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Candidates make their case at forum

By Kevin Bottrell

Colby Free Press
kbottrell@nwkansas.com

About 100 people packed into the basement at Pioneer Memorial Library on Thursday to hear from all three candidates for Colby mayor.

Computer software businessman Ed Collins, retired medical technologist Gary Adrian and city Councilman Dave Voss answered pre-submitted questions for an hour and visited with the audience afterward. Sandy Wilks served as the moderator.

For round one, members of the audience drew from a pool of questions. Each candidate had two minutes to respond to each one.

The first question asked what the most important role of the mayor is. Adrian said the mayor should represent the people and should make sure the utilities that they take for granted – like power and water – are steady. The mayor should support city businesses and make sure the town supports institutions like the library, college and museum, he said, so Colby's good quality of life is maintained.

"We must keep the town alive, vibrant and on the move," he said.

Collins said the mayor should be a liaison between the council and city manager. The mayor shouldn't have an agenda, he said, but should listen to what the people want and take that back to the council. Collins said the city should use technology to keep people apprised of city business and get their ideas.

Voss agreed that the mayor needs to be a liaison, and advocated a mayoral advisory group, where citizens can give input. Voss said he and other members have been disappointed with the lack of citizens at council meetings. He said he would like to find ways to get people involved.

Asked how the city can improve its relationship with the county, Collins said the mayor can act as a moderator between the two and help them communicate. Each entity has to be willing to give and get when working together, he said.

Voss said he thought the two governments have worked together well.

"I think we do make an effort," he said. "There is a willingness to do what's right."

Voss said that both need to make sure to put aside precon-



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

Mayoral candidate Ed Collins (left) waited as Dave Voss answered a question at Thursday's candidate forum at the Pioneer

Memorial Library. Each candidate took turns answering questions submitted by the public.

ceived notions when dealing with each other.

Adrian said the two governments have the same goal, to serve the people. The mayor should attend county commissioner meetings to see how they do things, he said, which might make it easier to find common ground.

The third question asked if the city should put a lid on spending. Voss said he would rather try to make things more efficient and make sure all purchases are necessary.

Adrian said the city needs to remember that all its revenue comes from taxpayers, and so the city needs to spend diligently. Property-tax levies provide a kind of a lid, he said, but sales tax revenue is more fluid. The city should keep taxes low enough not to hurt its citizens, he said.

Collins said it would be tough to support a spending lid without knowing exactly what the limit is. However, he said, city government has to be responsible in spending money because it is held accountable by its citizens.

For the second round, each candidate was asked three different randomly drawn questions. Voss was asked about what kind of industry he would encourage to relocate to Colby.

"It would be nice to pick and choose," he said, "but we don't really have that luxury."

Voss said he would rather focus on promoting existing businesses and helping them expand. He said he would like to avoid high-polluting industries that he has seen in some Kansas towns.

Voss was asked about the slower-than-average population decline and the rise in land valuation and how Colby could keep up the two trends. Voss said I-70 and the college and the hospital were the main factors boosting Colby, and the city should continue to support and work with them.

"We need to take care of business and keep taxes low," he said. "That deters people from moving."

His last question was about the relationship with the city manager and staff. Voss said the mayor isn't

answerable to them, but the staff is a valuable asset. The mayor needs to make sure the staff is fairly rewarded for their work, he said.

Collins was asked about eminent domain, whether the city should take land from private owners for development. Collins said he was against the practice.

"The city shouldn't take away private land," he said. "That's why we live in this country."

Collins was asked about keeping Colby's young people in town after they graduate from high school. He said Colby Community College is an asset in keeping youths around, especially with the nursing and veterinary technology programs. The college is also a good way to attract new people to town, he said.

He also drew a question about whether the city should buy or lease equipment. Collins said he would have to look at each piece of equipment, how much its going to be used and for how long, before making that recommendation. The mayor and council need to make the best decision with the

information on hand, he said.

"I'm fiscally responsible and conservative with my business,"



Candidate Gary Adrian (left) talked with members of the audience after the forum.

he said. "I'll do the same thing with everyone else's money."

Adrian was asked what the mayor could do to encourage downtown growth. He said he had seen a good map of businesses in Salina, and would like to do the same for Colby, both for downtown and for the retail centers near I-70. The city should do all it can to promote, he said, so that out-of-towners know what's available.

For his second question, Adrian was asked about whether more housing should be built outside or inside the current city limits. Adrian said that the city isn't likely to face that dilemma, since its population has been decreasing. He said he hoped that Colby would start growing so that the issue would come up in the future.

Adrian's last question was about how the city and county could weather another economic downturn. He said the city would have to establish priorities and weed out the things it wants in favor of what it needs.

Each candidate was allowed three minutes for a closing statement.

Adrian said he was proud that Colby had three good candidates when some cities struggle to get any. He spoke about his roots in Thomas County – his great-grandparents were settlers when the town was first founded – and his experience in the military.

"When I was stationed in Iran,

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Expect delays as crews work on roads this summer

By Steve Haynes

Colby Free Press
s.haynes@nwkansas.com

If you're going to Oberlin this spring, plan on a few delays as workers put a new surface on the road from Rexford to the Decatur County line.

In fact, it could be a long summer for travelers going to Oberlin or driving through the Decatur County. The results, though – new pavement all the way – should be worth it.

By the end of summer, every mile of the road between Colby and Oberlin should have a new surface.

Workers were to start repaving U.S. 83 and K-383 through Sheridan County, from east of Rexford to the Decatur County line near Leoville, on this week, with delays of up to 15 minutes expected through mid-May. As of today, however, only a few signs and orange cones marked the area.

The job is one of five this year and last which will result in a new surface on U.S. 24 and U.S. 83 all the way to Oberlin.

A crew from APAC Kansas out of Hays will be milling off a half inch of the old pavement from Rexford to the Decatur County line, then covering the road with 2 inches of new asphalt for about 12 miles,

said Kristen Brands, district public affairs manager for the Kansas Department of Transportation in Norton. At some points, the company will mill up two inches and put 2 back down.

A centerline rumble strip will be ground into the highway throughout the project, she said. The rumble strip is installed on two-lane roadways to warn drivers that they are drifting across the center line, helping to avoid head-on collisions.

During daylight hours, traffic will be reduced to one lane around the work zone and guided by a pilot car. Travelers should plan on a delay of 15 minutes or less, Mrs. Brands said.

The \$1.5 million project is part of T-WORKS, the transportation program passed by the Kansas Legislature last May, Brands said. Engineers say the job should be completed by mid-May.

Later in the year, said Jeff Stewart, district engineer for northwest Kansas in Norton, two projects will extend the work north to Oberlin, completing a job begun last year:

• U.S. 83, Selden Junction to eight miles south of Oberlin. This project involves repaving a stretch of road built in 1989 and repaved about three years ago. Mr. Stewart said the contractor will mill 1 1/2 inches off the pavement, then put down

two "lifts" of asphalt totaling 3 inches.

Because the pavement is fairly new, he said, about 40 percent of the millings can be incorporated into the new asphalt, while the norm is more like 25 percent. Venture Corp. of Great Bend bid \$1.7 million to do the project.

• From eight miles south of Oberlin to the city limits (the "wide pavement") on 83. Venture will mill 3 inches off the driving lanes, then "inlay" 2 1/2 inches of new pavement and cap the entire road with 1 1/2 inches of new pavement. The bid was \$1.7 on this job also.

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Briefly

Candidate to meet with voters

Larry McDonald, a write-in candidate for Colby Community College Board, will be meeting with voters from 6 to 7 p.m. tonight at the Home and Garden Show at the Community Building. McDonald said he will also be meeting with voters from 7:30 to 8 a.m. Monday at Starbucks; 7:30 to 8 a.m. Tuesday at Burger King; noon to 1 p.m. Wednesday at the student union; 7:30 to 8 a.m. Thursday at McDonalds; and 7:30 to 8 a.m. next Friday at Starbucks.

Take a life-saving class in April

The Northwest Kansas Red Cross will offer a cardiopulmonary resuscitation class from 6 to 10 p.m. Monday and Tuesday, April 11 and 12, at office complex. The class is open to the public, but people must register with director Sherry White at 462-7161 by Friday.

Chickenpox shots available

The Thomas County Health Department will be offering chickenpox vaccinations for \$14 until the end of June for anyone ages 1 to 18. The department says anyone who did not have chickenpox after age 1 should get two doses. For information or to make an appointment, call 460-4596.

Church offers sausage, pancakes

The Colby Berean Church will hold a pancake and sausage feed from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. Saturday at the Veterans of Foreign Wars hall. Donations will help the church youth group pay for a mission trip to Peru. For information, call 443-1994 or 462-9665.

College candidate forum near

The Colby Community College Faculty Alliance will hold a candidate forum for Board of Trustees candidates at 7 p.m. Tuesday in the Cultural Arts

Center on campus. Questions for the candidates may be e-mailed to bob.selby@colbycc.edu or deb.bickner@colbycc.edu.

Preschool enrollment Tuesday

Puddle Duck Preschool will have an enrollment open house for the 2011-2012 school year from 4 to 6 p.m. Tuesday at the school, 520 W. Fifth St. The school is open to all children 3 to 5. For information, call teacher Amy Jennings at 460-2603.

Seniors planning potato bar

The Senior Progress Center will have a potato bar, bake sale and coin raffle fund raiser from 5 to 6:30 p.m. Thursday. For information, call Kaila DeBoer at 460-2901.

Supper, auction to help man

Help raise money for John Morgan at a benefit

supper and silent auction from 5:30 to 8 p.m. Saturday, April 2, in the Colby High School commons. The proceeds will help with medical bills from his motorcycle accident Feb. 16. For information, or to donate, call Mandy Focke at 462-2120.

School plans scrapbooking day

Heartland Christian School is planning a free scrapbooking day from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Saturday, April 2, in the school commons. Supplies won't be available, so buy them ahead of time. For information, or to reserve a table, call Lucy Lucy Wood at 460-2721.



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