



Commissioners hear auditor's report

By Heather Alwin
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It's budget season in Thomas County, with local governments, including the county, tabulating 2012 audit numbers and projecting 2014 income and expenses.

The Thomas County Commissioners began their Wednesday meeting with an

audit report from Kalyn Ritter and Michelle Spence of the accounting firm Adams, Brown, Beran and Ball.

Ritter reported the county had no violations of Kansas' cash basis law since there were no negatives found in any funds.

The county had approximately \$932,000 in debt in 2012, Ritter said, and she recommended the county keep at least three to six months of operating expenses in reserve. Currently, the county

can cover about three months' worth of expenses.

Ritter found a few budget violations in her audit, but the violations were minor and have been fixed, she said.

Spence said the audit discovered encumbrances were not properly recorded at year end, so she recommended that department heads should report encumbrances to the county clerk so they can be properly recorded before the end of each

year. County Clerk Shelly Harms asked Spence to provide training to department heads on how to report encumbrances, which Spence agreed to do.

Spence also noted a lack of internal controls in the county's accounting system but said it would not be cost effective to hire enough people to provide those controls.

She said she recommended small changes in the health department, sher-

iff's office and county attorney's office, primarily for keeping receipts and frequently reconciling those receipts and ledgers.

Later in the meeting, the commissioners turned their attention to the 2014 budget, which they spent several days polishing at the end of last month.

The proposed budget totals \$7,579,056.

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'Explainer' to speak at college

Michael Wesch, a cultural anthropologist dubbed "the explainer" by Wired Magazine, will speak at 9:30 a.m. Thursday, Aug. 15, in the Cultural Arts Center at Colby Community College.

The public is invited to attend the talk exploring the effects of new media on society and culture, part of annual in-service activities at the college.

Wesch, a native of Fairbury, Neb., is an award-winning teacher active in the development of innovative teaching techniques.

After studying the effects of writing on remote indigenous cultures of Papua, New Guinea, he turned his attention to the effects of social media and digital technology on global society.

His videos, which discuss culture, technology, education and information, have been translated into more than 20 languages and have been viewed over 20 million times. Wesch's work has been featured at international film festivals and major academic conferences.



Michael Wesch

Wesch is an associate professor of cultural anthropology at Kansas State University. He holds an undergraduate degree from Kansas State University and a Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Virginia.

For information about the event, contact Chriss Ellison at 460-4728.

County weighs expenditures

By Heather Alwin
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The Thomas County Commissioners wrestled with decisions on how to get the best bang for their buck, or county tax dollars, at their meeting Wednesday.

They approved expenditures for a postage meter, skid steer loader, mini-split unit and a software agreement, but postponed a decision about purchasing new water fountains for the county courthouse.

County Treasurer Donita Applebury, Deputy Treasurer Layn Bruggeman and County Clerk Shelly Harms spoke up in favor of a new Pitney Bowes postage meter contract which the commissioners expect will cost the county about \$870 more over the five-year lease period than a comparable lease from Hasler Inc.

The three expressed concerns with Hasler's Nebraska-based office, listing problems they had with the company in the past. In comparison, Applebury said, the Pitney Bowes machine is easier to operate. The company also provides quicker service, based in Hays and Garden City, when the machine has problems.

"I know Hasler is a little bit cheaper," said Applebury, "but the service with Pitney Bowes is better."

After much discussion and comparison of each company's proposal, the commissioners approved the Pitney Bowes contract as the best option, though not the lowest price, for the county's needs.

their approval for Clair Schrock, the county's road and bridge supervisor, to purchase a new Bobcat skid steer loader under a special arrangement that allows the county to trade in its one-year-old machine for a new machine at a cost of \$2,900. The county can do this same deal every year as long as they do not use more than 500 hours per year.

"To me, it's worth the \$2,900 to keep the update going and keep the warranty if we need it," said Schrock. The warranty on the county's current skid steer will expire at the end of one year.

The commissioners also approved a new mini-split heating and air conditioning unit for the extension office at the Thomas County Office Complex at a cost of \$1,600.

Bids were submitted from McKee, CB Heating and Air Conditioning and Griffin Plumbing, ranging from \$1,500 to over \$3,000.

The two lowest bids were from McKee: \$1,500 for a 9,000 BTU unit and \$1,600 for a 12,000 BTU unit. The commissioners decided to purchase the \$1,600 unit since it cost just \$100 more for the 3,000 BTU additional capacity.

After Assistant County Attorney Craig Lowe reviewed the contract, the commissioners chose to purchase ongoing software licensing and support from Computer Information Concepts. The \$26,510 agreement is an annual renewal for the software that most county offices use.

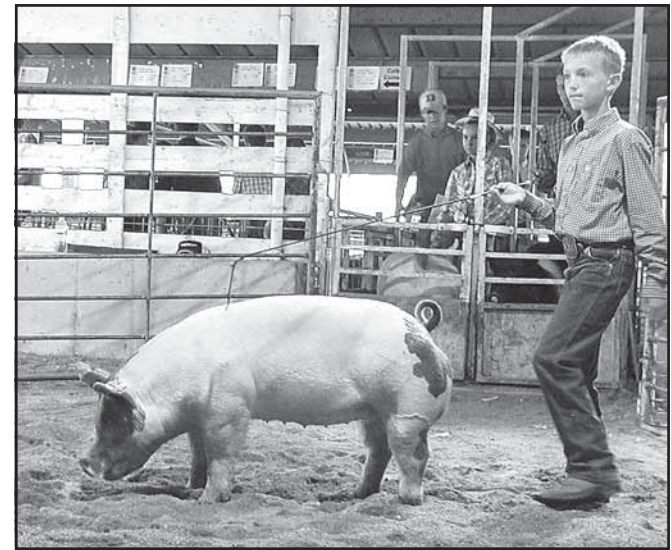
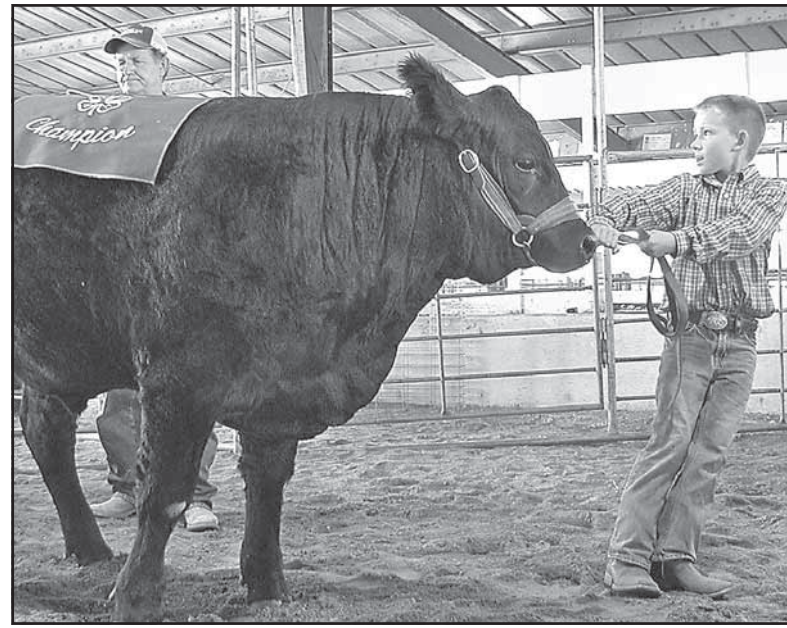
The commissioners also considered whether to purchase new va-

Livestock entries pay off



Having her arm in a cast did not stop Kourtney Finley from showing her lamb (right) at the livestock sale at the Thomas County Fair. Weston Schmidt (below right) showed his grand champion pig, which brought in \$1,140. His brother Michael raised the reserve champion animal. The sale started with Hunter Vaughn showing his champion yearling bucket calf (below) which sold for \$3,276.

SAM DIETER
Colby Free Press



Former lawman gets life term

KINGMAN (AP) - Unrepentant and unapologetic, a former Kansas police instructor was sentenced Monday to life in prison for the April 2011 shooting death of his wife.

Minutes before Brett Seacat was sentenced, he delivered a courtroom rant accusing the judge of helping to convict him by hiding evidence that proves his innocence.

Accusations of family abuse, multiple suicide attempts, and life insurance payouts - all kept out of the murder trial - got an airing at the sentencing in the high-profile case.

Seacat was convicted in June of shooting 34-year-old Vashti Seacat days after she filed for divorce, then setting fire to their house to cover evidence. Investigators found her charred body

in the Kingman home where the couple lived with their two sons, ages 2 and 4. Seacat, a former instructor at the Kansas Law Enforcement Training Center in Reno County and former Sedgwick County deputy, escaped with the boys.

Prosecutors at his trial portrayed Seacat as a manipulative man who used his law enforcement background to make it look

like his wife shot herself. The defense argued it was suicide, noting even an experienced coroner couldn't decide whether the death was suicide or homicide.

At his sentencing, the 37-year-old Kingman man accused King-

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