

Weather



ELEVATED FIRE DANGER

Tonight: Partly cloudy, with a low around 26. South wind 5 to 10 mph becoming west.

Tuesday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 49. Breezy, with a north wind 5 to 10 mph increasing to between 15 and 20 mph.

Tuesday Night: Scattered flurries after 9 p.m. Mostly cloudy, with a low around 21. East wind around 5 mph becoming southwest.

Wednesday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 45. North wind around 5 mph.

Wednesday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 26.

Thursday: Sunny, with a high near 55.

Thursday Night: Mostly clear, with a low around 31.

Friday: Sunny, with a high near 60.

Friday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 34.

Saturday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 63.

Saturday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 30.

Sunday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 52.

Thursday: High, 62; Low 24
Friday: High, 67; Low 29
Saturday: High, 72; Low 28
Sunday: High, 60; Low 37

Precip: Thursday None
Friday None
Saturday None
Sunday None

Month: 0.25 inches
Year: 19.63 inches
Normal: 20.03 inches

(K-State Experiment Station)

Sunrise and Sunset
Tuesday 7:28 a.m. 5:29 p.m.

Moon: waning, 79 percent

Wednesday 7:29 a.m. 5:29 p.m.

Moon: waning, 70 percent (U.S. Naval Observatory)

Debt reduction could hurt colleges

From "COLLEGES," Page 1

for money for a new engineering program.

Despite worries about what decisions will be handed down from the federal and state governments, Hammond remains optimistic about his university. Enrollment has reached 13,000 - both online and in person. Hammond said the university's goal is to reach 20,000 students by 2020.

Enrollment across the Regents system only grew by 856 from 2010, while Fort Hays grew by 919. Hammond said there are more students taking online courses than ever - about 4,500 - and his goal is to double that in 10 years.

Hammond has also been speaking about higher education as an economic issue. A study by Goss and Associates on the economic impact of the Kansas Regents University System says the system as a whole has an impact of \$7.3 billion per year. This includes \$3.4 billion in wages paid out and \$485 million in tax collections. Impact also figures in volunteer efforts and money stu-

dents and staff spend in the community.

The study lists Colby Community College's output impact at \$36 million and Fort Hays at \$256 million.

Among Kansas residents with no high school degrees have an unemployment rate of 22 percent. Those with high school degrees are experiencing 14 percent unemployment, and those with college degrees are experiencing 5 percent. Hammond said college graduates make \$22,000 more a year on average and pay \$6,000 more in state taxes.

"There is a direct correlation between the percent of the workforce that is college trained and how well the state economy is doing," Hammond said. "I'm trying to protect the economic engine that is higher education and feed it to help it grow."

Despite the benefits, Hammond said he is worried about access to higher education, especially with increasing tuition at many of the state's universities. Fort Hays has managed to keep tuition low, he said, because it has taken steps to reduce costs. Fort Hays

charges about \$105 per credit hour, 20 percent less than Pittsburg or Emporia State Universities.

Hammond said he has two strategies for keeping costs low. The first is efficiency: moved to a four-day work week, redid many staff contracts and moved its entire summer semester to online-only classes.

Fort Hays has its own generators, Hammond said, which it uses to offset peak demand in August and September, helping save on energy bills year round.

The university is also beginning a wind turbine project. Hammond said the plan is to build two 2.1-megawatt turbines just outside the city limits that, when completed, can power the entire campus.

The second cost-saving measure is the university's China program, a branch of Fort Hays offering classes in Xinzhen, China. There are about 3,600 students and 51 faculty in Fort Hays' China program, which is making money. Hammond said he is able to put about \$4 million from the China program into keeping tuition low.

Repealer talks tax forms, prairie dog regulations

From "REPEALER," Page 1

county officials to poison prairie dogs.

According to Jan Biles of the Topeka Capital-Journal, "a 1901 law gives Logan County officials the right to enter private property without the owner's consent, poison the prairie dogs living there and then bill the landowner for the service."

Taylor said he has heard from a number of people in a number of cities about this issue.

Sen. Ralph Ostmeier talked about his feelings on the issue at length, saying he believes it's been a very good law and it protects everyone, so it should not be changed at all.

Several others, including Jill Hansen, agreed that the law shouldn't be changed, but said it is not being enforced and it needs to be.

"We're having problems invoking this law," Hansen said. "We're not protected."

Taylor said the law is currently under review by the court of appeals and there should be a decision on it probably in the spring.

"I think as far as this area (northwest Kansas), they'd recommend for you to go back to the governor and recommend to leave this law alone," Logan County Commissioner Carl Uhrich said. "The people you've heard from that want to repeal this law are from parasite organizations, they're from eastern Kansas. The people out here are the ones that are living with this problem. That would be our recommendation, to leave it alone. It was put there for a reason and it's still a good law."

After these comments, Hansen and others talked about how the prairie dogs have affected their land and how much it has cost them to deal with this problem.

Taylor took notes while each person spoke about the issue.

Norman Olive of the Norton area changed the discussion to talk about a law that he actually wanted to be repealed.

He owns a camper that was destroyed in a hail storm and is no longer functional, but he said he is still required to pay taxes on it according to the year, make and model of the camper, no matter if it is useable or not.

"I think that's unjust, my camper's not worth anything now," Olive said. "I can't sell it now other than for junk... I think that's a bad law."

He also brought up another issue dealing with recreational vehicle taxation.

Olive said he chose to help out family members that were down on hard times by buying their car tags. However, the family owns a boat that they hadn't paid the taxes on, so Olive couldn't purchase the car tags until those taxes were paid.

"Now I can see banning it on your home, but on a recreational vehicle and the boat, they hadn't used it for two years. It isn't even licensed by the state," Olive said. "And I thought well golly, you're preventing this person from having a system of transportation that could help make him some money by having to pay taxes on a recreational vehicle that's not even been used for two years."

Taylor said the reason for this is because recreational vehicles are considered personal property, which isn't an ad valorem tax like real property is. He said the state taxes these vehicles according to year, make and model because of the bureaucracy that would be associated with keeping track of people that are not claiming these vehicles on their taxes.

Still, Taylor said he hadn't heard about this issue before and was glad Olive brought it to his attention.

Linda Franklin talked about an issue with filling out 10-99 tax forms.

A 10-99 is used to record incomes of people that are independent contractors and are not considered an employee of the business they perform work for.

Franklin said she has people that are custom hires so that is

why she has been filing them for many years.

Franklin said she was told by an accountant that these forms just go into a room and there's a whole building full of them along with K-99s and K-96s. The accountant told her to not even bother filing them because nobody ever looks at them, but Franklin said she wasn't sure if that was true.

"If there's no money associated with them, are we required to file those to the state or not?" she asked. "And if they're just being put into a room and nothing done with them, I don't understand the purpose of them."

Taylor said he's not sure about that, but said he would check into it.

Franklin brought up another paperwork issue dealing with forms called 2290s for Heavy Vehicle Use Tax, which she uses for farm vehicles.

"I have to send that in," she said. "I have to wait for a copy to come back and it has a date stamped on it in order to get farm tags."

The main issue Franklin has is that she doesn't need to use her farm vehicles until after July 1 so she doesn't file until after that date and also saves money. However, she doesn't get the copy back in time to avoid fines. She then said that if she files on or before June 30, it costs her \$50 to \$100 more per vehicle.

Taylor asked if she had a suggestion for solving this problem, such as changing the effective dates of the tags and keep the cost low.

Franklin said she wondered why she has to file the paperwork anyway if it's only for farm use and that she heard she can also do it online, but that has a fee attached to it.

Taylor told her he would look into it and get back to her.

Briefly

Group selling nuts

The Colby Episcopal Churchwomen are selling fresh crop pecans and various nuts such as cashews, pralines and walnuts. For information, call Mary Molstad at the Ascension on the Prairie Church, 462-7198.

High school library to hold book fair

The Colby High School library will hold a book fair from 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. through Tuesday in the library. Refreshments and hot apple cider will be available. The fair will include books for all ages. For information, call 460-5300.

National Honor Society to induct new members

The Colby chapter of the Nation Honor Society will induct 19 new members at a ceremony at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday in the Colby High School auditorium. Everyone is invited. Colby Community College President Dr. Stephen Vacik will speak. For information, call 460-5300.

Crafts, food and fun at Harvest of Holidays

The Thomas County Extension office will hold the "2011 Harvest of Holidays" program at 6 p.m. Tuesday at the 4-H Building. Sessions include fall decorations that can be grown or made and dying your own silk scarf. Cost is \$10. Sign up by calling Diann Gerstner at 460-4582 or e-mail diann@ksu.edu by Monday.

College gym to close for floor remodeling

The Colby Community College gym will be closed through Friday while the floor is resurfaced and painted. For information call 460-5411.

Fourth grade class to sing about elephants

Fourth graders from Colby Grade School will perform the musical "The Elephant's Child" at 2 p.m. and 7 p.m. Tuesday in the school auditorium. Admission is free. For information, call music teacher Jennifer Koel at 460-5100.

Learn about history at Food for Thought

The Prairie Museum of Art and History will hold the first Food for Thought program on the 2011-2012 season at noon Thursday with a talk by Eunice Petramala on "The Settlement Period from a Native American Perspective." Food for thought is offered every third Thursday each month through April. For information, call 460-4590.

Kids' cooking class continues Thursday

The last Kids-a-Cookin' fall class with the Colby Recreation Program for kids in third through fifth grades will be from 3:30 to 5 p.m. Thursday at the Colby Community Building. Classes are free. Sign up by calling 460-4440. After business hours leave a message at 460-4582, including child's name and a contact number.

Earthquake readiness not high on priority list

From "EARTHQUAKE," Page 1

Manhattan and nearby communities.

Kansas Insurance Commissioner Sandy Praeger said residents worried about protecting their homes and other belongings need to purchase a rider for their policies as most insurance plans don't cover earthquakes.

That includes homeowner and automobile coverage, she said.

Tafanelli said the earthquakes were a good reminder to Kansas residents about the importance of taking their own steps to be prepared. That includes having a home disaster plan and preparedness kit with food, water, flashlights, batteries, medications, first aid supplies and copies of any documents that may be necessary.

"We haven't had the New Madrid strike for almost 200 years but it should serve as a reminder of what we need to do in Kansas," he said. "Those same basic kits and plans apply. That's the part that our citizens can control."

The New Madrid fault is located in southeast Missouri and is known for being active in 1811 and 1812. Tafanelli said Kansas has been in planning with Missouri and other states in the event the faults awaken. Kansas would likely be asked to shelter survivors fleeing the damage or provide other response teams, he said.

Angee Morgan, deputy director of emergency management, said while Kansas has taken a so-called "all-hazards" approach to preparing for disasters, it's more of a matter of preparing to manage consequences.

LOCAL TV Listings Sponsored by the COLBY FREE PRESS

Table with columns for Tuesday Evening (November 15, 2011) and Wednesday Evening (November 16, 2011). Rows list channels and programs like Last Man, Man Up!, Dancing With Stars, Body of Proof, Local, Nightline, Jimmy Kimmel Live, etc.



Table with columns for Wednesday Evening (November 16, 2011). Rows list channels and programs like KAKE/ABC, Middle, Suburb., Family, Happy, Revenge, Local, Nightline, Jimmy Kimmel Live, etc.