



COLBY FREE PRESS

8 pages

County hears options for jail addition

By Christina Beringer

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County officials are still trying to figure out how to pay for a new Thomas County law enforcement center after a telephone conference on Monday with a lawyer and a financial consultant in Wichita.

Commissioners Ken Christiansen and Paul Steele, Clerk Shelly Harms, Undersheriff Marc Finley, County Attorney Kevin Berens and Brewster Mayor Mike Baughn sat in on the conference and heard suggestions from Kevin Cowan, a bond lawyer from Gilmore and Bell, and Ransom financial consultant John Haas,

as a followup to last week's regular commissioner meeting.

Cowan said that based on details provided by Haas, he believes the proposed construction should be classified as an improvement or addition to an existing facility. The plan involves expanding the existing Law Enforcement Center.

However, after the phone conference, officials again looked at the blueprints created in April 2011 and raised some concerns about the best route to take.

Several ideas have been discussed over the weeks. One possibility is to swap the law enforcement center with the offices in the Thomas County Office Complex on South Range. The county owns a large

tract on Range Avenue that would allow ample space for building expansion, with room for an impound lot. The basement would be ideal for dispatch services, someone said, although the distance between it and the courthouse might be inconvenient.

Another idea is to move law enforcement to the space currently occupied by the county Road and Bridge Department north of the court house. The location would be convenient for transporting criminals to court appointments. However, there was no suggestion where the road department would relocate.

A final option discussed was to expand the current facility to accommodate more

jail cells and office space. However, that might burden the building's plumbing, among other issues, and it could interfere with the impound lot, which would need to be relocated.

"I wish I knew the best answer to this," Steele said, "but I don't. I wish someone would just tell me if we should build new or expand this building."

Commissioners agreed that whatever happens, plans to solve the problem are long overdue.

Based on four financing options proposed by Cowan, the commissioners showed the most interest in creating a Public Building Commission that would be authorized to issue revenue bonds to

finance the project.

The commission would remain in existence for future use, if needed. It would be composed of five members appointed annually by the county commissioners.

The board would work on behalf of the county, Cowan said.

"This doesn't have to be a particularly active group," he said, "but would act as a conduit to facilitate whatever the county wants them to do. They would simply do the things they are requested to do by the county."

The commission would issue, sell and receive the money for bonds as a municipi-

See "COUNTY," Page 2

City decides on process for filling job

By Kayla Cornett

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The Colby City Council, at a special meeting Tuesday, discussed the interview process it wants to use when talking with candidates for city manager.

Marla Flentje of the Austin Peters Group, the firm helping with the city manager search, interviewed council members individually to find out what each thought was important in the interview process. She presented her findings to the group in a special meeting.

Flentje said there was consensus among the council on three points: the candidates will have an interview with the governing body as a whole, they will meet informally with the city management team and solicit that team's advice and the city will provide a meal for the candidates and their spouses, if present.

She said the one thing the members weren't in agreement about was holding a community forum, so she proposed an alternative.

Flentje said the council could ask each finalist to come prepared to give a 10-minute presentation. She said she would develop a scenario for them, and the candidates would give the presentation during

the interview with the council.

"That would enable you to still be able to gauge presentation skills," Flentje said, "but not have it in that forum."

Mayor Gary Adrian and councilman Tim Hutfles said they liked that idea. Hutfles said he likes that because right now, he's having a hard time getting a "feel" for the candidates.

Councilman Phil DeYoung asked if the council should record the presentations the candidates give and post them on the city's website so they would be available to the public, but councilman Mike Hake said the interviews would be during closed sessions, so they can't be recorded.

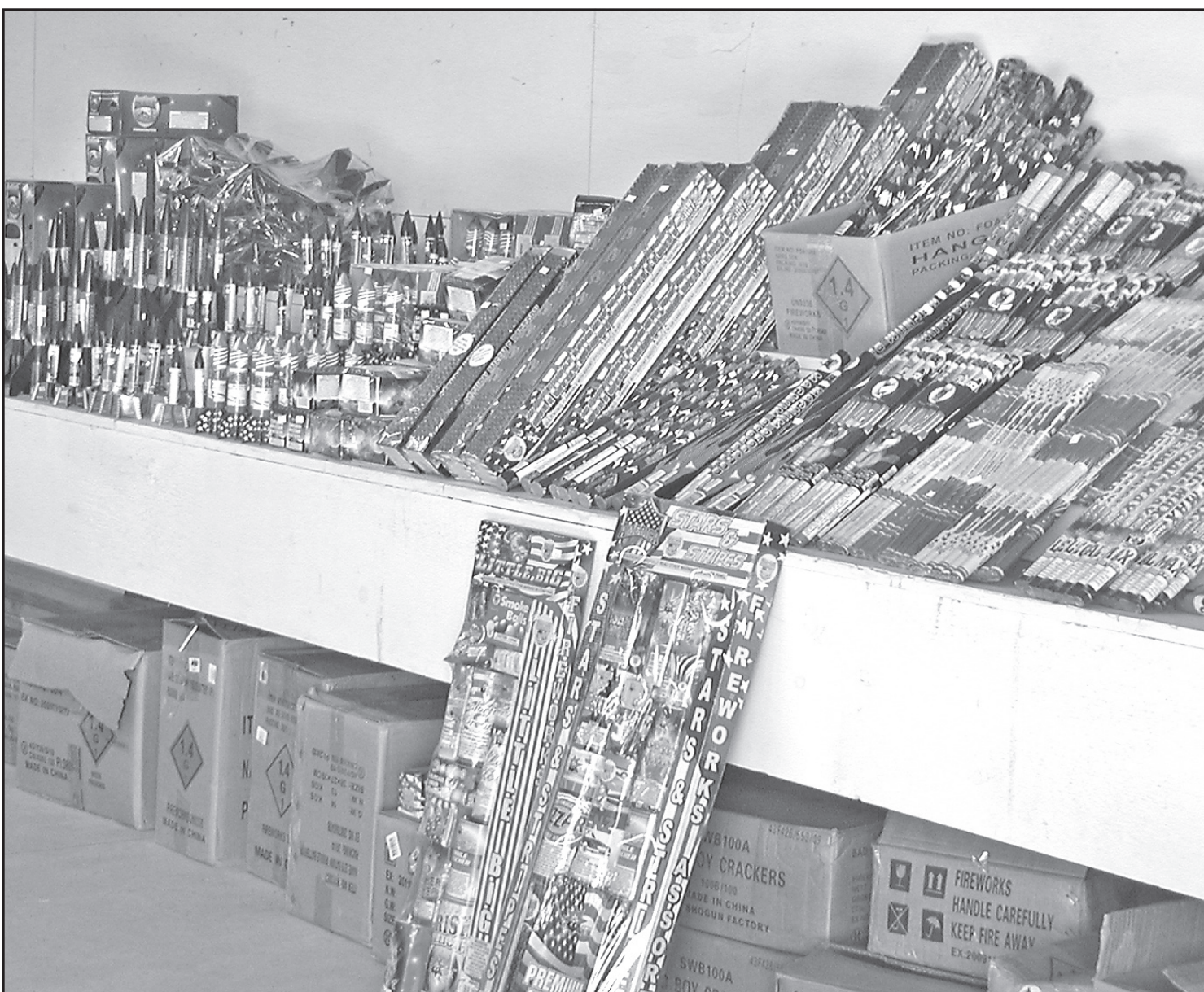
Councilman Pat Mallory said he didn't think that would be necessary because the council members are the only ones making the decision.

Flentje then recommended that once the council extends invitations to candidates for an interview, it should tell them that their names will be made public. She said the candidates should be given at least 48 hours notice, so they can tell whoever they need to tell.

She also suggested sending out a press release spelling out the

See "CITY," Page 2

To burn or not to burn?



KATHRYN BALLARD/Colby Free Press

Stephens Fireworks had its stand filled with a lot of fireworks Thursday despite the possibility of a burn ban remaining in effect for the Fourth of July. The Thomas County commissioners put the ban into effect until Friday, but they will meet that morning and may decide to keep the ban due to continuing high

fire danger. The City Council met at noon today and passed an ordinance to allow the mayor, city manager or fire chief to declare the existence of high fire danger. If the danger is declared, a ban could be issued on discharging fireworks within city limits.

Too hot to handle



MARIAN BALLARD/Colby Free Press

Victor Lopez of Roofmasters installed Pro-Ag Panel roofing Thursday morning at Sixth and Sterling on a job expected to take about three days. As summer heat hunkers down, with at least another week of triple-digit highs in the forecast, and a possible "cool front" expected to bring the high down to 99 on Tuesday, conditions have been especially stressful for workers

such as this. Foreman David Jacobsen said they have been starting work about 6 a.m. to take advantage of the cooler part of the day. "After 3, it gets unbearable," he said, "and we quit about 4." He said that's when the heat seems to build up the most.

High court upholds part of Obamacare

By Mark Sherman

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court today upheld the vast majority of President Barack Obama's historic health care overhaul, including the hotly debated core requirement that virtually all Americans have health insurance.

The 5-4 decision means the huge overhaul, still taking effect, will proceed and pick up momentum over the next several years, affecting the way that countless Americans receive and pay for their personal medical care.

The ruling hands Obama a cam-

See "COURT," Page 2

City approves ordinance to allow fireworks ban

The Colby City Council met for a special meeting at noon and passed an ordinance allowing the mayor, city manager or fire chief to declare the existence of a high fire danger.

Fire Chief Bob McLemore said that if a high fire danger is declared, then a ban would be declared on discharging fireworks within city limits. He said he expects that will happen Friday.

"This year is very dangerous with so many hazards," said McLemore, adding that there are dangers in the high winds, water use and not enough manpower. Firemen have had so many calls here and in other counties, he said, they are spread thin.

He clarified that "poppers" are a novelty item and not considered fireworks since they don't produce an open flame.

When county commissioners meet Friday, they plan to revisit their burn ban. If they ban fireworks, he said, he intends to ask for an exception to give the Colby Kiwanis Club permission to set off its Fourth of July public fireworks show.

Unless something unforeseen happens, McLemore said, the club hopes to go ahead with the free show.



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