



COLBY FREE PRESS

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Sit, Lucy!



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Jed Gray and his Chihuahua-Terrier mix, Lucy, are both taking part in the obedience school at the 4-H building in Colby on Tuesday nights. Carrie Bredemeier with the Thomas County Trackers 4-H Club is the trainer. The school for this year started last Tuesday and will continue through spring. There are two classes held every Tuesday night — one for 4-H youth and the other for the public. For questions or to find out about enrollment, call Bredemeier at (785) 460-3816.

Something new

Charter school clears first of many hurdles

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

A charter school for Colby moved one step closer to reality during the school board meeting Monday night when the board approved a petition for the school.

District Curriculum Director Diana Wieland presented the petition.

Wieland said the board wasn't approving the charter school itself, only the petition that will be submitted to the state for final approval.

Wieland said the petition will now be reviewed by a committee and if accepted, will go to the state board of education for their approval. If the state board approves, it will come back to Colby and the school district can proceed or stop the process if they choose.

"Then we have a planning year," she said. "That's what we're asking for."

It would include funding in the form of a planning grant from the federal government in the amount of \$35,000, which would help pay for salaries and benefits and travel and training.

Additional funding, when the school actually starts up, would be a larger grant up to \$250,000, followed by approximately \$100,000. Wieland said the federal funding is for three years only but once the school gets students enrolled, it will receive funding from the state for each student attending the school.

She said if a student is spending half a day at charter school and the other half at regular school, that money, \$3,863 would be split between the schools.

If the state approves the petition, the charter school will be in the planning stages for the 2004-2005 school year and will then accept its first students from grades five

through eight in 2005-2006.

Grades 9 and 10 would be added in 2006-2007 and 11th and 12th grades in 2007-2008.

Wieland said the process started three years ago and grew out of looking at what skills students need to take to the workforce when they finish with school.

"It's been an ongoing process," she said. That process included a public hearing on the charter school at 4 p.m. Tuesday, Jan. 13 but only two people attended. Wieland said people may be interested in the school but don't have an opinion either way.

She said the people at the hearing wanted to know more about it.

Wieland was pleased the board approved the petition.

"I felt the board was very supportive," she said, adding the school will provide another option for students if the state approves it.

Frontage road in Colby won't be closed, city council decides

By PATTY DECKER

Free Press Editor

The Colby City Council decided it will not close the exit on the access road north of E. 4th St. at County Club Drive — in part due to information provided by one business owner at the council meeting Tuesday night.

Jane Johnson, agent with State Farm Insurance, said she was "very concerned" about the closure and explained many of those reasons to the council.

"From 1971 to date and for the past 33 years," she said, "there have been no accidents as a result of the proximity of frontage road to the intersection."

Yet with respect to the intersection of Country Club and Fourth, where the city wanted to install stop lights, there has already been another accident at that location following the removal of the temporary lights, she said.

From Jan. 1, 2000 to July 15, 2003, there were 26 accidents at the Country Club and Fourth intersection and none of those resulted from use in or out of the frontage road, she said.

Johnson also said that to remove the west entrance access to the frontage road would create other problems and could put children in danger.

"Even with a 'keep out' sign posted," she said, "I am certain the parking lot north of the State Farm building will be used as a thoroughfare for the businesses on frontage road." Directly behind the State Farm office, she said, is a large neighborhood with many children. Even with discouraging this, children are still going to play where there is a lot of space.

Other issues she touched on included semi-truck use of frontage road, senior citizens needing the slow traffic environment provided by frontage road, redirecting of traffic and possibly hurting businesses on frontage road.

The closing of the frontage road was first prompted by the Kansas Department of Transportation, said Carolyn Armstrong, city manager. It was their recommendation, based on a safety audit report in July of 2003, to close the access road.

After reviewing the safety audit recommendations and the map from the state, along with hearing from local property owners, the council unanimously voted not to close the access road north of E. 4th St. at Country Club Dr.

Colby College trustees start contract negotiations

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

The Colby Community College board of trustees started contract negotiations with the school faculty at its meeting Tuesday.

The board spent six executive sessions discussing the matter.

Dr. Mikel Ary, college president,

said they have to renegotiate the collective bargaining agreement with the faculty each year and the executive sessions were just the beginning of the process.

Ary said he doesn't know how long the process will take because some years it concludes quickly and sometimes it doesn't.

"It's impossible to predict," he said.

In other business, the board approved naming Pedro Gonzalez as the new head volleyball coach.

The board also went over sealed bids to sell one of the cars from the school's motor pool. The school accepted bids for the sale of a 1995

Ford Taurus with more than 220,000 miles on it.

"We thought it was time to put it out to pasture," Ary said. The board approved the high bid of \$57 submitted by Mike Wiens.

Also approved were amendments and compliance to federal HIPAA regulations.

Ary said the regulations have to do with employment contracts with clinical facilities.

The board also dealt with a grievance over health and insurance benefits. Ary said the board discussed a dispute Boyd Walker, head of the vet tech program, has with health insurance and retirement benefits.

Discussion on a new track at Dennen Field continues

By TISHA COX

Colby Free Press

A new surface for the track at Dennen Field continues to find its way into Colby School Board discussions, the latest coming Monday night.

Superintendent Kirk Nielsen said they could do bids in May and have the work done this summer.

School board president Stan Molstad suggested taking bids by the beginning of March; however, Nielsen said nothing has been decided yet.

The board heard presentations on resurfacing the track from four companies back in November, which was the beginning of the discussion. There are concerns about

the track because the latex is eroding in several places but the surface has lasted longer than expected. The surface currently on the track was laid in 1989.

Nielsen said they are going to put specifications together and see what potential bids come in at.

There are two choices for a new surface — latex and polyurethane.

He said the school district has applied for a grant from Nike to get funds to help resurface the track, but they won't find out until February or March if the district will receive one of the grants.

Nielsen said the district would have to match the grant, which could be up to \$50,000 to put toward a polyurethane surface.

"They're going to let us know soon," he said. Nielsen said time constraints and cost are two concerns, since the district would like work to be completed this summer, if possible. He said cost is another matter because the board will have to choose between a latex surface, which is cheaper, and polyurethane, though expensive, lasts longer.

Briefly

College auditions next week

The drama department at Colby Community College will conduct auditions for the spring play next Monday and Tuesday from 7-9 p.m. in the Frahm Theatre located in the Cultural Arts Center on campus. Auditions are open to students and the community. The spring production will be a full-length, nonmusical play. The choice of the play will depend upon the people who audition. Performance dates for the production are Thursday, Friday and Saturday, April 22-24. Rehearsals will begin Sunday, Feb. 22. For questions, call Deb Bickner at 462-3984, ext. 300.

'Cardiac Arrest' is next week

The annual "Cardiac Arrest," sponsored by the American Heart Association is scheduled from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Colby Community Building, on Thursday, Jan. 29.

Arrestees will go before "Judge Heartless," played by Dave Jennings. Prior to the event, arrestees are busy collecting donations with the goal of making a \$100 bail. This year's parole board includes Roger Aumiller, Wade Baker, Marla Crumrine, Tracey King, Tina Harris, Rhonda McLaughlin, Robert McLemore, Marge Miller, Bob Muirhead, Shawn Reinert, Martin Rinehart, Carla Sharp, Jessica Vaughn and LaVon Wagoner.

Heartland School plans barbecue

There will be a benefit barbecue and open house on Sunday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Heartland Christian School, 1995 W. 4th in Colby. In addition to the barbecue, which will feature barbecued meat, baked potatoes, corn, rolls, salad and dessert bar, an auction will be held. Auction items include handmade quilts, bed and breakfast package and more. Everyone is invited to attend.

Rotary soup supper next month

The annual Colby Rotary soup supper will be from 5 to 7:30 p.m., Tuesday, Feb. 17, during the Colby High School basketball game against Goodland at the Colby Community Building. All proceeds from this event go to benefit various organizations. Tickets will be available at the door or from any Rotary Club member.

Orange & Black

Classic

(See pages 6-7)



Climbing into 50s

Colby, Oakley, Hoxie area
Tonight...Partly cloudy. Lows around 20. Northwest winds 5 to 10 mph. **Thursday...**Partly cloudy in the morning then clearing. Highs in the upper 40s. West winds around 10 mph. **Thursday night...**Mostly clear in the evening then becoming partly cloudy. Lows in the lower 20s. West winds 5 to 10 mph. **Friday...**Partly cloudy. Highs in the mid 50s. West winds 5 to 15 mph. **Friday night through Saturday night...**Partly cloudy. Highs in the upper 50s. Lows in the lower 20s.

The numbers
Tuesday's high, 45
Low this morning, 19
Records for Jan. 21, 72 in 1950 and -19 in 1984
Year ago today, 27 and 22
Month's precipitation, 0.05
Month's snowfall, 1 inch
2003 precipitation to date, trace
Soil temperature, 35
The sources:
The forecast is from the National Weather Service, and other numbers are from the Northwest Research-Extension Center, Colby.

