



TIM WANCURA/American Legion

American Legion Riders from around northwest Kansas gathered in Hays on Wednesday to provide an honor guard for U.S. Army helicopter pilot Bryan Nichols, who was killed in Afghanistan earlier this month. Riders, including several from Thomas County, escorted Nichols' body from the airport to the funeral home in Hays.

## Legion provides escort for soldier's funeral

By Kevin Bottrell  
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Eight American Legion Riders from Thomas County helped provide an honor guard today for the body of a Kansas soldier killed in Afghanistan.

The funeral for Army helicopter pilot Bryan Nichols was held this morning at Thomas More Prep-Marian High School in Hays. Nichols, a 31-year-old chief warrant officer, died Aug. 6 along with 29 other soldiers when their Chinook helicopter was shot down in Afghanistan.

Colby Legion Commander Monty Lewis said he and seven other riders would join others from the Patriot Guard and local groups to provide an escort for

Nichols from the funeral to the cemetery in Palco where he was to be buried.

Joining Lewis were L.J. O'Neal, Stan Schmidt, Todd and Abby Barrett and Greg, Mitch and Jim Griffin. The riders often provide an honor guard for veterans' funerals.

"This is what the Legion Riders are all about," Lewis said.

Several other riders, including Tracy Galli, Tim Wancura, George Overton and Darin Kanaday, made the trip to Hays on Wednesday to provide an escort for Nichols from the airport to the funeral home in Hays.

Nichols was a 1998 graduate of Thomas More Prep-Marian. He served in the 7th Battalion, 158th Aviation Regiment, based in Gardner.



Riders gathered at a staging area Wednesday before forming the honor guard. More riders from Thomas County went to Hays this morning to provide an escort for Nichols from the funeral to a cemetery in Palco.

## Citizen objects to college budget

By Kayla Cornett  
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One Thomas County citizen took issue with Colby Community College's 2011-2012 budget at the college board's public hearing Monday.

Fred Albers of Rexford talked about the six-mill increase that the board approved to fund the budget at a previous meeting.

"Six mills is outrageous," Albers said. "There's got to be another way to fund it (the budget). I totally object to it. The board needs to stand up and say 'no.'"

Albers asked what it would take to get issues like this on a ballot, and Kenton Krehbiel, the chairperson, said Albers would need to check with the county clerk about what the procedure would be to do that.

Albers then discussed how much money is coming from taxpayers that goes to the college, which is about \$1 million. He said he thinks the college will keep increasing the mill levy each year, and said he spoke up just for

this reason. "If I knew it was gonna stop, I would keep my mouth shut," Albers said, "But it ain't stopping. Sooner or later, the well goes dry and you all gotta pay something."

After he was finished, Arlen Leiker, vice president and newly elected treasurer, said that he too has experienced the effects of raising the mill levy and that many others have too.

"There isn't a fair tax, I don't care where you go," Leiker said. "It's unfair to somebody, but it's also unfair to the institutions sometimes too. We end up shooting ourselves in the foot sometimes, we have no choice. I understand that we have to look at the bigger picture."

As a conclusion from this point, he made a direct comment to the board members.

"We as board members have to come up with some answers," Leiker said. "And we need to start now for next year."

Albers then said "I've said my peace," and asked to be excused from the meeting. After he left, the board closed the public hearing.

The next item was to approve the budget as published. Leiker made the motion, Krehbiel

seconded it. Trustees Cindy Black and Nick Wells voted against the motion, which passed 4-2.

In other business, the board:

- Heard a report from Dr. Keegan Nichols, vice president of student affairs and marketing. She said that 268 students moved into the residence halls, which is 30 more than this time last year. She said these numbers are preliminary, however, because three or four students had showed up that day and said they wanted to move in. The preliminary total enrollment is 12,081 credit hours, which is about the same as last year, Nichols said.

Nichols also said the City of Colby came in and gave the college a number of power strips. Orientation went really well Monday, she said, and that the Rural Opportunity Zone agreement is in effect, which means that if people move back to a rural area, they will get help repaying student loans.

"It's a great opportunity for Colby," Nichols said.

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## State treasurer to visit next week

Kansas State Treasurer Ron Estes will make a stop in Colby from 5 to 6:30 p.m. Wednesday at the County Office Complex, 350 S. Range Ave., to talk about returning unclaimed property.

The treasury department currently holds more than \$230 million worth of unclaimed property. Estes and his staff are touring the state to talk about how citizens can search the departments records to see if they have any unclaimed property.

Unclaimed property includes inactive savings and checking accounts, uncashed checks, stock shares and bonds, divi-

dend checks, insurance proceeds, mineral royalties and utility deposits.

In addition to cash, stocks and bonds, safe deposit boxes are also turned over to the State Treasurer's office. There are currently more than 15,000 safe deposit box properties on file. About 600 new boxes are turned over to the treasurer's office each year.

Kansans who can't make it to the event may call the treasurer's office at (800) 432-0386

or log onto [www.KansasCash.com](http://www.KansasCash.com) to search for unclaimed property.

## Council decides to keep parks open at night despite vandalism

By Kevin Bottrell  
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The Colby City Council decided to leave city parks open through the night, despite a recommendation from the police department to close the parks between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m.

Police Chief Randy Jones brought the recommendation to the council, saying the police have repeatedly recorded vandalism and property destruction at Fike Park on a security camera. Jones said the juvenile filmed

vandalizing the restroom door Aug. 11 turned himself in to the police on Saturday after the surveillance photo appeared in the *Colby Free Press*. However, the police camera caught another person kicking the door at 2:15 p.m. Tuesday. The same types of things have been happening at Phillips Park, he said.

Closing the parks would have allowed the police to break up groups and remove people from the parks. Currently, Jones said, the police can break up groups only if they are seen doing something illegal.

Council member Mike Hake said he was concerned that the move would punish the general public for the actions of a few. There are people who use the parks legitimately late at night or early in the morning. Council member Tim Hutfles said he could remember playing basketball at Fike Park past midnight since the courts are lighted. Many people also walk in the parks for exercise early in the morning.

The council took no action on the issue, so the parks will remain open.

In other business, the council:

- Heard from David Barber of the U.S. Department of Agriculture office in Hays about a possible grant for a water system project. Barber said the department is very particular about awarding grant dollars, and the city would likely qualify for loan money instead.

"It would have to be a pretty substantial project before we get into grant dollars," he said.

City manager Carolyn Armstrong said the city has worked with the department before on the wastewater treatment plant, but it didn't see much in the way of grant dollars. A loan from the de-

partment would be set up for 40 years, Barber said, but the city could pay it off however quickly it wants.

- Approved the city staff to apply for the Kansas Airport Improvement Program, which could provide 75 percent of the money needed for pavement repairs and sealing at the airport. The project will cost \$72,000, and if the city is approved for the program, it would only have to pay \$18,000.

- Discussed drainage at the Thomas County Fairgrounds. Recent rain storms washed mud from the parking lot on the east side of

the arena onto Range Avenue. Hutfles said the mud is even flowing into some of the surrounding neighborhoods.

Fair Board President Austin Moser and County Commissioner Paul Steele attended the meeting. Steele said the commissioners have discussed seeding the parking area with more grass, but that may not be the solution. Hutfles

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