

Weather

Colby mail will go to North Platte, Neb.

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been turned down, or if all were just "rubber-stamped," Roy Reynolds, processing plant manager for the Omaha district, said the service had planned on closing the plant in North Platte, moving the work to Cheyenne, Wyo. That was nixed when officials found out the building in Cheyenne would have to be expanded.

The North Platte facility kept its 50 jobs. *The North Platte Telegraph* reported Thursday that the plant would not need to add any jobs to cover Colby's mail volume, but it would add a position to take on mail from Alliance, Neb. Elsewhere in Nebraska, the plants in Grand Island and Norfolk will close, costing 101 jobs at those plants.

Distance could also be a factor in the decision. North Platte is only 145 miles from Colby, while Denver is 235. U.S. 83 connects the two towns, and is seldom closed in the winter, unlike I-70. And the consolidation would preserve north-south mail connections in the area.

"As we conducted the study," Sperry said, "we decided that North Platte made more sense (than Denver)."

Sperry added that he wasn't sure how much people's thoughts about weather had influenced the decision.

"The comments were all read; I know that," he said.

Many people objected to the idea of taking mail destined for across town to Denver and back for sorting. The service says it needs to slim down and use its automated equipment more efficiently.

Now, with overnight sorting, this equipment runs only six to eight hours a day. With two-day delivery, however, it can be run during daylight hours and maintained at night.

While final decisions have not been made, the service is inclined to say that no mail will be sort-

ed in towns like Colby, even that destined for local delivery, because "there's simply no one there to sort it."

In Washington, Tonda Rush, chief executive officer of the National Newspaper Association, and a national authority on postal operations and regulatory cases, said while the service has asked for a decision by April on its opinion, it's unlikely the commission will hear testimony before then.

She said Congress is debating several bills, but seems unlikely to act before the elections. Members of both parties are split on many issues, she said, and there's been no push to compromise and get a bill out.

And even if the Senate moves its bill, she said, it's not likely to get much support in the Republican-dominated House.

"I think this (announcement) may hasten getting the Senate bill to the floor," she said. "I'm not sure we're going to see anything (pass) this year."

She said newspapers have pushed for a plan to allow entry of presorted mail at "hubs" where trucks will exchange mail, even if the regional plants are closed. Otherwise, she said, newspapers will have to leave the mails and find some other way of delivering their product.

"We have been told at the headquarters level that they will do that," she said. "The hub operation would help save the quality of mail service for everyone, not just newspapers."

The service is going to have money problems until it gets control of its labor costs, she said.

"Labor is 80 percent of their costs," she said. "It's a person-heavy operation."

Nationally, the service hopes to get down to about 250 plants. Of 264 operations studied for closure, it says, six are on hold, 35 will remain open like North Platte and 223 will close or be scaled down.

Court appointments bill stalls in Kansas in 22-17 vote

By John Hanna

Associated Press

TOPEKA — Many abortion opponents and conservative Republicans in Kansas are pushing to give the governor and legislators more influence over the appointment of appellate court judges, but a proposal seen as a step toward accomplishing their goals has stalled in the Legislature.

The state Senate rejected a bill Thursday to have the governor appoint new Court of Appeals judges, subject to Senate confirmation. The measure would end the screening of applications for the court by a nominating commission controlled by attorneys, expand the governor's potential options in making appointments and give legislators a direct role.

The Senate's 22-17 vote against the measure showed Democrats and moderate Republicans still have misgivings about changing how Court of

Appeals judges and state Supreme Court justices are selected, despite concerns that the process is dominated unfairly by lawyers and not open enough to the public.

Critics of the bill remain suspicious because the measure, passed by the House last year, has the backing of Gov. Sam Brownback, a conservative Republican.

The bill also has support from the anti-abortion group Kansans for Life and the small-government, anti-tax group Americans for Prosperity.

Some legislators, even critics of the bill, expect other proposals to change the judicial selection process to emerge this year, though not as dramatic as the changes in the bill rejected Thursday.

"We have a system in Kansas that works well," said Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Tim Owens, an Overland Park Republican. "I'm willing to take a look at many of the options.

What I'm not willing to do is to allow for something to come forward that gives one branch firm control over another branch of government."

In Kansas, the state nominating commission picks up to three finalists for each appellate court vacancy and submits their names to the governor, who can pick only among the nominees.

Voters decide every six years for Supreme Court justices and every four years for Court of Appeals judges whether an appointee stays on the bench. In more than 50 years, no justice or judge has ever been ousted.

There's no confirmation by the Senate or other role for legislators in the selection process. While other states have similar systems, Kansas is the only state in which attorneys chosen exclusively by other attorneys make up a majority — five of nine members — of the commission screening applications.

Briefly

Fun and games planned at carnival

Come to the Sacred Heart School Carnival from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday for food, prizes, a raffle and games, with lunch served in the church basement. For information, call Principal Dave Evert at 460-2813.

Concert spotlights 'My Favorite Things'

The Pride of the Prairie Orchestra will present "These Are a Few of My Favorite Things," conducted by Beverly Rucker, at 3:30 p.m. Sunday in the Frahm Theatre in the Cultural Arts Center at Colby Community College. The program features mezzo-soprano Bonnie Cameron. Admission is \$10 for adults, \$5 for seniors and \$3 for students. For information, call Janet Hopson at 462-5102.

Courthouse computers to be down Tuesday

The secretary of state and state motor vehicle offices will be installing new routers at the Thomas County courthouse on Tuesday. Computers in the offices of the county treasurer and clerk will be down from about 1 to 2 p.m. To avoid delays, you may want to plan your business for the morning. For information, call Clerk Shelly Harms at 460-4500.

Pizza sales Tuesday will benefit grade school

The Colby Grade School Parent-Teacher Organization and Colby Pizza Hut are having a fund raiser for special projects at the school. Twenty percent of all purchases between 3 and 10 p.m. Tuesday will go to the school group. For information, call Kristy McCarty at 460-2793.

Class for grandparents to teach skills

Grandparents and anyone interested in supporting young parents of infants are invited to a free class and meal at the Citizens Medical Center conference room from 5 to 7:30 p.m. Tuesday. Kathy Ryan, a registered nurse with the Thomas County Health Department, will talk about breast feeding. Maureen Ostmeier of Smart Start Northwest Kansas and Paige Campbell of Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect will cover supporting new parents, brain development, protective factors for a family, purple crying and happy babies. Participants must register in advance; call Smart Start at (785) 465-9103.

Library to hold meeting on walking trail

A meeting to update people on plans for a walking trail will be held from 5:15 to 6 p.m. Thursday at the Pioneer Memorial Library. For information, call Megan Carmichael, Smart Start Northwest Kansas professional development coordinator, at (785) 465-9103.

'World Day of Prayer' scheduled in two towns

World Day of Prayer will be observed in Colby at noon next Friday with a luncheon and worship service at the United Methodist Church involving women from several area churches. This year's service was written by Malaysian women; the theme is "Let Justice Prevail." All area church women are invited. A salad luncheon will be provided by the United Methodist Women. For information, call Millie Horlacher at 462-3104.

A service for the Brewster area will be held at the Brewster United Methodist Church, 202 Nebraska. Fellowship begins at 9:30 a.m., with a worship service at 10 for both men and women. For information, call Nadine Kammer at (785) 694-2456.

Library to become murder scene March 3

The Friends of the Pioneer Memorial Library plan to put on their annual Murder Mystery Dinner fund raiser at 6:30 p.m. Saturday, March 3. Tickets, at \$25, may be purchased at the library. For information, call Melany Wilks at 460-4470.

Secretary of state to speak in Brewster

Secretary of State Kris Kobach will speak at 7:15 p.m. Saturday, March 3, on the Constitution and Second Amendment under a free wild game banquet at 6:30 p.m. at the Brewster School Gymnasium. Along with more standard fare, the menu includes deer, elk, moose, buffalo, caribou, Dall sheep, black bear, antelope, jack rabbit, cottontail, raccoon, alligator, pheasant, turkey, frog legs, carp, white bass and salmon. Donations will be taken; bring a wild game dish if you wish. For information or reservations, call Mike Pinkelman at (785) 694-2720.

Christian Workers to gather for classes

A Christian Workers conference will be held from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday, March 3, at the Heartland Christian School in Colby. The conference aims to help rural churches with resources and training, along with several workshops and vendors. Brian Wechsler, executive director of Village Missions, will speak. Cost is \$45. Pre-register at www.shepherdstaff.org or call Gwen Griffiths at (785) 687-2565.

City council weighs proposal to replace water, electric meters

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explain the costs.

Construction costs total to \$1,157,858; design will total \$75,261; construction management \$57,893; construction period interest \$28,946; commissioning \$46,314; measurement and verification \$46,314; and overhead and profit \$196,836, he said.

An "investment-grade" audit will be covered by a separate fee of \$112,000, along with the Facility Conservation Improvement Program's fee of \$33,214 and an optional fund called owner-controlled contingency, which could be used for unexpected costs or problems while replacing the meters, of \$30,000.

Christenson said these costs total to the city's guaranteed price of \$1,784,636.

However, with interest over 15 years of payments, he estimates an additional \$432,444 to be paid to the bank for a grand total of \$2,217,080.

While Christenson was discussing how much profit Johnson will make, councilman Mark Beringer asked if that was the total profit. Beringer said the company could be turning a profit from all of the other categories in the price structure as well.

Christenson said that some of those figures may be high be-

cause of the contractors the company will use. For example, he said, in measurement and verification, they will have a woman from Olathe come out to do that work and supervise while the meters are being put in.

"There's a cost associated with that to bring her to Colby," Christenson said, "there's a cost associated with shipping those 66 meters and doing a change-out, we have to have somebody come out and physically change out the 66 meters, which is another company that's not embedded in the cost up there...."

"I know it's a different way to look at it, but I'm trying to give you open-book pricing to be transparent in what we're doing."

Beringer asked whether Itron will be around in 15 years, and city Technology Director Mike Albers said that company has been around for a while, but it wasn't perfected until about two or three years ago.

Hutfles then asked what the chances are that this technology will be obsolete in 15 years, and Christenson said it will never be

obsolete.

"It will never be obsolete, it will always work," he said. "Will there be improvements in technology and finding leaks? Absolutely, but there will be a cost associated with that."

Councilman Fred Taylor asked if the company was proposing that Colby put leak detection on every line it has, and Mense said it will be installed on about every third meter in town. The sensors can detect leaks on the meters surrounding the meter with the leak detection on it, he said.

Beringer asked how much it would cost to put sensors in new lines in the future, and Mense said about \$100 per sensor.

After all of the council's questions had been answered, City Manager Carolyn Armstrong asked if the members needed more time before taking a vote on the project, and the council said they did so they could digest all of the information from the presentation.

In other business, the council:

- Authorized the staff to seek bids for the 2012 power distribution line improvement project, which will affect the lines on Eighth Street, Garfield Avenue and County Club Drive.
- Authorized the staff to seek bids for power plant spill prevention, control and containment facilities.

LOCAL TV Listings Sponsored by the COLBY FREE PRESS

Monday Evening										February 27, 2012	
	7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00	11:30	
KAKE/ABC	The Bachelor				Castle		Local	Nightline	Jimmy Kimmel Live		
KBSL/CBS	How I Met	2 Broke G	Two Men	Mike	Hawaii Five-0		Local	Late Show Letterman	Late		
KSNK/NBC	The Voice				Smash		Local	Tonight Show w/Leno	Late		
KSAS/FOX	House		Alcatraz		Local						
Cable Channels											
A & E	Hoarders		Hoarders		Intervention		Intervention		Hoarders		
AMC	The Godfather								The Godfather		
ANIM	Gator Boys		Rattlesnake Republic		Finding Bigfoot		Gator Boys		Rattlesnake Republic		
BRAVO	Bethenny Ever After		Bethenny Ever After		Brad World		Happens	Bethenny Ever After	Brad Wrld		
CMT	Redneck Vacation		Bayou	Bayou	Speed						
CNN	Anderson Cooper 360		Piers Morgan Tonight		Anderson Cooper 360		E. B. OutFront		Piers Morgan Tonight		
COMEDY	Work.	South Pk	Sunny	Sunny	Sunny	Sunny	Daily	Colbert	South Pk	South Pk	
DISC	American Chopper		American Chopper		Toughest Truckee		American Chopper		Toughest Truckee		
DISN	Shake It	Frenemies			Good Luck	Good Luck	Shake It	Random	Wizards	Wizards	
E!	E! News	E! News			Fashion Police		Chelsea	E! News			
ESPN	College Basketball		College Basketball				SportsCenter		SportsCenter		
ESPN2	Wm. Basketball		Wm. Basketball				SportsNation		NFL Live		
FAM	Pretty Little Liars		The Lying Game		Pretty Little Liars		The 700 Club		Prince	Prince	
FOOD	Heat See.	Heat See.	Diners	Diners	Diners	Diners	Diners	Diners	Diners	Diners	
FX	Eagle Eye						Eagle Eye				
HGTV	Love It or List It		House	House	House	Hunters	My House	Price Thi	House	House	
HIST	Pawn	Pawn	American Pickers		Pawn	Pawn	Hardcore History		Pawn	Pawn	
LIFE	The Cutting Edge				Ice Castles				The Cutting Edge		
MTV	The Challenge		Ridic.	Ridic.	Ridic.	Ridic.	Caged		The Challenge		
NICK	My Wife	My Wife	George	George	'70s Show	'70s Show	Friends	Friends	Friends	Friends	
SCI	Being Human		Being Human		Lost Girl		Being Human		Lost Girl		
SPIKE	Seven				Payback					Repo	
TBS	Fam. Guy	Fam. Guy	Fam. Guy	Fam. Guy	Fam. Guy	Fam. Guy	Conan		Office	Office	
TCM	I Married a Witch				Come to the Stable				Who's Afraid of Virginia		
TLC	Obsessive Compulsive		Undercover Boss		Undercover Boss		Obsessive Compulsive		Undercover Boss		
TNT	The Mentalist		The Mentalist		The Closer		Rizzoli & Isles		Rizzoli & Isles		
TOON	Regular	IAD	King/Hill	King/Hill	Amer. Dad	Amer. Dad	Fam. Guy	Fam. Guy	Chicken	Boondocks	
TRAV	Bizarre Foods		Bizarre Foods		Bizarre Foods		No Reservation		Bizarre Foods		
TV LAND	Home Imp.	Home Imp.	Raymond	Raymond	Raymond	Raymond	Raymond	Raymond	King	King	
USA	NCIS		WWWE Monday Night RAW				White Collar		NCIS		
VH1	Basketball Wives		T.I.-Tiny	Basketball Wives	T.I.-Tiny		Basketball Wives		T.I.-Tiny	Basketbal	
WGN	Funniest Home Videos		Funniest Home Videos		WGN News at Nine		30 Rock	Scrubs	Scrubs	Sunny	
Premium Channels											
HBO	Real Time/Bill Maher		Something Borrowed				Too Short	F. Roach	Boxing		
MAX	The Town				Stag Night				Online Crush		
SHOW	Homeland		Blue Valentine				I'm Still Here				