at the street in front of the property for pickup. Tree limbs need to be in small bundles less than 4 feet long and less than 50 pounds per bundle, Strange said.

Crews will not pick up construction and demolition material, televisions, computers and other electronics. Electronic items can be disposed of every Wednesday at the E-Waste Collection Center

at 1190 S. Country Club Drive.

Appliances, furniture and other large objects cluttering yards can be removed during this week; but people must call the city office at 460-4410 to schedule a pickup. Any cooling appliance must have a certificate showing that a certified technician removed the coolant, or the city will remove it for a \$27 fee.

The county landfill is not offering free disposal of waste tires,

Strange said. The city will haul tires to the landfill, but regular disposal fees must be paid before they leave your property. A fee list is available at City Hall.

Anyone willing to volunteer to help the elderly and infirm clean up should call Strange at the city office. Anyone who needs help should also call the city office and leave their name and number. The city will try to match up those who can help with those who need it.

Colby High forensics team takes first

The Colby High School forensics team took first place at its last tournament of the regular season in Quinter on Saturday.

Colby students also took home six first-place wins out of nine events.

“We had a lot of fun and it was a good day,” said coach Nancy Rundel. “I’m proud of how hard these kids have worked all season long.”

Individual scores:

Poetry: Gabby Brown, second.

Humorous Solo: Gray Henry, first.

Serious Solo: Cameron McLaughlin, first; Audra Fleming, sixth.

Improvised Duet Acting: Henry and Brock Wagoner, first; Christina Ostmeier and McLaughlin, fourth.

Original Oration: Seth Bredemeier, first; Rachel Lamm, fifth.

Extemporaneous Speaking: Lamm, first; Michael Tubbs, second; Bailey Koerperich, fifth.

Informative Speaking: Koerperich, first.

Briefly

County to detail animal plan

The Thomas County Emergency Management department and sheriff’s office will hold a meeting for cattlemen, agribusiness companies and equipment dealers from 7 to 9 p.m. Tuesday at the Thomas County Office Complex to discuss the county’s foreign animal-disease plan. The meeting is open to the public. For information, call Emergency Management Director Susan McMahan at 460-4516.

County offices to close for lunch

The Thomas County Clerk’s office and the county road and bridge department will be closed during the noon hour for the rest of April because of software training. Both departments will conduct business from 8 a.m. to noon and from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. For information, call the clerk’s office at 460-4500.

Seniors to dance Wednesday

The Northwest Kansas Retired Senior Volunteer

Program will hold its 37th Annual Recognition Banquet and Dance from 7 to 9 p.m. Wednesday at the City Limits Convention Center. All area seniors are invited. For information or to buy tickets, call the office at 462-6744.

Scouts looking for faded Glory

Bring your tattered, torn and faded Old Glory to the Pioneer Memorial Library through Friday, April 30. Colby Girl Scout Troop 165 plans a U.S. flag disposal drive. The Scouts remind everyone that flags should be disposed of if they are torn, dirty, repaired to a point where they are no longer rectangular, faded or in general disrepair. For information, call Katherine Kersensbrock-Ostmeier at 460-3298.

Methodists to walk for hunger

To help fight world hunger, the Colby United Methodist Church is sponsoring a “Communities Responding to Overcome Poverty,” or CROP Walk,

at 2 p.m. Sunday at Fike Park. Participants will walk around the park for donations. Refreshments will be served. For information, call the church office at 460-2761.

Youth group to wash cars

The Colby United Methodist Youth Fellowship middle school group will be washing and cleaning cars inside and out at from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday at Kansas Quick Lube. They will also be selling hot dogs, chips and soda. The proceeds will go to the youth fellowship and the United Methodist Mission and Ministry Fund. For information, call the church at 460-2761.

Trooper to teach self defense

Colby Community College is offering a women’s self defense class at 7 p.m. Wednesday in Room 106 of the Student Union, taught by Trooper Tod Hileman of the Kansas Highway Patrol. The Thomas

County Farm Bureau will provide refreshments and door prizes. For information, call Shanda Mattix at 460-5464.

Brewster offers garden training

The Brewster Recreation Department and the K-State Extension Master Gardeners will offer landscape training sessions at 7 p.m. the next three Thursdays at Hunter Hall in Brewster: this week, Extension agent Clint Milliman, on composting and Earth Day; April 29, Kansas Healthy Yards and Communities by agent Dana Belshe; and May 6, Trees for Northwest Kansas by Jim Strine, state forester. For information, call the Sherman County Extension office at 890-4880.

