



COLBY
FREE PRESS

County approves asphalt project bid

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

County road projects were on the agenda at this morning's Thomas County Commissioners meeting. Road department supervisor Clair Schrock presented asphalt bids to the commissioners. He said he sent out letters to six companies but only received one bid back from High Plains Sand, Inc. of Kanopolis. Their bid was for 16,000 tons of asphalt at \$5 a ton, and it's the second year in a row the company had the winning bid, which the commissioners approved. This year's bid was 10 cents a ton more than last year, and will cost the county \$1,600 more for the asphalt which will be used on county roads.

They also approved Penco Engineering to be the consultant for the Horton Avenue project for which the county is responsible for paving Country Club from the I-70 overpass to where the street intersects with Horton Avenue. Schrock said the city is doing all of Horton. Township road maintenance was also part of the discussion. Chairman Ron Evans said they've been approached about East Hale taking back its own maintenance but the issue will have to be put on the ballot by petition. County Clerk Shelly Harms said there isn't enough time to get it on the spring ballot so it will have to wait until fall. The commissioners also made appointments. Steve Richards of

Brewster was appointed to fill Sheriff Mike Baughn's vacated seat on the Thomas County Economic Alliance board of directors. Baughn, one of three county appointees to the board, handed in his resignation last week. Richards becomes the representative for District 3 and will fill out the remainder of Baughn's term, which ends in December. However, he would be eligible to be re-appointed for a three-year term after the end of the year. They also appointed Tylin Mingle of Colby to a three-year term on the board of zoning appeals. In other business, the commissioners approved:

- Paying the bills for the month.
- The minutes from the Feb. 7 meeting.

City to approve software

By Patty Decker
Free Press Editor

The Colby City Council will consider approving a new utility billing software package during its regular meeting Tuesday, starting at 7:30 p.m., at city hall, 585 N. Franklin. For the last six months, the city returned to its older and more dependable utility software program (American Fundware) after discovering the replacement program (Mastertrak) installed in May of 2004 was not working properly, said Carolyn Armstrong, city manager. The city attempted to put in place a newer billing program that was riddled with problems after installation, she said, but now the city believes it has a program that will

be compatible with the server. The new company, Continental Utility Solutions, Inc., she said, is also used in conjunction with programs the city already has in place. Due to the problems in the last changeover, Armstrong has also been assured by Continental that if there are any conversion difficulties it will refund any amounts associated with that. The actual cost for Continental is about \$44,000; however, Mastertrak already agreed to refund the down payment of \$36,500. The balance of 8,000 for the new program, she said, has been encumbered from 2002. Along with looking at a new utility program, the city will talk about wrecker rotation and consider approving a proposal that would be

acceptable to all local services and approved between both the city and county entities. Other agenda items include approving documents to purchase land from Union Pacific Railroad between School and Franklin on the south side of the tracks; approval of a resolution defining city boundaries; options to purchase water rights; and approving of a bid for police unit. In addition, the city will consider approval of plans and specifications to authorize advertising for bids on the Willow and Franklin Ave. paving project; along with the possibility of rejecting all bids on the airport apron and taxi lane project. Council meetings are open to the public. For questions, call 460-4410.

The love of books



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Chelsey Juenemann of Brewster looked through boxes of books Saturday during the Sweetheart book sale at Pioneer Memorial Library. The library had plenty of books to offer during its annual Valentine book sale, which benefits the Friends of the Library.

In debate over court, history's 'Triple Play' worth remembering

TOPEKA (AP) — After nearly five decades, the "Triple Play" is all but forgotten, but that ancient political scandal is worth remembering as legislators consider requiring Senate confirmation for Kansas Supreme Court justices. The proposal to modify justices' selection is a response to recent court decisions striking down the state's death penalty law and ordering legislators to improve education funding. Some Republicans complain the court now has an activist streak and believe Senate confirmation of members would make it more accountable. The state embraced the current selection system — bypassing both partisan elections and legislators —

because of the "Triple Play." In January 1957, both an ailing Supreme Court justice and an outgoing governor resigned, and the new governor appointed his predecessor to the bench. Kansas voters then amended the state constitution to insulate the court from politics. Now, some legislators question how well a previous generation succeeded and wonder ironically whether the existing system gives the governor and a few others too much control. "We just think we ought to acknowledge there's politics in the process and give people more input into it," said Senate Majority Leader Derek Schmidt, R-Independence.

Schmidt backs a proposal to add Senate confirmation as a final step to the existing selection process. Twenty-eight senators are sponsoring the measure, one more than the two-thirds majority necessary to adopt a constitutional change in the 40-member chamber. The court's 4-3 majority said the 1994 law is unconstitutional because of a provision governing how juries weigh evidence for and against imposing a death sentence. Other legislators grumble about the court's decision last month on education funding, in which it said the state isn't fulfilling a constitutional duty to provide a suitable education for all children. The court

gave legislators until April 12 to provide additional dollars and distribute its aid to school districts more fairly. "It's definitely a more activist court," said Sen. Susan Wagle, R-Wichita. "We need to take a much longer viewpoint and not just react in knee-jerk fashion to a couple of decisions that are unpopular," said Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman John Vratil, R-Leawood, who is not a sponsor of the measure. Currently, a nine-member nominating commission screens applicants for appellate court positions. Four commission members are members of the general public appointed by the governor, and the

others are chosen by attorneys. The commission nominates three finalists, and the governor makes the appointment. Justices then stand for retention once every six years. Voters adopted the system in 1958. Previously, justices were elected to six-year terms, with the governor making appointments when vacancies occurred. That appointment power was unfettered, as the events of January 1957 demonstrated. Chief Justice William Smith, a power in the state GOP for three decades, was bedridden in a Topeka hospital. Gov. Fred Hall, at odds with conservatives within his own Republican Party, had been denied renomination in 1956.

Smith resigned on Jan. 3. Hall then resigned, just eight days before his term expired, making Lt. Gov. John McCuish governor for those eight days. An angry *Topeka Daily Capital* editorial called it "political trickery of a very low order" and proclaimed: "Kansans will generally resent the scheming that was hidden behind a curtain of dark secrecy." Wagle, Schmidt and other legislators who support their proposed change contend the process created in the wake of the "Triple Play" is itself too secretive. Others say the change could inject more politics into a selection system designed to avoid it — a view held by Democratic Gov. Kathleen Sebelius.

County seizes \$2.7 million in cocaine on I-70

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

Thomas County authorities seized over \$2.7 million in cocaine and put a child in protective custody as a result of a traffic stop on Interstate-70 on Friday.

Undersheriff Jason Moses said this morning two women were arrested when deputies found 61 pounds of cocaine in the pickup. Maria Hilda Sandoval, 37, and Sarai Marquez, 23, both of El Paso, Texas were arrested when a Tho-

mas County Sheriff's office canine alerted for drugs on the 2003 Chevrolet Avalanche while it was being searched. Moses said in addition to the two women, a 1-year-old child was in the pickup.

He said the baby has been placed in protective custody. The street value of the cocaine is estimated at \$2,745,000. The case has been forwarded to Thomas County Attorney Andrea Wyrick for prosecution.

Briefly

Rotary to hold soup supper Tuesday

The Colby Rotary Club will hold its soup supper from 5-7:30 p.m., Tuesday, at the Colby Community Building during the Colby-Goodland basketball game. Chili and potato soup will be served. Tickets are \$4 for adults and \$2 for children and are available from Rotary members or at the door.

Legislative town hall meeting Saturday

Rep. Jim Morrison, R-Colby, and Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, R-Grinnell, are holding a town hall meeting from 9:45-10:45 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 19 at the Quality Inn in Colby. They will be giving a legislative update and answering questions. For information, contact coordinator Bert Stramel at 462-9748.

'Sky is the Limit' trip still has openings

There is still space available for the Colorado Springs trip scheduled for Saturday, Feb. 26, said Judy Kleinsorge, children's librarian at Pioneer Memorial Library. The "Sky is the Limit" trip is open to students in grades 6, 7 and 8, who have until Tuesday, Feb. 15 to turn in their application. "It would be great to see a number of youngsters take advantage of this opportunity that will be lots of fun," she said. For questions, stop by the library at 375 W. 4th or call (785) 460-4470.

Free income tax help available

For those retired and over 60 or with people with low-income, a special free service is available for filling out 1040s or uncomplicated income tax paperwork. Anyone who would like assistance on their 2004 Income Tax is asked to bring all W-2 information and other related documents to Pioneer Memorial Library, 375 W. 4th, Colby from 1 to 3 p.m. on Wednesdays only, said Alvin Volk, assisting with preparations. For questions or other general information, call Volk at 460-2645.

Photographs to be displayed

The Cultural Arts Center Gallery on the Colby Community College campus will be displaying selected photographs from "A Day In the Life Of Thomas County," during the month of February. The photographs are from three different seasons taken by amateur photographers who participated in the contest. The gallery is open Monday through Friday from 1 to 5 p.m. For questions, call Cathy Gordon at (785) 462-3984 (Ext. 310).

Scouts to ship cookies overseas

Colby Girl Scout Troop 162 will be shipping cookies overseas to Colby-area servicemembers fighting the war against terrorism, said Jan Barnum, troop leader. The troop will be responsible for sending the boxes of cookies overseas. For questions, call Barnum at (785) 462-6503.

Colby
Hoxie
Oakley



Rain, snow showers...maybe

Tonight...Mostly cloudy. Lows in the upper 20s. North winds 10 to 15 mph. **Tuesday**...Mostly cloudy with a 30 percent chance of rain showers and snow showers. Highs in the upper 30s. East winds 10 to 15 mph with gusts to 30 mph. **Tuesday night**...Mostly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of snow. Lows in the lower 20s. Northeast winds 10 to 15 mph. **Wednesday**...Mostly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of snow. Highs in the mid 30s. Northwest winds 5 to 10 mph shifting to the southeast in the afternoon.

The numbers
Sunday's high, 59
Low this morning, 30
Year ago today, 37 and 7
Records for this date, 74 in 1945 and -9 in 1936
Precipitation past 48 hours to 8 a.m. today, 0.09
Precipitation for month to date: 0.32
Snowfall for month to date: 3.7 inches
Soil temperature, 41

The sources:
The forecast is from the National Weather Service, and other numbers are from the Northwest Research-Extension Center, Colby. A recorded forecast updated throughout the day is available by calling (785) 899-7119. Current temperatures are available by calling 460-TEMP.

