



COLBY FREE PRESS

What are the odds of this?

By DARREL PATTILLO

Colby Free Press

Charlie Cook of Colby says he's "one of the unluckiest men alive." A tornado ripped across a cornfield of his Wednesday night north of Levant and tore up the pivot on his sprinkler system.

This is the same sprinkler system that was torn up in July of 1996, when a tornado touched down north of Colby. The sprinkler, which was being used by Doug and Greg Hill at the time, was repaired by Hoxie Implement and moved to its present location, where it's being used by LJ O'Neal.

Colby Ag Center and Hoxie Implement were busy this morning working to get the sprinkler back to work.

"They should have it up and running by Tuesday," Cook said.

How strong of a wind does it take to do this kind of damage? "Ed Heim (of Hoxie Implement) estimates it was around 100 to 150 miles per hour," Cook said.

Substantiating Cook's misfortune, Trojan Amateur Radio Club members, who were also watching the storm, said the activity was odd in that it didn't follow the normal rules for a tornado.

However, after officials with the National Weather Service forecast center in Goodland saw the sprinkler system damage, they concluded it was indeed a tornado. "We were having a pretty boring weather spotting season, that is until Wednesday night," said another member of the club today.



DARREL PATTILLO/Colby Free Press

Charlie Cook surveys the damage to his sprinkler system from Wednesday night's tornado that rolled across his land 10 miles north of Levant.

Millions of dollars on hold

TOPEKA (AP) — A dispute with legislators over paying unemployment benefits is keeping the Department of Human Resources from spending \$4 million in federal funds.

The department contends it needs to spend the money on staff and computer upgrades to improve the processing of unemployment benefits, particularly in the winter.

But Democratic leaders criticized the agency Thursday, saying the money should go directly to the jobless benefits. They suggested during a Statehouse news conference that the department is inefficient.

Until the issue is resolved, the \$4 million will lie idle and cannot be used for anything.

The agency had hoped to win approval of its plans Friday from the State Finance Council, which includes Republican Gov. Bill Graves and eight legislative leaders. However, legislative opposition caused the department to rescind its request.

"If there isn't support for it, we're certainly not going to take it up," said State Budget Director Duane Goossen.

About 62,000 Kansans were unemployed and actively seeking new jobs in April.

Benefits are 60 percent of a worker's weekly earnings, up to \$333.

In March, the state learned it would receive \$78 million in federal funds under a package of legislation designed to stimulate the national economy and help the unemployed.

The department wants to spend \$3 million of those funds to add up to 60 workers to help process unemployment claims, with another \$1 million going into computer upgrades.

But during their record-long session, legislators objected.

They even included a provision in a budget bill that said the department couldn't spend any of the money for administrative costs — and the Finance Council couldn't approve any such spending.

Graves vetoed that provision, but Senate Minority Leader Anthony Hensley, D-Topeka, and House Minority Leader Jim Garner, D-Coffeyville, said sentiment among lawmakers remains strong.

"We need to use this money for its intended purpose," Garner said.

But William Sanders, the department's director of employment security, said the extra staff and computer upgrades will make processing of unemployment claims more efficient. That processing slows down in winter because of a lack of staff, he said.

Typically, the state process between 3,000 and 4,000 claims a week. During the second half of December 2001, it was processing about 8,000 claims a week.

"Lack of funds keeps from being able to staff appropriately during the winter," he said. "We know we're going to have a problem in the winter. We always do."

Hensley and Garner said the agency should be more efficient already. They noted that over the past 4 1/2 years, the agency has spent nearly \$19 million on computer projects.

"It's my sense that they've got everything they need," Hensley told reporters. But much of the spending on computers wasn't for the unemployment benefits program, according to the list Democrats presented.

Planning commission's suggestions get green light

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

The Colby City Council unanimously approved the planning commission's recommendation on amendments to the city's zoning ordinances for downtown-commercial, commercial, industrial, neighborhood and residential areas at its meeting this week.

"After several discussions, revisions, and a public hearing," said Carolyn Armstrong, city manager, "the commission is recommending approval of the amendments."

Following the council's decision to approve those amendments, Armstrong said the next step would be in defining the downtown commercial area. During that part, she said, all properties impacted would be provided a notice and a public hearing would be held.

Specific changes approved for the (C-1) downtown business district were in preserving and maintaining the integrity of the downtown shopping and service area, which would mean that no storage-type buildings or other structures that would take away from that kind of look would be allowed. Another change was taking out parking restrictions on restaurants that might relocate to the downtown area at some point in the future.

Buildings in the downtown business district would include buildings that house bakeries, banks, barber or beauty shops, commercial schools of business or arts, drugstores, repair shops, florists, hardware stores, photography or art studios, theaters, lodges or fraternal halls, drinking establishments, to name a few.

Regarding the commercial section of the downtown business district, the recommendation was to allow businesses such as grocery stores/meat markets, frozen food lockers, telemarketing centers, plumbing, heating/cooling and electrical supply shops, service stations and automotive shops,

automobile dealerships, and contract construction with restrictions. The zoning in the commercial district would require buildings have the frontal facade of a commercial business.

The (C-2) neighborhood commercial district is designed to provide locations for larger and more complex businesses.

Hotels or motels, upholstering and furniture repair shops, general warehouse and storage operations (excluding mini-storage complexes), funeral and crematory services, commercial entertainment and recreation facilities, such as miniature golf, bowling and swimming pools, would be some of the types of businesses in this zoning.

The (I-1) light industrial district permits assembly and manufacturing businesses of more intense nature, according to the amended zoning. Some changes made included adding the word "large" to animal clinics and veterinary services, adding "manufacturing" to assembly of agricultural

equipment and related sales, adding "body" to automobile finishing, repair and (related) services; sign shops with the word "manufactured" included, and the addition of mini-storage (self-storage) complexes to the types of businesses permitted.

The only change made to the (R-1) single family dwelling district was in regard to front yards.

The amendment read: Where platted lots have a double frontage or are located at the intersection of two streets, the required front yard shall be provided on both streets; provided, however, in existing residential subdivisions, platted before April 15, 1997, where 40 percent or more of the side yard lines do not exceed 15 feet on a double frontage lot, pursuant to the zoning ordinance of 1973, new construction will be grandfathered in and allowed to adhere to a depth of not less than 15 feet for the side yard.

The planning commission's primary function, according to information

provided by the city, is to prepare, adopt and recommend long-range comprehensive plans to guide the future physical development of Colby and the area.

Members of the planning commission that are appointed by the city include Charles Schwanke, chairman, Ken Frahm, Lana Johnson, Ivan Lee, Hal Kistler, and Brent Wiedeman. The county appointed members are Al Gerstner, Tylon Mengel and Paul Bailey, vice-chairman.

The commission meets the first Thursday before the third Tuesday's council meeting monthly at 9:30 a.m. in council chambers.

Each of the members is appointed to a three-year term that begins and ends in December.

Johnson, Kistler, Mengel and Lee's terms will expire in December of 2002; Frahm, Wiedeman and Bailey's terms expire in December 2003; and Schwanke and Gerstner's terms expire in December of 2004.

Driver charged in boy's drowning at Cedar Bluff reservoir

WAKEENEY (AP) — The driver of a sport utility vehicle that plunged into a reservoir, killing one of seven children inside, was charged Thursday with involuntary manslaughter and other felonies.

Robert Bruce Jr., 26, admitted this week that he — not a female passen-

ger — was driving the SUV when it went off a boat ramp at Cedar Bluff Reservoir in darkness on June 11, Trego County Sheriff Curt Bender said. Campers awakened by screams helped rescue the occupants, who included seven children 21 months to 8 years old. The other adult in the ve-

hicle, Teresa Owen, 27, had initially said she was the driver. Her 3-year-old son, Seth Contreras, was found dead in the water about 60 feet from where the SUV submerged.

But authorities suspected Owen was trying to protect Bruce, who had previous drunken driving convictions and

had recently been jailed in Rush County for driving with a revoked license, according to Rush County Sheriff Jack Mendenhall.

Trego County prosecutor Dave Harding on Thursday charged Bruce with involuntary manslaughter while under the influence, obstruction of jus-

tice, six counts of child endangerment, driving under the influence for a third time and driving on a suspended license. Bruce had been jailed since Tuesday in Trego County and remained there Thursday afternoon on \$30,000 bond, the prosecutor said. No preliminary hearing date was set.

Briefly

In one word **HOT!**

Hang in there, winter begins Dec. 22. And summer officially arrived this morning and the forecast for the Colby region certainly underscores that fact. Today's high is expected to top out around 93. Tonight, a 30 percent chance for thunderstorms, lows in the mid 50s and south winds up to 20 mph. Saturday, hot and windy, highs in the middle 90s and south winds up to 25, gusting to 35. Saturday night, thunderstorms a possibility, lows in the mid 60s and breezy out of the south. Sunday, partly cloudy and hot with highs in the mid 90s. Monday, clear and very hot with highs near 100. Colby's high Thursday was below 90 — at 88. This morning's low was 64. The soil temperature at the 4-inch depth is now averaging 80 degrees. Precipitation remains at 1.26 inches. The records for June 21: 106 in 1988 and 35 in 1902. td. *(The temperatures and precipitation are provided by the Northwest Kansas Research-Extension Center, Colby.)*

Free fans available

The Thomas County Chapter of the American Red Cross has allotted money to purchase fans for those in need, said Molly Oliver, disaster chair. The fans are free and need not be returned, she said. For those interested, call the Red Cross office at (785) 462-7161 or call board members Dave Evert (785) 694-2633 or Duane Unger (785) 462-6177. In the event that no one is available at the office, Oliver said to leave a message and a Red Cross representative will contact you.

Queen applications sought

Applications are being sought for the Thomas County Rodeo Queen and Princess pageant, said Trudy Wildeman, coordinator.

The pageant will be held Friday, July 26, and anyone interested in an application form is asked to contact Wildeman at (785) 462-2848. The saddle, which will be



awarded to the 2002 Rodeo Queen, is now on display at "OutWest," located in the Southwind Plaza.

Rexford readies for July event

Rexford PRIDE will be holding its Farmers/Flea Market on Saturday July 6. The annual citywide garage sale will also be held at the same time. Lunch will be available. The Farmers/Flea Markets are held on the first Saturday of each month. June's was termed a success by organizers with nine vendors present. Anyone interested, call Peg Greenwood at (785) 687-3925.

'Ham' field day is Saturday

Members of the area's Trojan Amateur Radio Club will be participating in the annual Field Day Emergency Preparedness exercise starting at 1 p.m., Saturday. Everyone is invited to stop by and visit at Colby Municipal Airport.

**Thumbs Up!**

- ✓Jason Duffey — Thomas County's newest Highway Patrolman.
- ✓Tim Morris — new associate pastor at the Colby Berean Church.
- ✓Brownie Scouts — on your *God and Me* award.
- ✓Shawna Eberle — good performance at Thursday's *Picnic in the Park*.
- ✓Trojan Rodeo Team — on your fine showing at nationals.
- ✓Cody Bieker — quite a catch!
- ✓Norma Seibel — enjoy the weekend and enjoy the paper.

(Call us at 462-3963 to submit a name or names for inclusion in this weekly salute.)

