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Soaking showers continue

By TOM (TD) DREILING

Free Press Publisher

The rainmaker was making more rain for the Colby area as this was being written this morning at 9:45. And the National Weather Service at Goodland expected showers to continue for most of the day.

The precipitation collected over the past 24 hours up to 9:20 this morning for Colby was 0.45 inches, bringing the month's total to 1.38 inches and the total since Jan. 1 to 3.16 inches, far outstripping the January-April figure for 2002 which was 1.37 inches.

The rains, said the National Weather Service, covered all of northwest Kansas, adding to the totals generated in the shower activity of just a week ago. In that rainfall, Colby received 0.57 inches.

Trenton, Neb. reported 0.71 inches shortly after 9 a.m. today and St. Francis came in with a report of 0.48.

Goodland received 0.13 up to 8 a.m., with other areas reporting the following: Oakley, 4 miles west, 0.05 and still raining; Hoxie, 0.14 with rain in progress; and Willie Engelhardt at Mingo, 0.05 and "it is raining pretty good."

With rain in progress, here are some other area reports: Burlington, Colo. 0.40; Leoti 0.13; Quinter 0.18; Russell Springs 0.12; Sharon Springs, 0.45; Tribune 0.50; McDonald 0.07; Selden 0.13; Grainfield, 0.21; Idalia, Colo., 0.35; Stratton, Colo. 0.17 and Arapahoe, Colo. 0.36; and Benkelman, Neb. 0.50 and McCook, Neb., 0.02.

How long will the wet spell hang around? Check the weather box elsewhere on page 1.

Big award given in jail suicide

TÓPEKA (AP) — A federal jury has awarded \$10 million to the parents of a man who hanged himself in 1999 while on suicide watch in the Shawnee County Jail.

Scotty Sisk, 23, died only a few days into a one-year sentence for violating an order to keep him from contact with a former girlfriend.

He had been placed in a cell in the jail's medical unit, where he pried a metal plate away from the wall and tore strips from a blanket. He attached the blanket strips to the plate, then leaned forward against them, choking himself.

Jurors deliberated three hours Tuesday before making the award to his parent. Danny and Sharon Sisk of McCune.



Showers

Tonight...rain showers and thunderstorms likely. Some thunderstorms may be severe. Breezy. Lows in the lower 40s. Southeast wind 15 to 25 mph with gusts to 35 mph decreasing early in the morning to 10 mph. Chance of rain 70 percent. Thursday...cloudy with a chance of rain showers. Highs near 60. East wind 5 to 15 mph becoming north late in the morning. Chance of rain 50 percent. Thursday night...cloudy. A slight chance of rain showers until midnight. Lows in the upper 30s. Chance of rain 20 percent.

The numbers

Tuesday's high, 72
Low this morning, 43
Year ago today, 86 and 34
Records, 98 in 1989, 26 in 1988
24-hour precipitation, 0.45
Month's precipitation 1.38

Getting ready for the musical



CRYSTAL RUCKER/Colby Free Press

Jennifer Wassemiller, vocal instructor at Colby Public Schools, was busy painting props today for the musical performance "Guys and Dolls," featuring the Colby Middle School seventh and eighth grade choir, next Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. in the Colby Grade School auditorium. The musical, she said, is a part of the Broadway Junior Collection with music and lyrics by Frank Loesser. The public is invited. For additional information, call Wassemiller at 465-5200.

Trustees put off selection of wellness center architect

By MICHELLE L. HAWKINS

Colby Free Press

The proposed wellness center at Colby Community College still has three prospective architects despite efforts to trim the list to one at Monday's board of trustees meeting. The architects are Strait Associates of Colby, Stecklein and Brungardt of Hays and Gossen Livingston of Wichita.

Funding for the project has been requested from the government, said Dr. Mikel Ary, college president. He told the board that in talking with associates in Sen. Sam Brownback's office this week, there is about a 50 percent chance or less of funding. He is hopeful that Brownback's support of rural health care and outward migration will play favorably for the college.

The grant request was for \$4.1 million and Ary was told if the money was approved, the college could at best expect one half to one third of the total requested. Ary anticipates a reply by early summer.

Trustee Curt Stephens had suggested it was time to narrow the choices down to only one architect so designs and material could be

made and used for fund raising.

Stephens suggested that Strait Associates should be selected for the project since they were offering the lowest architectural fees, taking the overall costs down considerably. Stephens also emphasized how important having a local person monitor the project would be.

He made a motion to approve Strait Associates and was supported by Matt Hamill and Don Kready, but the other three trustees, Cleona Flipse, Kenton Krehbiel and Ken Poland, voted against the motion.

"We need to select somebody, I think," Stephens said.

Poland then moved to select Gossen Livingston as the firm of choice. But without a second, the motion failed.

"Anyone of these firms have the ability to build what we want," Stephens said. "I just think it is important to go local."

Flipse said it would be better to give all three firms an opportunity to state the very lowest figure they would charge for the total architectural fees before the board selected a final firm.

"I think we have a fiscal respon-

sibility," Flipse said.

It was decided to contact the three firms and nail down the lowest possible figures for their fees before the next meeting on May 5.

In other business:

- Dean of academic affairs, Gracemary Melvin presented the year's program review.

- Contracts were approved for outreach and adjunct instructors.

- A supplemental contract for Shelly Rodenbeck was approved to assist a student who had missed a good portion of the semester due to health issues. The student wants to graduate with her class, but is needing to make up clinicals. The \$800 of the contract will be paid for by the student.

- Affiliation agreements for the physical therapy department were approved from Wray, Colo., Englewood, Colo., and Salina.

- The trustees approved the resignation of Scott Murray, who is a computer technician for the college. Murray is not a contracted employee and will be leaving to work for S&T Communications.

"We wish him very well," Ary said.

Briefly

Important publication notice

With the absence now of a Tuesday *Free Press*, we are asking our contacts to please keep that in mind as they prepare items for the paper. We like to inform our readers several days in advance of activities taking place in and around Thomas County and the area. With some of our subscribers getting their newspaper by mail the following day, it is important that they be given the courtesy of notification of any event several days in advance. Items for this column are taken up to 9 a.m. daily. The *Free Press* thanks you for your cooperation.

School plans 'Renaissance Day'

Colby High School is sponsoring a "Day at the Renaissance" on Friday with activities beginning at 9 a.m. Formal presentations for sixth through twelfth grade students start at 9:15 a.m. with participants in costume and exhibiting fighting, dancing and fire eating. The formal portion of the presentation will end at 10:15 a.m., with informal presentations

at demonstration tables from 10:15 to 11:15 a.m. After lunch, the same schedule will again be held and everyone is welcome to stop by and visit, school officials said. For questions, call 465-5300.

Volunteers to be recognized

A tea and recognition for volunteers of Prairie Senior Living Complex in Colby has been planned for Friday, May 2 at 2:30 p.m. Anyone who has volunteered or is interested is welcome to attend.

Concert in Levant tonight

The Captive Free Ministry will be holding a concert tonight at the Levant Community Church at 7 p.m. The program will consist of music, puppets and skits and is free of charge.

4-H Dog Show Saturday

There will be a 4-H Spring Dog Show at 10 a.m. on Satur-

Tempers flare at Colby school board meeting

Food fights, resignations, principal figure in the mix

By MICHELLE L. HAWKINS

Colby Free Press

Many questions.

Few answers.

Problems with food fights at the high school, coaching situations, teachers asked to resign, status of the high school principal and possibilities of a new administration building spanned the course of the four-hour meeting of the Colby board of education on Monday night.

Two teachers and a high school student started the meeting off by addressing the board. Laura Krejci, elementary music instructor and Nancy Rundell, speech teacher at the high school, both addressed concerns over the requested resignation of middle and high school vocal instructor Jennifer Wassemiller.

Krejci said that in the past eight years there have been six different teachers who have filled Wassemiller's position and three of them have been asked to resign. She questioned the board as to why the trend was happening and suggested it was either a poor interview process to select the right person for the position or the fact that expectations need to change about the vocal instructors. Krejci praised Wassemiller for her dedication and her abilities as a teacher.

Rundell told the board how Wassemiller has assisted her in productions at the high school.

"She is truly a person I've been waiting to come along," Rundell said. "Jennifer is giving it 100 percent."

Rundell told the board her biggest concern was that they were trying to eliminate a position in the music department and cautioned the board on how important the music department was to students who participate in it.

"It fills the needs of students who don't fit elsewhere," she said.

Rundell finished by saying, "If you let her go, you are really losing something. If she goes back to Wichita, we have lost a jewel."

High school student Taylor Miller brought his concerns to the board about the proposed resignation of principal Don Barta. Miller said that after the food fight on last Tuesday, issues that need to be addressed have not, but other areas such as tardiness and absence have been tightened.

"Barta's removal would be a costly error," he said. "It will add stress to the school and cause shame to the board."

After such a powerful opening to the meeting, the regular agenda continued with no discussion of either subject.

During the principal's reports,

Terrell Harrison and Robb Ross reported on the elementary and middle schools. High school activities director Jeff Quenzer gave his report and at the completion, board member Bill Miller questioned superintendent Kirk Nielsen about the missing report from the high school principal.

Nielsen told Miller that Mr. Barta was absent from the meeting and therefore could not report.

When Miller asked why Mr. Barta was not at the meeting, Nielsen said, "I asked him not to be here tonight unless we called him."

Growing visibly agitated, Miller told Nielsen that it was a public meeting and he couldn't do that.

"I did," Nielsen said.

Nothing more to say, the meeting continued as Diana Wieland, curriculum director gave her report and then Nielsen presented the superintendent's report.

After a brief report on open positions to fill for the coming year by Nielsen, Miller once again began to question him.

"I received a letter from you last week and I want to know an update on things at the high school," Miller said.

The two-sided conversation between Miller and Nielsen continued as Nielsen reported a few students were identified and suspended. Miller said damage had been done to the flags in the commons area and asked if the students were being required to pay for the damage.

When Nielsen said they were not, Miller referred to the student handbook and asked why Nielsen was not abiding by it.

Board member Tracy Rogers interjected and asked Nielsen who had cleaned up the mess and was told it was the teachers and the "good students" who were not involved in the fight.

Wilburn Holloway then questioned Nielsen by saying, "is that why Mr. Barta isn't here?"

Nielsen said, "not directly."

Nielsen continued by reporting that in dealing with the situation with Barta, Barta asked Nielsen if he wanted his resignation. "He verbally offered it and I said, 'Go ahead and take off,'" Nielsen said.

The board continued with the meeting and went on to personnel where the resignations of band instructor Cathy Cash; Wassemiller; elementary teacher Melissa Reed; and library paraprofessional Rachel Workman were accepted.

Executive sessions amounting in a total of 1:40 were taken throughout the night to discuss aforementioned issues as well as a suggested problem with the girls' basketball coach. There was no action taken after any of the sessions.

Vendors wanted for flea market

Rexford PRIDE is sponsoring its Farmers/Flea Markets during the months of May through September, said Evelyn Johnson, one of the coordinators.

The events will be held on the first Saturday of each month with the first one on May 3 from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Booth cost for vendors is \$10 with a lunch stand provided by various community organizations.

Anyone interested in participating as a vendor or has questions, call Johnson at (785) 687-3925.

