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Sheriff's office plans charges in death

By Steve Haynes
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The driver of a pickup involved in a fatality last week in Brewster could face charges of drunk driving, negligent homicide and child endangerment, says Thomas County Sheriff Rodney Taylor. Taylor said his office has been investigating possible criminal charges in the incident, while the Kansas Highway Pa-

trol did the accident investigation and report. An autopsy answered some questions about the death, he said, but many conflicting stories have been circulating in the small county-line town – and in Colby and Goodland as well.

That's one reason, he said, that both agencies have put extra time in on the case. Officers were comparing reports and notes Tuesday afternoon.

"There's probably part of it that we'll never know what happened," the sher-

iff added, "unless it comes out in a civil suit."

The patrol's accident report, done by Trooper Adam Medlicott, says a 2003 Ram pickup driven by James Allen House, 44, Brewster, backed from a parking space on Main Street near Kansas Avenue about 9:50 p.m. Sunday, March 10. The victim, Val G. Gallentine, 44, Goodland, approached the truck, the report says, then moved in front of the vehicle. The truck moved forward, striking

the pedestrian, who by that time was in the middle of the street.

The report said Gallentine lost his balance and fell, hitting his head on the street. At first, Taylor said, officers thought the blow might have been the main injury. However, the sheriff said the autopsy showed the man died of a crushed chest and internal injuries from being run over by the pickup. The head injury, while severe, apparently was not fatal, he said.

Taylor said the two men were long-time

friends and had been drinking together before the accident. There was no indication of foul play, he said, though earlier reports indicated the truck struck Gallentine while backing up.

"We know that Val did not suffer," the sheriff said. "We can say there were two grown men who, if they had it all to do over, and they were sober, they would do it differently."

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KATHRYN BALLARD/Colby Free Press

Big fish goes in, then out

State biologist Matt Bain (above) and a young bystander watched as a helper worked on a chute used to unload trout from a supply truck earlier this month. The state has stocked several hundred rainbows, large and small, in the Villa High pond this winter and spring, and fishermen have been pulling them out ever since the ice went off. Robert Ledou reported catching this seven-pound beauty Sunday.

ROBERT HANZLICK



Senate cuts property, sales tax; reverses its vote on income tax

By John Hanna
AP Statehouse Correspondent

TOPEKA – The Kansas Senate reversed course today, reconsidering its rejection of a bill cutting income and sales taxes and passing the measure.

The Senate approved the bill on a 29-11 vote, only two hours after rejecting it on a 20-20 tie. Nine Republicans, including Senate President Steve Morris, of Hugoton, switched their votes.

The bill is dramatically different than Brownback's plan to over-

haul the state's individual income tax code.

Senators embraced Brownback's proposals to cut the state's top individual income tax rates and eliminate income taxes for 191,000 businesses. But they rejected his proposals to eliminate income tax credits and deductions and voted to cut the sales tax from 6.3 percent to 5.7 percent in July 2013.

The Senate also approved, 38-2, a separate property tax relief measure.

Earlier, the Senate's vote on the income and sales tax bill was 20-20, leaving it just a vote shy of the majority needed to pass. A bipartisan coalition that included the

Senate's top Republican leaders opposed it.

The Senate added a cut in the sales tax, a move that boosted the potential revenue loss and scared off some senators. The cost, \$213 million during the fiscal year that begins July 1, growing to \$829 million in the next year, threatened to force big budget cuts; Brownback's plan cost the state about \$90 million a year in revenues.

But senators did approve, 38-2, a separate bill to give cities and counties \$180 million over four years and directing them to use it to keep local property taxes in check. Senate leaders from both

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County hears request to allow beer garden at the fairgrounds

By Christina Beringer
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Thomas County Commissioners said they'd consider a request from the Fair Board and a radio station Monday to possibly allow a beer garden at the county fairgrounds.

Board members plan to come back for the end-of-the month meeting Friday, March 30, when commissioners expect to have some answers from the county attorney.

Fair Board members said Monday they had been approached by Sacha Sanguinetti, general manager of Rocking M Radio here. Sanguinetti, they said, is interested in moving the radio group's annual Great Bull Giveaway from the Prairie Museum of Art and History to the fairgrounds, but only if a

beer garden can be set up at the fairgrounds.

Clair Schrock, county road boss and vice-president of the fair board, said the radio stations would take care of all of the expenses for the event, including insurance and security. Half of the proceeds from the beer garden will be donated to the fair board, Schrock said, adding that he was told the beer sales made about \$800 last year, so they should expect about a \$400 donation.

"We'd like to let them do that," he said, "but we need your permission to let them."

In addition to the beer garden during the bull event, he said, the fair board would eventually like to allow beer at the rodeo, demolition derby, races, the fair and wedding dances.

Schrock said he has contacted about a dozen

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Rain may give wheat a drink at right time

By Kevin Bottrell
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Northwest Kansas could see its first significant precipitation in months over the next two days, something that would be a big boost to the fast-growing wheat crop.

So far Tuesday and today, weather stations in Colby and south of Levant had reported .14 of an inch by 8 a.m., but forecasters said there could be more to come. At noon, light rain continued to fall in downtown Colby.

The National Weather Service

was predicting 60 to 70 percent chance of showers today and 40 percent Thursday, with a 10 percent chance of isolated thunderstorms Thursday night. These storms could drop as much as half an inch of rain over two days.

"That would sure help," said Larry Enfield, who grows wheat in Sherman County.

The wheat has just broken its winter dormancy, he said. The mild winter sped up the growth and did not produce much winter kill. Rain at this stage will bring up the subsoil moisture, in the

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Storms flood southeast

JOPLIN, Mo. (AP) – Flood watches continue for southeast Kansas and western Missouri after a few days of heavy rain that prompted closing of several rural roadways.

The National Weather Service said Wednesday that the large, slow-moving storm over north Texas was expected to continue pushing eastward, producing more rain in Missouri and Kansas. Up to 4 inches had been recorded in

the Missouri Ozarks and southeast Kansas. The rain is expected to taper off Thursday.

The Missouri Department of Transportation reported several roadway sections closed across southwest and south-central Missouri because of high water. Cherokee County, Kan., Sheriff David Groves told *The Joplin Globe* (bit.ly/GGRgbe) that low-lying county roads had flooded there, as they do during rains each spring.

Two hurt in wrecks near Colby, Rexford

A Selden woman was hurt Tuesday when she apparently pulled out in front of a semitrailer rig at the County Road 36 intersection at the southeast corner of the Thomas County town of Rexford.

The Kansas Highway Patrol reported that Pamela S. Dipman, 54, was taken to Citizens Medical Center in Colby for treatment of possible injuries. Troopers said she was wearing a seatbelt.

The patrol reported that her car,

a 2003 Dodge Stratus, was northbound on Road 36 about 2:02 p.m. when she apparently stopped at the stop sign, then pulled onto the highway, failing to yield the right of way to the semi.

The Dodge was struck in the passenger side by a 2007 Peterbilt driven by Michael L. Adams, 48, Omaha. Adams was not hurt. The Stratus was towed from the scene

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