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Power plant regs may cost city \$600,000

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A federal regulation that goes into effect in 2013 could cost the city anywhere from \$200,000 to \$600,000.

those generators are only used an average about 88 hours a year. The city buys power from Midwest Energy and uses the generators only during peak demand, such as the hottest days of the summer when many residents are running air conditioners. The generators also provide a backup in an emergency.

Despite this low usage, Armstrong said, the city still falls under the Clean Air Act rule. Armstrong said the city got an initial estimate last year that put the retrofit at about \$200,000. However, this week she received a proposed contract from an energy firm, who said they would do the project for \$633,835.

"I just happened to get that contract on the week they were going to be in town," she said. Since the proposed contract was so much higher than the initial estimate, Armstrong said she would seek out other, cheaper ones if the city ends up having to install the converters.

Armstrong said members of the Kansas Municipal Utilities Association and the Kansas Municipal Energy Agency met with the EPA to see if they could get an exemption for low-use cities like Colby, but they were refused.

City Manager Carolyn Armstrong said

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Every little bit helps



Assistant Fire Chief Sean Hankin took a donation from a local youth Saturday as part of the "Fill the Boot" campaign to raise money for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. Hankin said the firefighters raised \$2,250. The number will be announced on the air during a telethon on Monday on KAKE Channel 6.

Rumble strips could save lives

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No one can say whether an innovation called a centerline rumble strip would have saved Mickeal Quakenbush's life, but the stretch of U.S. 83 south of Oberlin where he died last year should have the lifesaving noisemakers soon.

Contractor crews started repaving the road this week from the Selden junction north all the way to the south end of Oberlin, just past the Sappa Creek Bridge.

After they're done, another crew will come along and mill the rumble strips into the pavement, then the center lines will be painted over the strips.

Mickeal's accident happened about half a mile south of town, near the "55 mph speed ahead" sign for northbound motorists. He'd worked an all-night shift at Love's Country Store in Colby, and was driving home to Oberlin the morning of Wednesday, Nov. 10. He'd almost made it when his 1989 Jeep Cherokee crossed the centerline and he ran into the rear wheels of a southbound semitrailer rig.

"I tried to miss him, but I couldn't," said the truck driver, Kenneth Jones, 64, of Altus, Okla.

The impact ripped the left front wheel off the Cherokee, which flipped onto its top. The victim was

pronounced dead at the scene. Whether the strips would have warned Mickeal in time to prevent the wreck is anybody's guess. His dad, Donald Quakenbush, who lived near Seguin and works for the Sheridan County road department, says he thinks it's a good idea anyway.

"It's got to help," he said. "I'll bet it would. I think it'll help."

The centerline rumble strips are relatively new. The Kansas Department of Transportation only adopted a policy of applying them on rural two-lane roads in 2007, and experimentation goes back only about a dozen years to 1999. The familiar sideline rumble strips have been in use longer, but those are only used where a wide shoulder allows room for bicyclists.

The wide pavement from south of town to the Eight-Mile road will get both types of strips, the state says, but south of there, only the centerline bumpers.

Steven Buckley, state highway safety engineer, is one of the people at the Department of Transportation who believe in the strips. He recalled that the first test installation was on U.S. 50 west of Newton in 2003. Followup studies by Kansas State University researchers showed that crashes likely to be corrected by the rumble strips dropped 42 percent, nearly in half. Those include head-on and side-

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Senator talks burdensome regulations at town hall meeting

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U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts had one thing on his mind as he met with area residents in Colby on Tuesday: burdensome federal regulations.

"Wherever I go, people have been asking, 'why on Earth are you passing all these regs that are putting me out of business,'" he said.

Roberts said there have been 451 new regulations passed by federal agencies this year. The Senate has been trying to keep up with them, he said, and has managed to fix a few that didn't make sense, such as a regulation that would have classified a milk spill as an oil spill.

Roberts said he has been talking to business owners who say regulations are shutting down the business community, leading to things like outsourcing. The Environmental Protection Agency has been going around the intent of Congress, he said, in putting regulations on things like dust in rural areas and classifying farm ponds as navigable waterways.

"It used to be, 'did you read the bill?'" he said. "Then it was, 'did you read the regulations?' Now, it's even worse: 'did you even know about the regulations?'"

Roberts said President Barack Obama has asked for a cost-benefit analysis of getting rid of some of these regulations, and while he applauded the presi-

dent for that, more is needed. He has been working on a bill to "tweak" that executive order, including a moratorium on future regulations and a look back at regulations that aren't needed.

Roberts has recently been involved in hearings on reauthorizing the farm bill, which contains provisions on everything from crop insurance to nutrition. There has already been a lot of money cut from crop insurance in the last few years, and he hopes to stop that cutting and put money back in if possible. Roberts said he had just been on a tour of some of the drought-stricken southern counties.

"Thank goodness we have crop insurance," he said.

Roberts also spoke about the recent debt ceiling crisis. Congress is working on three different appropriations bills, he said, but it is difficult to get a real budget passed. However, Roberts said the government is not likely to experience a real shutdown.

"I've been to that rodeo before," he said, referring to the 1995 government shutdown, "and we didn't stay on very long."

Roberts took questions and comments from the audience.

A local crop insurance agent told Roberts that his paperwork takes twice as long as it did two years ago with no practical benefit. Roberts said he wants to put about \$12 billion back into the program.

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Free Press Publisher Sharon Friedlander (left) chatted with Sen. Pat Roberts after the town hall meeting Tuesday morning at the Thomas County Office Complex.

Kansas' tax revenue comes in above forecasts for the fifth month in a row

TOPEKA (AP) - Kansas' revenue collections in August exceeded official forecasts by \$16.8 million, officials said Wednesday, suggesting more positive signs for the state's economy.

The Department of Revenue released the figures showing the fifth month in a row that Kansas revenues beat expectations. Total revenue in August was \$436.4 million, compared with the \$419.6 million forecast for the month

back in April.

Kansas revenues are running \$40.2 million ahead of estimates for the first two months of the state's fiscal year, which began July 1. When factoring in the positive collections in April through June and cuts to state spending approved by the 2011 Legislature, Kansas is projected to end the next fiscal year with close to \$200 million in cash reserves.

Revenue Secretary Nick Jordan

said the new figures were positive, but cautioned that "the economy is still fragile and we have a lot of work to do."

"The healthy rise in state sales and use taxes show an increase in confidence by businesses and citizens," Jordan said. "We are working hard to keep the recovery going by focusing on creating a pro-growth environment in Kansas to attract private-sector jobs."

Jordan said the sales tax col-

lections showed an improvement over previous months in which collections were flat or had minimal growth.

Republican Gov. Sam Brownback has asked Jordan to lead a task force that is looking at the state's overall tax structure and to make recommendations for modifying the state's tax rates. One idea proposed by some House Republicans during the 2011 legislative session was to phase out or elimi-

nate entirely the state's income tax to make the state more attractive to businesses.

However, Democrats and advocates for the arts argue that Brownback should reverse his veto of \$700,000 in funding for the Kansas Arts Commission, in light of growing state revenues. The governor deleted the state funding in May, saying the money was needed elsewhere in government to fund core programs such

as public safety, education and social services.

Sales tax collections exceeded the forecast by \$7.1 million. Individual income taxes totaled \$3.4 million more than the forecast, while corporate incomes tax payments beat the estimate by \$524,000.

