



City OKs fee increase for business

By Sam Dieter
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The city says its commercial trash pickup routes are losing money, and businesses that leave their trash out will soon be paying fees that in some cases are more than double what they have been.

The Colby City Council voted Tuesday to approved a fee increase for commercial trash pickup starting Friday, March 1, to keep the trash service from losing money. City Finance Director Debbie Zerr told the council this is the first hike since 2006.

Each month, the city will now charge \$20 for picking up trash from two tipper cans, \$30 from a three-yard dumpster and \$50 from

a nine-yard dumpster. Old rates were \$16.50 for two tipper cans, \$15 for a three-yard dumpster and \$20 for a six-yard dumpster.

For a second pickup, the city will charge \$7 for two cans, \$13 for a three-yard dumpster and \$24 for a six-yard dumpster. The city doesn't charge for an extra pickup now, but adds a timing charge of \$1.90 for every minute the city spent picking up a business' trash.

"We felt that this was our fairest way to get our department back in the black and still be fair to our customers," said City Manager Tyson McGreer.

A report he prepared for the council showed the increase would almost double the yearly commer-

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College plans King reception

The public is invited to attend a Martin Luther King Jr. Day reception at Colby Community College from 3:30 to 5 p.m. Monday in the Fireside Lounge in the Student Union.

The event will include speeches by sophomore student Kris Rolle and Dr. W.G. Romine II, senior pastor and chancellor of the Redeeming Love Ministries Training Center in Colby. They will talk about the importance of Dr. King and his impact on today's society.

"We wanted to do something to celebrate diversity on campus," said Charles Keefer, director of residence and campus life. "I know Martin Luther King Jr. means a lot to our students, and this reception is a way to celebrate his accomplishments. I encourage community members and students to get involved in campus events such as this reception."

For information, call Keefer at 460-4680. There is no charge to attend.

Militants say 35 hostages die in Algerian raid

ALGIERS, Algeria (AP) — Algerian forces raided a remote Sahara gas plant today in an attempt to free dozens of foreign hostages held by militants with ties to Mali's rebel Islamists, diplomats said.

Islamic militants claimed that 35 hostages and 15 militants were killed after Algerian military helicopters strafed the

area but said seven hostages survived.

Islamists with the Masked Brigade, who have been speaking through a Mauritanian news outlet, said the Algerians opened fire as the militants tried to leave the vast Ain Amenas energy complex with their hostages a day after seizing the installation deep in the desert.

Algerian forces had surrounded the complex in a tense standoff since the plant was seized early Wednesday and had vowed not to negotiate with the kidnappers, who reportedly were seeking safe passage.

President Barack Obama offered military assistance Wednesday to help rescue

the hostages, but the Algerian government refused, a U.S. official said in Washington. He spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak publicly about the offer.

Information about the 41 foreign hostages the militants claimed to have — including seven Americans — was scarce

and conflicting. All were reportedly workers at the remote plant.

The spokesman for the Masked Brigade said today the surviving hostages included three Belgians, two Americans, a Briton and a Japanese citizen. The infor-

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Hospital here receives grant

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Citizens Medical Center of Colby has received a \$157,000 grant from the Dane G. Hansen Foundation of Logan to buy general surgical equipment — just in time for the arrival of a full-time surgeon this summer.

The hospital plans to enhance its surgical suites and update equipment, adding laparoscopic equipment and a new surgical table. Citizens Medical Center Inc. is in the middle of a \$1.9 million campaign to expand its clinic, Family Center for Health Care, and add full-time general and emergency surgery services.

"Citizens Medical Center is not on the public tax rolls, so it is easy to see why our current campaign is so important," said Sue Evans, campaign co-chair. "The Citizens Foundation ended 2012 with \$1.4 million in cash and pledges and with the award from the Dane G. Hansen Foundation, we are now at \$1.6 million in a

year's time.

"The impact Citizens has on our region is significant. As we continue to recruit medical providers and their support staff, growth is the dominant theme in our future."

In addition to the laparoscopic equipment and table, the Hansen money will be used to buy vital sign monitors, a ventilator and a defibrillator for one of two surgical suites. The hospital will offer full-time as well as emergency surgeries to the nine-county area.

"When I spoke with one of the trustees at the Dane G. Hansen Foundation," said Tama Unger, director of fund development and community relations for the hospital, "she said the board felt the addition of general surgery in Colby had a true impact on the northwest Kansas region, and the future of its citizens' access to care. We are very thankful for their support."

"There are so many ways to

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Woman discusses new book

Nancy Larsen-Sanders (left) spoke at a meeting Monday night for the Colby High Plains Lions Club about her recently-written historical fiction books, including "The Mourning Dove's Message" and "All Stubborne Up." Larsen-Sanders (below, from left) chatted with Sheryl Brenn, district governor for the Lion's Club, and her husband John during the meeting at Colby Community College.

SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press



TAMA UNGER/Citizens Medical Center
Serenity Tech, a surgical technologist at Citizens Medical Center, stood Tuesday in front of a surgical table that will be replaced with money from the Dane G. Hansen Foundation. The hospital received \$157,000 from the foundation to buy surgical equipment.

Lawmakers hear more on selection

TOPEKA (AP) — Supporters of the way Kansas puts judges on its highest courts hope to persuade legislators to drop a proposal for giving the Legislature a role in the process, while the Supreme Court is asking legislators for \$17 million a year more in state money.

House and Senate committees planned to hear testimony this morning against changing the Kansas Constitution to give the governor and legislators more power over appointments to the state Supreme Court and Court of Appeals.

Backers of the current system of having applicants screened by a nominating commission say it eliminates politics. The commission picks three finalists for each opening and the governor makes the appointment, with no role for legislators.

The proposed change would still have the governor make the appointments, but they would be subject to confirmation by the state Senate.

The constitutional amendment would go before voters if it clears the Legislature.

Meantime, the high court says it would end emergency surcharges people pay to file lawsuits and get marriage licenses if legislators to will put more state tax dollars into the court system.

The judicial branch is proposing a 16 percent increase in the tax money it receives for the fiscal year beginning July 1.

The increase would be about \$17 million, to \$123 million from the current \$106 million. The Supreme Court administers the court system.

The increase would allow the courts to eliminate \$11 million in extra fees.

The judiciary's total budget would be about \$135 million, an increase of \$3 million, or a relatively modest 2.1 percent.

Gov. Sam Brownback is required by law to include the proposals in his budget recommendations.

