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Colby schools facing \$500k in budget cuts

By Kevin Bottrell

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Colby Public Schools administrators say they'll need to cut about half a million dollars out of the 2011 and 2012 budgets to keep up with cuts in state aid.

Superintendent Terrel Harrison told the school board Monday that while budget negotiations in the Legislature aren't finished, she predicts the final budget will be close to the House version, which reduces base state aid per pupil to \$3,762.

While the House and Senate both passed separate versions of the budget, they still have yet to reconcile them into one bill to be sent to governor. The Legislature is expected to work on the issue when members return for a veto session next Wednesday.

The process has been complicated, Harrison said, because the latest revenue estimates project the state's tax income down \$32 million. Even though economists are predicting steady growth for the state, the tax revenues will be down because of changes in federal tax law. Kansas income taxes are based on a taxpayer's federal return, and federal law changed this year to include a tax break for business machinery purchases. The Associated Press is reporting that the break will cost Kansas about \$77 million.

If state aid is brought down to \$3,762, Harrison said, it would cost the district \$104,845 this year and \$386,927 next year for a total of \$491,772.

"We're looking at half a million again," she said, noting that the district already has cut \$1 million over the last three years.

Harrison said she and the staff had been looking into areas like vocational education, food service, art, music, athletics and student fees and found ways to save about \$284,500. The rest can be found in the general fund, she said, adding that she will bring specific recommendations to the board at future meetings.

Board President Janice Frahm described the news as "sobering."

There is good news for the district, however. Harrison said a "quality assurance team" from AdvancED – an international school accreditation group – visited the district last week. After three days of interviews, school visits and data reviews, the team submitted its report to AdvancED, which pronounced the district fully accredited.

The team rated Colby on a scale. The lowest rating is "not evident," with no efforts being made to improve; the second is "emerging," where a district is working toward meeting standards; the third is "operational," where a district is consistently meeting standards; and the highest is "highly functional," where a district is exceeding standards and has programs not found in other schools.

Colby was rated operational in most categories and highly functional in the resources and support categories, Harrison said. Resources and support include staff,

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CYNTHIA HAYNES/Colby Free Press

Colby artist displays work in Oberlin

Danielle Bowman (above, from left) and Hilde Lien of Phillipsburg examined "The Stinker," a sculpture by Rebel Jay, Colby Community College art teacher, at the Oberlin ArtFest on Friday. Jay is one of the organizers of the Colby Art Walk this Friday in downtown Colby, and will have some of her work on display. Jay (right) and Westen McNeely were perusing other art at the Oberlin show. McNeely provided the body cast for Jay's sculpture.



Getting ready for summer



KATHRYN BALLARD/Colby Free Press

Colby firefighters have been out flushing fire hydrants around town – such as this one at the corner of Franklin Avenue and Fifth Street – over the past two weeks.

Garden to request donations rather than money for plots

By Vera Sloan

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A few minor changes are in store for the this year's community garden project.

Orvella Romine, one of the coordinators, said Northwest Kansas Research Station professor and department head Bob Gillian has asked that groups or families

that want individual garden plots pledge 10 percent or more of their produce to Genesis-Thomas County food bank rather than pay \$20 rent.

Romine said the Thomas County Coalition is encouraging groups such as Big Brothers Big Sisters, 4-H, day care centers, church youth groups, Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts units, Rotary and other clubs to get their groups together

to have a garden plot.

"It's so important that people work together to give back to their community," Romine said. "Everything else is the same, and the only thing that is changing is the request for a pledge of 10 percent of the produce rather than the initial cost of \$20 for an individual plot."

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Photo ID to be required at the polls

By John Hanna

AP Political Writer

TOPEKA – Voters in Kansas will have to show photo identification to cast ballots under a law signed Monday by Gov. Sam Brownback, who predicted that the new requirement won't cause obstacles at the polls.

Brownback and many fellow Republicans see the measure as an important check on potential election fraud, but a state leader of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People called the

change "radical" and one that could leave some voters disenfranchised.

Brownback signed the legislation at a ceremony at the Statehouse with Secretary of State Kris Kobach, another Republican who pushed for the law. The event came exactly three months after Kobach outlined tougher photo ID proposals, and the secretary said the bill that passed contains most of what he wanted.

"For those who are lawful citizens of Kansas, this

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Briefly

Start separating clippings, trash

The City of Colby will start picking up grass separate from household trash on Monday. City officials ask that everyone leave grass clippings unbagged in a tipper can marked "Grass." Have tipper cans to the curb by 8 a.m. on trash day. For information, call the Public Works office at (785) 460-4420.

Veterans officer coming to town

The state Veterans Affairs mobile office will be at the Colby Walmart parking lot from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Thursday and 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday to help veterans and family members obtain benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The office is staffed by a representative trained to help veterans and their families. Call (785) 220-5183 if you have questions.

Church plans egg hunt Saturday

The College Drive Assembly of God church will

have its sixth annual Easter Egg Hunt for children up to age 10 from 1 to 2:15 p.m. Saturday on the church grounds at 245 W. College Drive. Kids under 5 years old must be accompanied by an adult. Prizes in a coloring contest will include a bike for each age group. For information, call organizer Michelle Hillery at (785) 846-7688.

Legion to serve breakfast

The Colby American Legion Post will serve biscuits, gravy, hash browns and scrambled eggs from 7 to 11 a.m. Saturday at the post hall, 1850 W. Fourth St. Donations will be accepted. For information, call 462-3809.

Congressman to hold meeting

U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp will be here for a town hall meeting from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. Thursday, April 28, at the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce office, 350 S. Range Ave. For information,

call Huelskamp's office at (202) 225-2715.

Foundation plans fun shoot

The Citizens Foundation will hold a benefit fun shoot beginning at 11:30 a.m. Sunday, May 1, at the Colby Trap Club west of town with competition for all skill levels. Registration includes food, 125 "rocks," prizes and gifts. Proceeds will go for the purchase of medical equipment for Citizens Medical Center and to the club. For more information, call Tama Unger at 460-1214 or Bob Luck at 462-0686.

Chickenpox shots available

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

Head Start looking for kids

Head Start, a tuition-free preschool, is accepting applications for its 2011-2012 school year. The school accepts applications all year long for kids 3 and 4. For information, or to get an application, call 460-6067.

Lecture discussion rescheduled

Colby Community College's discussion on Dr. Patrick Carr's presentation on his book, "Hollowing out the Middle," has been rescheduled for 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 3, at the Davis Library on campus. The discussion was postponed by Thursday's lockdown. For information, call Linda Davis-Stephens at 460-5528.



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