



Suspect arraigned at hearing

By Heather Alwin
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After hearing evidence presented at a preliminary hearing Monday, Magistrate Judge Richard Ress concluded there was enough evidence to hold William "Billy" Shank for trial. He is charged with first-degree murder, aggravated arson and aggravated burglary in the death of Colby resident Teri Luann Morris.

At arraignment, held shortly after Ress' decision, Shank pled not guilty to all three charges.

Morris died on Feb. 9, 2013. She was stabbed 27 times, according to the coroner's report, and suffered blunt force trauma around the time of her death.

Her body was discovered in the fire that burned the home she shared with her boyfriend, Russell Rodenbeck, and her 8-month-old daughter Addilyn "Addy" Shank. Addy's father is the defendant in this case.

Smoke inside Morris' mouth and nose indicates she was still alive when the house caught fire, said Assistant Attorney General Jessica Domme, a specialist in domestic violence prosecutions.

Domme and Assistant Attorney General Nicole Romine called four witnesses at the preliminary hearing.

Shank sat calmly through the testimony, dressed in a dark suit, taking notes on a legal pad in front of him.

Rodenbeck was first to testify, dressed in khakis and a plaid shirt.

He said he met Morris in September 2012 and the couple began dating shortly after. By December, they were living together, with Addy, at Rodenbeck's house on Chickamauga Avenue in Colby.

Rodenbeck said two of Morris' tires were flat the day before the murder, and he had helped her fill them with an air compressor borrowed from Colby Glass where he worked part time. That night, Morris filed a complaint with the Colby Police Department about the flattened tires, Rodenbeck said.

The couple went to dinner at Rodenbeck's parents' house, he said, then returned home, put Addy to sleep and watched part of a movie before going to bed.

Just before 6 a.m. the next morning, Rodenbeck went to work at the Thomas County Emergency Medical Services station as scheduled, he said, leaving Morris in bed at home.

At 7:01, Rodenbeck said he received a call from the dispatch center.

"She said she had a report that my house was on fire," he said.

He said he hurried home to discover fire department and law enforcement officers working in the yard of his burning home.

"I could see that the south bedroom window of the master bedroom had been broken out and there were flames in the window," he said.

He tried calling Morris on her phone, thinking she may have

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Gun lobbyist to give lecture

Former gun lobbyist Richard Feldman will speak at 7 p.m. Tuesday, Sept. 10, at the Northwest Kansas Cultural Arts Center on the southeast corner of the Colby Community College campus as part of the Dr. Max Pickerill lecture series.



R. Feldman

Feldman is the author of "Ricochet: Confessions of a Gun Lobbyist," a critical look at the inner workings of the National Rifle Association. At one time, the author was a regional political director for the organization.

He is also a former spokesman and lobbyist for the American

Shooting Sports Council, and a White House policy advisor and political campaign consultant.

He has appeared on television and radio news programs and featured in the documentary film "Gun Fight."

Feldman says he remains a staunch advocate for Second Amendment rights and believes these rights and responsibilities benefit all of society regardless of a person's ideological beliefs.

The lecture is free, as the Pickerill series is financed by anonymous donors.

In other business, the board:

\$10,824,620 and took in \$3,093,827 in taxes. The district budgeted for 47.594 mills last year, but the actual levy worked out to 46.882.

The final tax levy is figured after all valuations for the year are set around November. District Business Manager Jo DeYoung pointed out that the estimated valuation for the general fund is \$66,876,950, about a 7 percent jump from last year. The valuation is \$72,358,373 for all other funds this year, a 6.5 percent increase. In 2012, it was \$62,414,893 for the general fund and \$67,880,785 for all other funds.

The board voted to raise the levy in the district's capital outlay fund earlier this year to help pay for energy-saving improvements at district buildings. The project started this year, focusing mainly on the heating and cooling systems at the middle school.

• Approved the school's five-year capital outlay plan, which includes projects that the district might budget for each year. Harrison said the plan includes the 7 mills the board put in this year's budget to pay for the energy-saving upgrades. Board members spoke briefly about future projects they would like to see.

The plan includes a three-year contract with computer system provider ADP Lightspeed in 2014. It also includes work on the high school floors and elementary school classrooms, and a total of 49 Mac Mini computers and for kids to use in the classrooms.

Projects for 2015 include an overlay of the high school parking lot and new vehicles. A new car would be bought in 2016, several new vehicles in 2017 and in 2018, the district is looking at replacing the roof on the high school.

• Approved a change order on the building upgrade project for 32 air dampers.

Harrison said they existing dampers are so old that they stopped working when contractors started working on them, and that there had been no way to know that before the work started. She said 360 Energy Engineers, the firm that helped set up the project, is picking up \$6,700 of the \$26,700 extra cost.

• Took a tour of the district buildings, which allowed the members to get a closer look at the energy-oriented upgrades. The tour started in the grade school, where Principal Lance Krannawitter showed the board new motion detectors that turn lights on when people walk into a room. The floor in the school gym had its first refinishing in several years, he said.

"They'll be able to call traveling this year," board member Brice Barton joked. Middle school Principal Robb Ross pointed out the automatic lights in his building, along with new heating in the middle school gym, which sends

warm air across the floor.

A large statue of an eagle has been installed in front of the high school, paid for by boosters, and put in place by Commercial Sign. When the board members stepped inside, the high school smelled like fresh paint because the walls were being re-painted, black and orange.

The Booster Club had an awning built over the gym entrance, Principal Jeff Wallingford said. A sign reading "gym" will go up soon for the benefit of people here for sports competitions, along with another iron eagle on the wall of the school with the help of Lana Johnson, one of the donors for the statue.

New banners were put up on the school walls. The board members inspected

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Brewster parties for 125th

Fred Juenemann (above) helped Emily Stramel drop a dried ear of corn into his corn shelling machine while her brother Nathan and sister Anna waited their turns at Brewster's 125th anniversary celebration last weekend. Near the Brewster Senior Center, Zelma Kinkade (left, at right) and Betty Jo Baird dished up chili samples to the crowd as part of the celebration's chili cookoff. Tasters voted for their favorite chili, and the cookoff winner was Erma Palmgren of Brewster. Partygoers came from all over northwest Kansas to participate in kid's activities, crafts, the cookoff, buffalo bingo, a parade, a street dance, a talent show and a car, motorcycle and tractor show (below right). Emmeline Hutton (below) took a dive in the dunk tank, set up behind Farmers State Bank. Her brother, Eli, and friends took turns throwing a ball at the target while she sat in the booth.



School budget increases; levy up only slightly

By Sam Dieter
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The Colby School Board approved a budget for the coming year at its meeting Monday after a brief public hearing where no one appeared to comment.

The board talked about the \$11,466,156 budget at its last meeting, and that amount was published in the Colby Free Press July 31. The district plans to raise \$3,344,954 from property taxes this year with a levy of 47.743 mills, up less than a mill from last year.

The planned tax revenue is up about 8 percent from what the district took in last year, but the levy should increase only about 1.8 percent, in part because the district's valuation has gone up.

Last year's budget was \$10,842,965, of which \$3,063,156 was to come out of taxes. The district ended up spending