



Computer price quotes encouraged

By Heather Alwin
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The sheriff's office is inching its way toward getting a new computer server and work stations, but the issue has created some tense exchanges between Thomas County Commissioner Paul Steele and county employees.

At the commissioners' Aug. 30 meeting, Undersheriff Marc Finley had given the board an estimate from Ntronic Inc., a Colby information technology company, to fix the sheriff's department's aging computer system by installing a new server and computers.

Steele had balked at the idea of awarding the repair contract without getting bids from other companies. Finley said he did not know enough about computers to ask other companies for bids and reminded the commissioners that the department relies on its computer system. Steele had also questioned the

department's spending and budget planning since the computer replacement had not been included in the department's 2013 or 2014 budget requests.

At the commissioners' Monday meeting, Finley handed a written statement to all three commissioners calling the computer problem an "unforeseen expense" and questioning Steele's recent e-mail to a Dell.com customer service agent.

Regarding the need for a server, Finley wrote, "The server for our system is almost to capacity.... It is not an option to do nothing."

He cited security protocols required by the state and federal governments along with the department's "critical" need for the computers in day-to-day operations.

"The estimate (I obtained) was a baseline on how much fixing this problem could potentially cost. At no time did I say or believe that this would be the only estimate or

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Band concert moved by rain

In a notice received late this morning, the *Colby Free Press* has learned that the Pan Jumbies steel drum band, scheduled to play here at 3 p.m. Sunday, will be performing in the Cultural Arts Center at Colby Community College.

The change, from the Colby High School Auditorium, was made necessary because of

leaks due to the heavy rains this week, according to Amie Kendrick, publicist for the Western Plains Arts Association.

Superintendent Terrel Harrison said staff have dehumidifiers drying the carpet, but they do not know when it will dry out entirely, and the roof will have to be repaired after that.

Court offices won't move

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At their Monday meeting, the Thomas County Commissioners reversed part of a previous decision to move some offices within the courthouse.

Earlier this month, the commissioners had rearranged the offices of the county attorney, court services and community corrections, all offices that work with the criminal justice system.

But the commissioners had not ensured the court services and community corrections offices were aware of the proposed moves before the changes were made.

"The initial request we had was from the county attorney to relocate his office out of the courthouse," Commissioner Mike Baughn said. "We should have been more cognizant of people and got everybody in the loop."

The commissioners heard suggestions from personnel in the court services and community corrections offices, along with the suggestions of District Judge

Glen Schiffner, before officially rescinding their prior relocation decision.

Kathy Russell, the court services supervisor, said it would be costly to relocate the court services office to the basement of the courthouse into the county attorney's old office as originally ordered by the commissioners.

Putting a female officer by herself downstairs at the far corner of the building creates a safety issue, she said. If the office is moved downstairs, she wants a security system installed and hooked directly to monitors in the sheriff's office, she said.

After discussion with the entire group, the commissioners agreed to relocate the county attorney's office downtown at a cost of \$1,000 per month but tabled office reassignment for court services and community corrections.

No date was set for the tabled relocation discussion.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Approved a contract with Hinkle Termite and Pest Control LLC for quarterly pest control at the county-owned buildings. The company's bid was \$280 per quarter, the lowest of three bids

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SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press

Water crept close to the pavilion at Villa High Pond (above) this morning after heavy rains hit Colby for several days. The water rose several feet from the pond's normal level, seen at the Colby Community College fishing derby in May (below), where a drain pipe can be seen exposed at the edge of the pond. By today, rain had fallen to the point that standing water was backed up in the ditches that normally drain through the pipes (bottom).

Rain takes over

Heavy rains have moved into the western part of Kansas, ending a heat wave and raising concerns of flooding.

After light showers Tuesday night, rain began falling Wednesday afternoon and throughout the day Thursday. There has been no flooding in Colby, but a small part of Interstate 70 has been closed off.

Measurements of rain varied widely within a short distance. By this morning, the Goodland station of the National Weather Service had measurements of 3.75 inches of rain in Brewster over about the last 24 hours, 3.24 inches four miles to the west and 3.87 inches in Levant. Measurements in Colby have ranged from 2.48 to 2.86 inches, according to the Weather Service.

One of the measurements sent to the weather station comes from the Northwest Kansas Research and Extension Center, which measured 2.61 inches this morning and .58 inches Thursday. Another .39 inches of rain was measured there between 8 and 11 a.m. today. That comes to 3.58 inches since 8 a.m. Wednesday, and 4.52 inches for both August and September so far.

"It can be raining on one side of the street and not the other," said Vicki Brown, an administrative assistant at the extension.

The KXXX radio station here, which measured 4.63 inches since the rain started, said less rain seemed to fall farther north. From the last two days, the radio station got reports of 3.8 inches south of Page City, 1.25 in Selden, 2.05 southwest of Oberlin, three in Quinter, 2.40 southwest of Beardsley, and 4.35 in Dighton.

The station heard that six inches had fallen at the weather station. And the station itself reported a total of five to six inches over the last two days in the area, including between Goodland and Burlington, Colo. Another one or two inches were possible this afternoon.

Citing the rain, the weather service issued several flood warnings today. The first was issued at 4:34 a.m. in all or parts of Thomas, Cheyenne, Logan, Rawlins, Sherman and Wallace counties, and Kit Carson, Yuma and Cheyenne counties in Colorado, until 1:30 p.m. Runoff from rain showers could flood small streams, nearby farmland and county roads, the weather service said.



Jesse Lundquist, a meteorologist at the station, cancelled the warning at 10:08 a.m., but said at about noon that he was considering re-issuing it for southern Sherman and northern Wallace counties. Shortly afterward at 12:05, another warning was issued for Sherman county until 6 p.m.

A broken drainage pipe and recent heavy rains have prompted the Kansas Department of Transportation to close the eastbound lanes of Interstate 70 between exit 9 and exit 12 by Caruso. Public Affairs Manager Kristen Brands said the traffic, which passes

through a construction zone, is being routed onto old U.S. 24 until the pipe is fixed. She could not say when that will be.

The weather service expects a chance of either showers or thunderstorms all weekend through Monday night.

Public Works Director Omar Weber said that the rain that is falling here is draining fast enough that there are no hazards in town.

"You know it's coming slow enough that everything's flowing," Weber said. "We've got places that don't drain as quick as others, but that's normal."

