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Council OKs \$20.4 million budget

By Sam Dieter

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The Colby City Council approved a \$20.4 million budget for next year in a meeting Tuesday that started out with 30 to 40 minutes of closed-door discussions concerning personnel and attorney-client privilege.

As soon as the meeting started, the

council members and mayor went into a closed session, leaving everyone else outside. After this, the council entered another 10-minute executive session, this time with interim City Manager Randy Jones.

In the open session meeting, the Pioneer Memorial Library and recreation department presented their budget requests for next year.

The library asked about \$3,000 less for 2013 because unencumbered cash

flow from the city has gone down. Director Melanie Wilks stressed that some of the work done on the library had been done through private gifts, not taxes. This includes new carpet and tile which was paid for through a gift from the Maxine Neville Revocable Trust in 2009 and artwork added to the front of the library, which was paid out of the Jean Hutton memorial, established through the Dallas Women's Foundation.

The recreation request was up by about \$3,000, Director Stacy Jasper said, thanks to cash-generating programs within the department. A lot of the money is going for dirt work at the ball fields, she said, including a large lip in field four.

The council considered but then tabled a resolution to approve an increase in salaries for the city's lowest-paid employees, who make \$10.31 an hour, starting next year. Finance Director Deb Zerr said

the budget proposal includes a 3.6 percent cost of living increase for these jobs. The last such increase was in 2011, she said. Council members debated the wisdom of the increase, and the council decided to hold it pending a study of salaries in similar cities.

The council held a brief public hearing before approving the 2013 budget. No

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Colby selected for road project

By Kayla Cornett

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Colby has been selected for one of 35 projects totaling \$11.7 million in overall cost and \$6.3 million in state money from the Kansas Department of Transportation's 2014 city connecting links (KLINK) resurfacing program.

The project will include milling off the old surface and putting down a new layer of asphalt on U.S. 24 (Fourth Street) from 268

feet east of K-25 (Range Avenue) for 1,410 feet east to the concrete pavement. The same work will be done on K-25 from the south city limits to 1,200 feet south of Interstate 70.

Public Works Director Omar Weber said originally, Colby was going to do three projects under the program, one this year, another in 2013 and the last in 2014.

He said the first project, the one set for this year, had been pushed

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Boy gets stuck on moving train

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A Colby youth called police Tuesday morning after he climbed onto a freight train in town and it started moving. He apparently was afraid to jump off, so he used his cell phone to call for help.

The boy, 13, called 911 at 2:55 a.m. Tuesday to report that he got on a train in Colby and couldn't get off. His name was not reported because of his age.

Sheriff's department records clerk Reba Cersovsky said that train was moving slowly when the boy got on.

"Apparently it started to speed up and he freaked and he dialed

911," she said.

The sheriff's office called the Kyle Railroad, but the train got about halfway to Gem before it could be stopped at County Roads U and 25.

The boy was not arrested, just taken back to his parents, Cersovsky said.

"It's an extremely dangerous thing to do, and we try to get the message out," about safety around the tracks, said Tres Meyer, general manager of the railroad in Phillipsburg. Generally, the railroad has trespassers arrested, he added.

Meyer said that the railroad would decide after finishing an investigation whether to have authorities to press charges.

Car-chase driver charged

The driver involved in a chase Thursday that began near Levant and ended in Colby was charged later that day in Logan County District Court with two counts of attempted first-degree murder.

Logan County Attorney Margaret Mahoney said the man, Curtis Christopher Mack, 41, Kansas City, Kan., was being charged in the chase, which went from Colby to Oakley and back.

When he was booked Thursday in Thomas County, the man reportedly would not give his name

or cooperate with deputies on his ID. He had several IDs, officers said. Fingerprints sent to the FBI confirmed his identity later in the day. He is wanted by the U.S. Marshal's Service for violating the terms of a supervised release on drug charges. His name and photo appeared on a "Most Wanted" website in Wyandotte County.

In Thomas County, County Attorney Kevin Berens said today he was reviewing the file and considering filing several felony charges related to the car chase.



Colby students re-enroll

School employees (above) talked to a student enrolling for school Wednesday at Colby High School. Returning students from all grades (left) turned in their paper work at the high school, a change from original plans which had students going to their own school to sign up.

KATHRYN BALLARD
Colby Free Press



SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press

Colby Aquatic Park changes schedule

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The Colby Aquatic Park will be closed weekdays beginning Monday due to a lack of lifeguards.

The original closing date for the pool was Sunday, Aug. 19, with special weekend hours until Labor Day, but with the lifeguard shortage, the pool schedule has changed.

Pool Manager Krisstal Kriss said a few of the lifeguards had to quit due to other commitments.

"We have a few guys that are quitting for sports," she said, "so we were down to about six or seven guards during the weekdays, and we need more than that to open, so we're down to just the weekends."

The high school sports teams begin practices on Monday and she said most of the lifeguards are high-school age. Kriss said some of them are college students, though, and they are still able to work.

The pool will be closed from Monday to next Friday, but will reopen from 1 to 6 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday, Aug. 18 and 19.

It will follow the same schedule for the next two weeks, closing from Monday to Friday, Aug. 20 to 24, and from Monday to Friday, Aug. 27 to 31. The pool will be open from 1 to 6 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, Aug. 25 and 26, and the same hours from Saturday to Monday, Sept. 1 to 3.



A woman with a child floated down the "lazy river" Tuesday afternoon at the Colby Aquatic Park. Warm weather stuck around, with lots of people still using the park with lifeguards headed

back to school and sports practice, the pool will be closed during the week between now and September. The pool closes for good after Labor Day, Monday, Sept. 3.