



County asks about severance tax

By Sam Dieter
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County Commission Chairman Paul Steele called a representative of the Kansas Legislative Policy Group during a meeting Monday to ask about progress on getting severance tax money on oil and gas production the state reportedly owes Thomas and other counties.

Pinegar said later he was talking with legislators from across the state, asking

them to help the counties get the money back.

Steele said that the state owes severance tax to counties for which funds have been set up to offset declining oil and gas revenues, including \$39,416 to Thomas County. At the last meeting, Steele had estimated that the state had shorted the county about \$28,000.

Although Pinegar stressed that no lawsuit had been filed yet, Steele said Thursday he dropped off a copy of a check the county got from the state to attorney John

Frieden. He said the county has until the end of the month to file a petition to get the money back.

Doug Smith, another representative of the policy group, said the state is proposing to transfer \$7,127,722 to the counties through severance-tax trust funds, but the policy group wants more than twice that, a total of \$14,742,501.

In 2006, Smith said, the state set up Oil and Gas Valuation Depletion Trust Fund for each county in the state to help the counties deal with declining oil and gas

revenues. A baseline valuation for oil and gas was set, and if a county's valuation drops below half that level for at least two years then that county can draw up to 20 percent from its trust fund.

Valuations have dropped in Logan and Gove counties, Steele said, but not in Thomas County yet. He said the state owes the county money because of the way it distributed tax into the reserve account and then into its own coffers.

The policy group's website said the group represents 30 Kansas counties, al-

most all of them in the far west.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Went into closed session for 10 minutes at the end of the meeting to discuss non-elected personnel, but took no action after the session.

- Heard from Steele, who said the commission should talk about the budget after the county learns how much sales tax was collected for October, because he expects the county to collect more than expected.

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Colby woke up to some wet snow this morning (top), though on Thursday grain trucks were lined up to deliver corn to the Hi-Plains elevator here (right). October temperatures have been warm enough that the cold blanket came as something of a shock to both trees that have barely begun to turn color and blooms like this gaillardia (above) caught peeking out of its cover this morning.

SAM DIETER and EVAN BARNUM/Colby Free Press



Wet snow brings moisture

Colby had its first snow of the year Thursday night, although you would not be able to tell now.

People woke up to snow this morning, with gray skies overhead. It was almost entirely gone by noon, although snow was seen weighing down tree limbs earlier in the day.

The K-State Research and Extension Center reported 2.5 inches of snow in Colby. The Goodland station of the National Weather Service reported four inches of snow fell here. Other measurements include 2.5 inches in Oakley, three inches in Hoxie, two inches in Atwood and six inches in northeast Sherman County.

The Research Center recorded over a quarter of an inch of moisture for the snowfall.

All the storm clouds on the High Plains seem to be east of us for the time being. The weather service predicts partly cloudy skies until Tuesday. Nighttime temperatures should dip to the low 30s.

Shutdown affected us in many ways

Don Babwin
Associated Press

CHICAGO — Our food was a little less safe, our workplaces a little more dangerous. The risk of getting sick was a bit higher, our kids' homework tougher to complete.

The federal government shutdown may have seemed like a frustrating squabble in far-off Washington, but it crept into our lives in small, subtle ways — from missed vegetable inspections to inaccessible federal websites.

The "feds" always are there in the background, setting the standards by which we live, providing funds to research cures for our kids' illnesses, watching over our food supply and work environment.

So how did the shutdown alter our daily routines? Here's a look at a day in the life of the 2013 government shutdown.

Waking Up

That sausage patty on your breakfast plate was as safe as ever because meat inspectors — like FBI agents — are considered "essential" and remained at work. But federal workers who inspect just about everything else on your plate — from fresh berries to scrambled eggs — were furloughed.

The Food and Drug Administration, which in fiscal year 2012 conducted more than 21,000 inspections or contracted state agencies to conduct them, put off scores of other inspections at processing plants, dairies and other large food facilities. In all, 976 of the FDA's 1,602 inspectors were sent home.

About 200 planned inspections a week were put off, in addition to more than 8,700 inspections the federal government contracts state officials to perform, according to FDA spokesman Steven Immergut. That included unexpected inspections that keep food processors on their toes.

It worried Yadira Avila, a 34-year-old mother of two buying fruit and vegetables at a Chicago market.

"It's crazy because they (the FDA) sometimes find the bacteria," she said.

The FDA also stopped doing follow-ups on problems it previously detected at, for example, a seafood importer near Los Angeles and a dairy farm in Colorado.

And what about the food that made it to your plate? The federal Centers for Disease Control

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Funds sought for tech schools

TOPEKA (AP) — State education officials are offering two plans for Kansas legislators to consider that would increase state funding for career and technical education programs.

The plans, depending on which formula legislators adopt, would increase education spending for the state's 286 school districts by between \$9 million and \$12 million.

The Lawrence Journal-World

reports (bit.ly/H0uoFJ) that Deputy Education Commissioner Dale Dennis said Tuesday that the figures were determined after surveying all districts about the costs of providing the classes.

Legislators asked education officials in 2011 to come up with a funding mechanism for the programs that recognizes that some courses are more expensive

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Statistics slow to be caught up

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Agriculture said Thursday that the National Agricultural Statistics Service and World Agricultural Outlook Board have cancelled publication of several statistical reports due during the partial government shutdown.

The Crop Production and Cotton Ginnings reports and World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates scheduled for last Friday have been canceled. The next scheduled

release for these reports is Friday, Nov. 8.

Crop Progress reports for Oct. 7 and 15 have been cancelled, along with Cattle on Feed and Peanut Prices reports scheduled for today.

While the agencies are back to work, the service says it has not been able to complete data collection and analysis for these reports. Officials are evaluating the timing of upcoming reports as well.



Dr. Sam Funk

Optometrist joins practice

A new optometrist has joined Dr. Larry Washburn's Colby office.

Dr. Sam Funk said he has been working with Washburn at the office for about six weeks. He came here shortly after graduating from the Arizona College of Optometry in August.

"I was done on Wednesday," he said, "and I was here by Monday."

He had been talking with Washburn for about 2 1/2 years about working here while going to the school in Glendale, Ariz. His wife Chelsea recently got a job as an assistant volleyball coach at Colby Community College, he said, and the couple wants to settle down in western Kansas, where both are

from.

Funk said he has not created an official partnership with Washburn.

"I'm going to stay in Colby here for hopefully the rest of my life," he added.

Funk said one thing that got him interested in optometry is that his older brother has an eye problem. He said he shadowed an optometrist as a boy considering the profession, and has wanted to become one since he was in seventh grade.

Washburn said he plans on staying in the clinic here for a long time.

"He care about his patients a lot," Funk said of Dr. Washburn, "and he plans on turning them over to someone he knows and trusts."

Raised on a farm just northwest of Garden City, where his father and grandfather still work, Funk graduated from Holcomb High School in 2004. Then he earned a bachelor's degree in human biology from the University of Kansas in 2008.

In 2010, he married Chelsea Cox, a native of Norton who graduated from high school there in 2006. She earned a bachelor's degree in Spanish and a master's degree in second language acquisition in 2011, both from Kansas State University.

