



COLBY FREE PRESS

Recreation director updates city council on year's activities

By **PATTY DECKER**
Free Press Editor

The Colby Recreation Commission continues to improve on its programs, according to information given at Tuesday night's city council meeting.

C.W. Cheney, director, presented his annual report highlighting the commission's activities, along with new programs added this year.

"Our newest additions include a men's basketball league, yoga, and junior tumbling," he said.

The current spring programs offered are Taekwondo, baseball and softball camps, finger painting, playdough, fundamentals of golf, Little Cagers, Little Dribblers, water aerobics, kick boxing and 8-ball tournaments.

In the summer, the commission's activities include baseball, softball, coed softball, men's softball, a baseball camp, tennis, arts and crafts, swimming lessons, summer basketball leagues, Brian Ostermann's shooting camp, Mid-America Youth Basketball Tournament, introduction to Spanish and volleyball camp.

During the fall, activities are Christmas arts and crafts, fundamentals of volleyball, junior cheerleading, youth basketball league, fundamentals of basketball, Brian Ostermann's shooting camp, racquetball, flag football, Halloween pumpkin carving, hunter education class, and youth outdoor skills day.

"We also have available a spring, summer and fall brochure that gives details on each of the activities," Cheney said.

Along with the regular activities, the recreation commission plans to host a regional 14 & under Class B baseball tournament this summer with 25 teams coming to Colby, and the Mid-America Youth Basketball tournament is expected to bring some 80 teams.

"The youth basketball tournament will require all five Colby gyms, two in Brewster and one in Rexford this year," he said. "Last year's tournament saw 180 basketball games played in two days."

Colby Mayor Warren Hixson commended Cheney and his staff on their good work.

"The recreation department has a whole range of programs for a variety of interests and we appreciate what you have done," he told Cheney.

In other council business:

- The council approved a request from Colby Jaycees for a beer garden during the Jimmy Dee dance on Satur-

day, April 6, from 8 p.m. to midnight.

- Approval was granted for a new daycare home occupation permit for Michelle Schlegel, 480 N. Riddle.

- The idea of providing utility customers with the option of using a credit card to pay their bill with the city was rejected. Colby City Manager Carolyn Armstrong said the idea of using a credit card for payments was brought to the city personnel's attention with the new software for billing utilities. Armstrong said the costs to offer this service would include the purchase of a credit card machine, initial application fee, monthly charge for account statement and transaction charges. "It's an option," she said. After asking council members for input, it was decided they weren't interested in using credit card payments.

- For informational purposes only, Armstrong said the city has provided information on Fourth Street and Country Club Drive that could qualify for federal-aid safety funding.

"The basic criteria is an intersection with many accidents and traffic counts for that intersection," Armstrong said. "We had 13 accidents at Fourth and Country Club during the period of January 2000 through December 2001," she said. No action is required by the council at this point, she said.

- Armstrong said the city has been having a difficult time getting a highway access permit for Horton Avenue, located south of Comfort Inn. Armstrong said plans to have a reverse curve are being discussed and officials from the Kansas Department of Transportation will be at that site on Monday to discuss this option.

- Regarding curb and gutter at Horton Avenue, Armstrong said negotiations are continuing for the highway access permit.

- Armstrong spoke briefly about the Interstate-70 detour and the Kansas Department of Transportation's decision not to run it through the city. Chriss McDiffett in Norton did say that should the patch of road now being used for the detour fall apart, it could require traffic being detoured through Colby for two or three days while fixing that area.

McDiffett guaranteed his office would keep citizens posted.

- The elevator at city hall is now installed and final adjustments are being made. Armstrong said the final inspection and approval from National Elevator personnel is planned for Monday, April 1, beginning at 9 a.m.

Wacky Wednesday



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Tatum Rundel (right) and Alison Hall, kindergarten students at Colby Grade School, took part in a unique activity today called, "Wacky Wednesday." Many of the students in Julie Ross' class wore odd hats,

clothes and other "wacky" things in honor of Dr. Suess' birthday earlier in the month. Activities, such as this one, tend to raise children's creativity and imagination, Ross said, adding that it's also a lot of fun.

Four Kansans honored with teaching awards

Atwood teacher among Presidential recipients

WASHINGTON (AP)—Four Kansas teachers were named Tuesday as

winners of the Presidential Awards for Excellence in Mathematics and Science Teaching.

Kansas winners announced by the White House are: Rhonda Carter-

Argbright, a mathematics teacher at Atwood High School in Atwood; Frances Irelan, a mathematics teacher at Lee Elementary School in Manhattan; Marion Zampa, a science teacher

at Trailwood Elementary School in Overland Park; and Mary Gibson, a science teacher at Shawnee Mission West High School in Overland Park, officials said.

Arafat offered incentives to help stop conflict

JERUSALEM (AP) — Yasser Arafat was offered major incentives Tuesday to help stop Mideast fighting: Vice President Dick Cheney said he would meet with the Palestinian leader after a truce takes hold, and Israel said it might lift a travel ban on Arafat in time for next week's Arab summit.

A meeting with Cheney would mark Arafat's highest-level contact yet with the Bush administration. Attending the Arab summit would mean an end to Arafat's three-month confinement to the Palestinian areas by Israel.

In fighting Tuesday, two Palestinian gunmen infiltrated an army training area in the West Bank, killing an Israeli officer and wounding three soldiers before being shot to death. Elsewhere, a Palestinian man standing outside his shop in the West Bank town of Beit Omar was killed by Israeli troops, Palestinian officials said.

Cheney said the United States would remain "very actively engaged" in truce efforts led by U.S. envoy Anthony Zinni, who has reported some progress toward a cease-fire declaration that would end 18 months of fighting. Since September 2000, 1,212 people have been killed on the Palestinian side and 352 on the Israeli side.

Palestinian officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, said a truce announcement could be made as early as Wednesday.

Cheney has drawn complaints from Palestinians for not meeting with Arafat during his 24-hour visit to Israel. The vice president said that once a cease-fire has taken hold, he would meet with Arafat in a location yet to be

determined.

Asked about his failure to meet with Arafat on this trip, Cheney said: "I don't think that justifies the charge that somehow we are ignoring the Palestinian people."

"We are working very hard ... at trying to achieve an end to the conflict that has plagued Israelis and Palestinians," he said during a joint news conference with Sharon. "I am hopeful that the effort that we are making here today will result in giving Gen. Zinni the support he needs to move forward."

Public schools would be hardest hit under panel's new budget plan

TOPEKA (AP) — State aid to schools would drop \$303 per student, many state workers would have to take unpaid days off and the next legislative session would be shortened under a House committee's plan for covering the budget gap.

The no-new-taxes plan endorsed by the Appropriations Committee on Tuesday would set state spending for the next fiscal year at \$4 billion, down \$517 million or 11.4 percent, from spending in the fiscal year that ends June 30. The biggest cut, \$208 million, would be in aid to public schools, which would drop to \$3,567 per student. Lawmakers had set per-pupil aid at \$3,600 when they passed the school finance law a decade ago.

Higher education, promised three years ago that its budget would increase in fiscal 2003, would lose nearly \$53 million instead.

Another \$36 million would be saved by furloughing state workers — eight unpaid days off for civil service em-

ployees and 12 for non-civil service employees between now and July 1, 2003.

"Our job is to give you a budget with the dollars we have available," said Rep. Melvin Neufeld, R-Ingalls, an Appropriations Committee member.

The committee is trying to close a projected \$698 million gap between expected revenues and required spending over the next 15 months.

Last week, the House spent four days debating and rejecting revenue-raising proposals, including higher taxes on income, sales, estates, tobacco and alcohol. In light of those votes, House Speaker Kent Glasscock told the Appropriations Committee to draft a no-new-taxes budget so the full House could assess the severity of potential cuts.

"It's not possible for it to be very pretty," Glasscock, R-Manhattan, said Tuesday. On separate voice votes, the Appropriations Committee endorsed two bills, sending them to the House

for debate that could occur as early as Monday. One bill revises the budget for the current fiscal year, while the other contains appropriations for fiscal 2003. The cut in aid to public school — 9 percent of the current \$2.3 billion — is likely to draw complaints from education officials across the state. Many have said they would have budget problems even if state aid were kept at its current level.

For Wichita schools, the committee's proposed budget is "shell-shocking bad," said Diane Gjerstad, the district's lobbyist. The district would lose \$19.7 million, and she noted that 54 percent of its students are considered poor.

"Their chance at the American dream is found in our schools every day," Gjerstad said. "This will hurt children."

House Appropriations Committee Chairman Kenny Wilk, R-Lansing, said the cuts would hurt but added, "If you don't like this budget, show us a

better way." Gov. Bill Graves has said he is preparing new proposals for up to \$350 million in tax increases. Other budget-cutting steps endorsed by the committee Tuesday included having state agencies sell \$15 million in unspecified assets and postpone \$11 million in planned purchases of vehicles, furniture and other equipment.

The committee even would save \$100,000 by closing the governor's Wichita office and an additional \$600,000 by shortening the Legislature's 2003 session to 80 days, instead of the traditional 90.

Part of the gap is caused by promises for additional money made in previous years — such as \$45 million extra for higher education. Those promises would be broken.

The committee also endorsed proposals Graves submitted — in case legislators wouldn't increase taxes — to close five minimum-security prisons and cancel nine highway projects, to save about \$150 million.

Highlights of the proposal

By The Associated Press

Highlights of budget proposals endorsed by the House Appropriations Committee:

- Overall Spending: Declines \$517 million, or 11.4 percent, to \$4 billion during fiscal year beginning July 1, from \$4.5 billion for current fiscal year.

- Public Schools: Aid cut \$208 million, or 9 percent, to \$2.1 billion. Per-pupil aid drops \$303, to \$3,567 from \$3,870.

- Higher Education: No \$45 million increase, as promised by 1999 reorganization law. Instead, spending cut \$53 million, or 7.4 percent.

- Social Services: Cover increases in costs of services mandated under federal law but cut other programs \$47 million.

- Transportation: No \$46 million

increase in sales tax revenues set aside for highway projects, as promised by 1999 law. Eliminate all sales tax set aside to save another \$95 million.

- Prisons: Close minimum-security units in Osawatimie, Oswego, Stockton and Toronto, and cut community programs, saving \$6.6 million.

- State Employees: No pay raises. Require unpaid days off for employees, to save \$36 million.

- Wildlife and Parks: Finance all of Department of Wildlife and Parks with fees, saving \$3 million.

- Arts Spending: Cut state funding to Arts Commission to \$143,000, saving \$1.5 million.

- Legislature: Shorten 2003 session to 80 days from traditional 90, to save \$600,000.

Briefly

Weather: Cold Thursday

Thursday's high temperature is expected to be some 30 degrees colder than what we had today, says the National Weather Service in its forecast for the Colby region. Tonight, partly cloudy, lows 15-20, winds west at 5 mph, turning northeast late and increasing to 10-20 mph. Thursday, mostly cloudy and much colder, highs only in the middle 30s, northeast winds 10-15 mph. Thursday night, mostly cloudy early then becoming partly cloudy, lows around 15. Friday, sunny, highs in the middle 50s. Friday night, partly

cloudy, lows in the uppers 20s. Saturday, partly cloudy, highs in the upper 60s. Colby's high Tuesday was 51 and the overnight low this morning was 21. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth is averaging 32 degrees. The records for March 20: 88 in 1907 and -14 in 1965. (The daily temperatures, precipitation and records are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)

Chamber reservations extended

The deadline to make reservations for this year's Colby/

Thomas County Chamber of Commerce annual banquet has been extended until Friday, said Gerry Fulwider, executive director. The banquet, which will be held Friday, April 5, at City Limits Convention Center, will begin at 6 p.m. with a social hour followed at 7 p.m. with the dinner and entertainment. "Spirit of America Alive In Colby," is this year's theme with Bill Cordes of Great Bend, the guest speaker. Tickets for the banquet are \$25 or \$225 for a corporate table of eight. The dinner menu is prime rib and chicken and the event is open to all Chamber members and guests. To make reservations, call Leta Lee, secretary, at (785) 462-3401 or

stop by the office at 350 S. Range, Suite 10, Colby.

Public invited to forensics tourney

The Colby High School Eagle Forensics team is hosting its home tournament on Thursday, in the commons area and 19 schools will be competing, said Nancy Rundel, head coach. "This is a great opportunity to see our students in a variety of forensic events," she said. The public might want to consider watching the students at 3 p.m., 4:30 p.m. or during the final round of competition beginning at 6 p.m. For information, call 465-5300.

