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FREE PRESS

# It means what it says



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

The ‘road closed’ signs just east of the Oasis Travel Center on Horton Avenue greet motorists. Work recently began to finish the street which will eventually connect with the newly-completed Country Club Drive that was finished last week by the county road department. The city should have Horton finished within the next few months.

# Council tackles code violations

By Patty Decker

Free Press Editor

Violations concerning weeds and other eyesores around the city were reviewed by the Colby City Council at its meeting Tuesday.

In addition, one couple appeared before the council to request an exception be made regarding their motor home parked on the north side of their property at the Pine Street right-of-way.

Prompted by a complaint, said Carolyn Armstrong, city manager, the code enforcement officer sent David and Carla McCoy, owners of the motor home, a letter noting they were in violation of an ordinance prohibiting vehicles being parked in street right-of-way areas.

The McCoy's said their motor home has been in the same location for six years and when they asked to move it for maintenance reasons, they have always complied.

The couple further said they didn't understand why this is an issue now, adding that there are a lot of residents in violation of the ordinance with vehicles parked in alleys and others who have planted gardens in that same right-of-way area.

Councilman Phil DeYoung explained to the McCoy's that either

“We have to start somewhere and we will continue to enforce these types of violations . . .”

Councilman Jim Tubbs

the council will uphold the ordinance or grant exceptions to all.

When the couple argued that this is not a “fair thing to do” with so many others violating the ordinance, Councilman Jim Tubbs said, “we have to start somewhere and we will continue to enforce these types of violations to keep the city clean (and in compliance.)”

Councilman Ken Bieber concurred saying that the council needs to “hold the line,” otherwise there is no stopping residents from doing whatever they want.

Another resident, Dwayne Jenik, also spoke to the council about a letter he received regarding weeds.

He too said that many others in Colby are in violation of the weed ordinance and even brought photographs with him.

Jenik said he believes the city needs “complete compliance,”

rather than giving residents, like himself, the feeling that they are being discriminated against.

Doug Lewis, code enforcement officer, also discussed the recent order of violation notices sent to the eight locations around the city with either structural or exterior problems.

He told the council that only two properties have made no progress, but the other six were making headway.

Citing 440 W. Plum and 445 S. Range as the locations where not much has changed, he said. As for the other properties, Lewis said there's been improvement at most of the other locations to include 903 Court Terrace, 660 N. Franklin, 955 W. 5th, 360 W. Webster, and 480 N. Country Club Dr.

Lewis did let the council know that although the certified letter was

refused for the 360 W. Webster property, that a relative has been working with the city on this particular location.

The council also agreed to send Jacquie Horner at 165 E. Cherry an order of violation regarding the problems at that location.

Whenever notices are sent for either weeds, exterior trash, debris and other hazards or when structural problems such as broken windows, roof dilapidation, and other defects, Lewis also alerts the property owners of future council meetings, time limits and their right to a hearing.

“Just because someone gets a notice that they are in violation of an ordinance, doesn't mean they cannot call and ask questions or work with us,” Lewis said today.

Depending on the type of violation and the ordinance, the resident has anywhere from 10 days to 60 days or more to comply with particular problems.

Council members are taking an aggressive stand on enforcing the ordinances and said they will continue to do so in the future — whether through complaints or something seen by the code enforcement officer.

# School board considering drug testing

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Drug testing for students in the Colby School District might be a reality in the future. The school board discussed the issue at its Monday meeting.

Sue Evans, director of the Regional Prevention Center in Colby, gave a presentation on random voluntary student drug testing.

Activities director Jeff Quenzer went to an April meeting on random student drug testing sponsored by the Regional Prevention Center.

Superintendent Kirk Nielsen said he needed the board's consensus to proceed.

If a testing regimen is implemented, it won't be until the beginning of the 2006-07 school year.

Evans said along with Quenzer, representatives from Brewster and Goodland were also in attendance at the April meeting.

Brewster, she said, is in the second year of implementing its program and Goodland has put together a committee to discuss the issue.

Evans explained steps must be taken before a plan is put into action.

Three questions must be asked before a testing program can begin, she said. Are drugs a problem? Is random testing an appropriate response if there is a problem? What is the process?

Her answer to the first question is that Thomas County has good information on usage because of the annual survey the prevention center puts out, Evans said, and student participation has been good.

She said the second question is sometimes responded to with another question — why test students?

Evans said drug testing isn't about punishment or catching students using.

Instead, it's about showing the values of a community in that drug abuse isn't acceptable behavior and getting students the help they need.

Testing does sometimes deter use, although to what degree varies, Evans said. She said it identifies those who have tried or experimented with drugs or individuals with dependency problems.

“Whether we like it or not, addiction is a pediatric onset disease,” she

said about the testing.

It's also about creating a healthy, safe environment for students where they can learn, Evans said.

The next consideration would be to form a committee representative of the community because drug use is a problem that concerns everyone. She said school board members, administration, students, parents, coaches, the school attorney, activity sponsors and people from the community would need to be included.

Their duty would be to look into all possible outside sources of drugs, she said. Then, they would have to come up with recommendations, a written policy and procedure.

That would be followed by a 90-day waiting period with public input and education before the implementation of the program.

Evans also covered who could be tested and how.

Drug testing also isn't a violation of student privacy. Evans said it's just like any other health screening done in school, like vision, hearing or scoliosis checks.

“The courts have upheld student drug testing,” she said, adding it only applies to students in extracurricular activities, and students in the general population can't be tested. Evans said the school isn't in a position to be sued and students don't have as many rights as adults.

Also, if the administration has a “reasonable suspicion” about a student, they can be tested.

Evans said a difference exists between random testing and voluntary random testing.

Random testing is where students are chosen from the pool of available students.

With random voluntary testing, students sign up to be tested and names are picked from the volunteers. It's up to the district how students are picked, Evans said.

She said the test only applies to illicit drugs and not alcohol.

“Isn't it fairly expensive?” board president Stan Molstad asked.

Evans explained the cost varies depending on the method used and the profile of drugs tested for.

Urine, saliva and hair samples can all be used to test for drugs, and specimens have to be taken by a trained collector. Then, they're sent off to a lab for testing.

Paying for the testing would be the school district's responsibility and if a student's test was positive, their parents would have to pay for treatment, Evans said.

# Hospital meeting ‘routine’

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press

Trustees of Citizens Medical Center met last week and several actions were taken.

Tama Unger, director of fund development and community relations at the hospital, said the meeting was “basically routine” business. Topping the list was the approval of finances of the hospital.

“When the board approves the financials, it is a formality that follows the update from the finance department. The trustees look at the balance sheet, profit and loss statement, and etcetera. The approval of financials will be present on the agenda at all board meetings,” Unger said.

The trustees also talked about credentialing, which is a normal agenda item, for providers which are approved once a year.

“Because we have so many, the approval process is spread out over the year,” Unger said.

She said Allied Medical Staff Credentialing approved for reappointment Brian K. Unruh, physician's assistant, and Mona S. Dreiling, a registered nurse who serves with an active staff physician during specialty clinics. Active Medical Staff reappointed was Dr. LaDonna M. Regier.

Cardiopulmonary polices were approved as well. Unger said the action made way for new policies and updated practices in the cardiopulmonary department which effect patient care.

In other business, the board approved medical staff recommendations of certain advanced certification for providers covering the emergency room and those providing obstetric services.

# ‘Cool’ cooks assured at Colby Senior Center

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

The Senior Progress Center in Colby is \$3,000 richer, thanks to a grant from the Northwest Kansas Area Agency on Aging in Hays.

And the cooks are all smiles.

Greg Hoover, the agency's executive director, presented center director Donna Schielke with the grant on Tuesday. Schielke was responsible for making the grant application. She said the money will be used to install an air conditioner in the center's kitchen.

“The cooks definitely needed it,” she said.

Hoover said they've always

given out grants, but in the past few years they've had to limit the amount and how many.

“We used to give grants for whole buildings,” he said.

Now, the organization gives out three to four grants a year between \$500-\$3,000 and Colby received the maximum amount.

Grants are need-based and given on a first-come, first-served basis.

As Hoover said, they used to be given for large building projects but as times have changed, so have the uses for the grants.

They are now used for building maintenance and repair, which ranges from roof and floor repair to installation of new air conditioners



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Greg Hoover, executive director of the Northwest Kansas Area Agency on Aging in Hays, and Donna Schielke, director of the Senior Progress Center in Colby, visited with Max Melvin, one of the center's patrons, on Wednesday.

or heaters.

Hoover said the center was on the waiting list for more than a year. Grants had already been given to St. Francis, Oakley and Atwood so Colby had to wait a while.

He said the Colby center serves meals to many people and not just in Colby. He said the center has a nice setting and does a good job.

“I wish all senior centers were like that,” Hoover said.

Musical Picnic, Rod Run  
see, ‘My Turn’ column

