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## City council discusses empty spot

**By Kayla Cornett**  
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The Colby City Council discussed the position of public works director, which was recently vacated due to the death of Chris Bieker, during its regular meeting Tuesday.

Mayor Gary Adrian said he thinks this is a key position and that the city needs to fill it quickly.

Councilman Dave Voss asked if the council wanted to involve the new city manager in the decision once that person is hired and councilman Tim Hutfles agreed it would be a good idea if they possibly can. However, Hutfles said he was under the impression that there was an assistant public works director and since there technically isn't, it is crucial to find a new director.

Armstrong said Gordon Gilbert, assistant public utilities director, basically handles the utilities side of it and was an assistant to Bieker.

"I think it's a vital position and I think it needs to be filled," Arm-

strong said.

Armstrong said there are several projects that don't have anyone to oversee them right now, including the inspection for the distribution power line project, the installation of about 120 LED street lights and the day-to-day duties of tracking employees.

Adrian mentioned that Armstrong made a good selection when she hired Bieker so he's sure she'll make another good selection.

Hutfles asked if the city has been advertising in other publications and Armstrong said they are advertising the same way they usually do because she is hoping for some good local candidates.

Voss asked what the salary range is for this position and Armstrong said the beginning salary is about \$61,000, but it has to be more than the people the director supervises.

Councilman Pat Mallory said he thinks it would be handy to have this position filled by the time the new city manager is hired so he or she doesn't have to worry about it.

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### Safety first



It was a beautiful day for a ride on Wednesday. Ebony, a black German shepherd belonging to C.W. Hamilton of Levant, enjoyed her ride a the World War II motorcycle sidecar. Hamilton

said it only took one day for Ebony to know that to go riding, she had to wear her goggles for safety.

SHARON FRIEDLANDER/Colby Free Press

## Top officials contest projections

**By John Hanna**  
*Associated Press*

TOPEKA — Top officials in Gov. Sam Brownback's administration objected strongly Wednesday to new projections from the Kansas Legislature's staff showing that tax cuts endorsed by the governor would create a budget shortfall exceeding \$700 million by July 2018.

The Department of Revenue countered the pessimistic forecast from the Kansas Legislative Research Department with two more optimistic sets of projections. The administration's most favorable scenario showed no budget shortfall resulting from the tax cuts

and a surplus of \$138 million by mid-2018.

Lawmakers in both parties want assurances that the tax cuts wouldn't create a shortfall, as critics predict the plan could force cuts to spending on public schools, social services and other programs. The Republican governor and many members of the GOP-controlled Legislature believe cutting taxes will stimulate economic growth without causing budget problems.

The disagreement over projections complicates the debate. Legislators historically have used numbers from their nonpartisan research staff, and its figures have varied widely over the past week. Many backers of the tax plan could be receptive to relying on

the administration's figures instead.

Revenue Secretary Nick Jordan said the administration is confident enough in its methods that it will continue making its own forecasts public — and ask legislators to use them. The administration disagrees with methods used by legislative researchers.

A former state senator, Jordan said the administration isn't criticizing the Legislature's staff, only pointing out an unresolved disagreement over how to make difficult calculations about the effects of the tax cuts.

"Can you project 2018?" Jordan asked reporters during a Statehouse news conference. "There's a lot of time for growth. There's a lot of time for budget adjustments."

## House panel to meet on map

TOPEKA (AP) — A Kansas House committee is expected to hold hearings on a new Senate redistricting plan similar to one that failed to get enough votes from senators.

House Speaker Mike O'Neal said the House Redistricting Committee would hear testimony Friday with the goal of endorsing a plan early next week. The move breaks from legislative tradition where each chamber draws its own political boundaries.

A new Senate map approved by that chamber Wednesday was defeated Thursday in the House over concerns that it diluted minority votes by collapsing two western Kansas districts. That map put Republican Sen. Garrett Love of Montezuma in the same district as Democratic Sen. Allen Schmidt of Hays.

Legislators must redraw political boundaries to account for population changes.



Colby native Wendy Hills, pictured alongside her German shepherd Scout, will be dancing in a local charitable edition of Dancing with the Stars in Kansas City as she raises money to support Operation Breakthrough. The nonprofit supports the most basic needs of underprivileged, inner city children who did not win the parent lottery, said Hills.

## Colby native joins event to raise money for nonprofit

**By Christina Beringer**  
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Wendy Hills, a former resident of Colby, is asking for local help as she "dances with the stars" to raise money for a children's nonprofit organization in Kansas City, Mo.

Hills now lives in Prairie Village and is vice president and associate general counsel for Waddell and Reed in Kansas City, Mo. She is a graduate of the University of Kansas, where she received both her undergraduate degree in architecture and law degree.

Although she did not graduate from Colby High School, she is listed as a 1988 alumna on the website.

"Whenever people ask where I'm from, I always say Colby," said Hills. "And, I come back every five years for reunions, even though I technically graduated from Hays High."

Taking to the streets in Colby on her behalf to raise donations for Operation Breakthrough are Hills' father and step-mother, Doug and Junelle Hills.

"My dad especially has been very excited and supportive and has began actively raising money for Operation Breakthrough in Colby," said Hills. "It was an enlightening experience for him when he was able to visit and tour the place where I volunteered. The kids I represent are very different than kids of the other charities. OB supports about 675 inner city kids on a daily basis through education, transportation and health care.

"Most of the parents are single-working moms who make about \$14,000 a year and we provide support that the families wouldn't otherwise get. It is one of two charities being represented in Dancing with the Stars who are not associated with a religious organization.

"I am an avid supporter of all things Operation

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## Kansas Senate rejects 401(k) proposal

**By John Hanna**  
*Associated Press*

TOPEKA — A proposal for a 401(k)-style retirement plan for new teachers and government workers failed on a tie vote Thursday in the Kansas Senate, but its members later approved other changes designed to bolster the long-term financial health of the state pension system.

Senators' 20-20 vote on the 401(k)-style plan puts them at odds with Republican Gov. Sam Brownback, who favors the idea, and the House, which approved

legislation in March to start an optional 401(k)-style plan for new public employees.

After debating the merits of a 401(k)-style plan, the Senate approved a bill making a less dramatic move away from the state's existing retirement plans. The vote was 32-8, sending the bill to the House....

The Kansas Public Employees Retirement System projects an \$8.3 billion gap between the total revenues it anticipates receiving and the total benefits it has promised to current and future retirees through 2033.

Last year, legislators enacted a law to boost the state's annual payments toward public pensions and require workers to either contribute more of their salaries or accept less generous benefits. But neither Brownback nor the GOP-controlled Legislature believes that the changes are enough to close the long-term KPERS funding shortfall.

