



COLBY FREE PRESS

Girls basketball coach nixed - maybe

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Is he or isn't he? Tom Beckman is out as the head girls basketball coach at Colby High School — but that could change.

The Colby School Board decided not to approve Beckman's contract with the rest of the supplementals at its Monday meeting, choosing instead to exclude him.

The motion passed 4-2 with board president Stan Molstad and board member Gerry Fulwider voting against.

Board members John Cranston, Joel Powell, Kevan Taylor and Dewey Augustine voted against approving Beckman's contract. Board member Tracy Rogers was absent.

However, the board didn't rule out bringing up his contract at a future meeting and has put it down on the agenda for the June 30 meeting.

Beckman's contract was a source of concern from some of the people who came to the meeting.

Beckman supporters Jerry Baird

and Bill Kersenbrock addressed the board during the public comment portion of the meeting. Baird said it seems like every year there is a fight to keep a coach.

He said the community elects the board members to manage the school district.

"It's poor management not to know both sides of a story," he said.

The team has had success under Beckman, qualifying for state four years in a row, Baird said.

He said he hoped they would consider other viewpoints when making their decision.

Kersenbrock also talked about Beckman. He said parents need to go to a practice where it would be evident who works hard and who doesn't.

He added the coaches have nothing to hide and it's kids who play the



T. Beckman

game, not parents. Kersenbrock also said he didn't think many parents have gone to talk to any of the coaches.

In other business, the board approved:

- The resignation of special education teacher Amy Ricker and the termination of special education paraprofessional Tamera Margheim.

- The hiring of art instructor Jeanne Cox; math instructor T.J. Scholz; language arts instructor Andrea Schutte; Spanish instructor Diane Turvey; and industrial arts instructor Ronald Turvey.

- Approval of the final re-publishing of the 2004-05 budget.

- Went into executive session five separate times to discuss personnel issues. No action was taken after they went back into open session after the first. The board approved the Ricker resignation and Margheim termination in open session after the second and the Beckman issue in open meeting after the fifth closed-door session.

Hammekes are no show

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press

HOXIE — Despite being listed on the agenda, neither Paul Hammeke nor Dr. Margarita Hammeke attended the Sheridan County Health Complex trustee meeting on Wednesday night. Last week after being fired, Dr. Hammeke said she was not being given an opportunity to meet with the trustees. Steve Schwarm, the board's attorney from Topeka, refuted the doctor's statement.

"They were employees, and under employment manual guidelines they can request a formal hearing before the board, but it is my understanding they have not requested a hearing," he said.

The board recessed into executive session for 30 minutes. Upon reconvening into public session, no action was taken.

Schwarm said both Paul Hammeke and Dr. Hammeke had met

with the board on one or more occasion during their tenure, but following their termination no request had been made "individually or collectively" to see the board. He said the doctor, on May 30, was advised of Wednesday night's meeting and that they had been mailed a copy of the agenda in advance of the meeting.

Despite Sheridan County Sheriff Jim Johnson on Wednesday afternoon saying the investigation of a break-in at the clinic was "not ongoing," ReChelle Kennedy, interim administrator, and Schwarm believe it to be otherwise.

Kennedy was called to the complex at 11:30 p.m. the night of June 1, by an employee saying an unauthorized person was inside the clinic. After making an initial sweep of the complex and finding no one in the building, Kennedy said Undersheriff Brian Fenner arrived to take statements from the two em-

ployees who aware of the incident. One of the employees alleges he saw Paul Hammeke inside the clinic and later leaving the building. Fenner on Wednesday referred all questions to the sheriff.

Following the trustee meeting, Kennedy said items have been determined missing from the complex. And she said the sheriff's office has not yet requested to review surveillance tapes from the night of the alleged incident.

"The health complex, as an entity and its employees, will fully cooperate with any law enforcement investigation and provide all relative information and answer questions as part of an official investigation.

"The health complex will be contacting local law enforcement to ensure they are fully informed of the concerns that the complex has and make appropriate reports to assist with their investigation," Schwarm said.

Council comes up with towing solution

By Patty Decker

Free Press Editor

After a long talk on how to coordinate towing services in a fair way, the Colby City Council came up with a plan that everyone could agree on at its meeting Tuesday.

In determining the best way to proceed, the council and representatives from four of the five towing companies decided to try a "plain rotation" for the next month or so and see how it worked out.

The plain rotation plan simply means that when the situation calls for a towing service, the Colby dispatcher will have a list available of all five companies and will call whoever is next. However, if the customer has a preference, then that company will be called regardless of who would be next on the rotation.

Offering an example, Carolyn Armstrong, city manager, said that if someone requests Van's Body and Frame Towing and Van's is also the next on the rotation, it just means that this particular towing company would have jobs one after the other.

By trying this for the next 30 to 60 days, there would be no need in looking at a dispatch service to handle the rotation. In other words, the city's dispatcher would continue to maintain the list and call.

Another factor of the "plain rotation" would mean that when the need for a locksmith or truck towing arrangement was necessary or specialty tows required, there would be only one list to work off. In the event one service couldn't handle the need, the dispatcher would continue down the list and the towing service unable to handle



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

Along with the towing issue Tuesday, Thaniel Monaco, project engineer with Miller and Associates, Kearney, Neb., was also present. Monaco (above) pointed on the map where Phase I of the new \$8.6 million sewer treatment project would begin. He also said advertisement for bids on this first phase will appear Friday in the *Colby Free Press* and elsewhere.

the job would go to the bottom of the list until the entire rotation was completed.

Armstrong explained to the council that this has been an issue for many years and finding the best solution has been difficult since some of the wrecker services be-

lieve they have been slighted when it came to calling for a tow.

Prompted once again by the wrecker services in February, the council requested the five companies to include Van's Body and Frame (Rex Van Horn); McB's Motor Company (Gary Baumfalk);

Stringtime



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Wayne and Millie Lauritsen, known as Sappa Strings, performed during the first "Picnic in the Park" of the summer today at Fike Park. Families and others turned out to enjoy the music and lunch outdoors. Next week's entertainment will be provided by April McAdams of Colby. The picnics will continue in the park at noon each Thursday through July 28.

Time to Salute our Wheat Producers

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Hoxie board stands firm

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press

HOXIE — Sheridan County Health Complex trustees stood firm by their decision to terminate the contracts of the administrator and doctor of only a month.

Trustees Richard Krannawitter, chairman, Randy Farber, vice-chairman, and members Charles Schwarz, Ross Carder, Craig Cooper and Allen Neal met with their attorney, Steve Schwarm, Topeka, during a special meeting Wednesday night. Absent from the meeting was Mary Karnes.

"It is the board's strong position that in the best interest of the health complex, and with consideration of the long-term interest of the community, the hospital, the long-term care unit and overall operational and administrative issues the board, in its discretion, exercised the 90-day contract cancellation and termination provisions of each contract," Schwarm said.

The board's statement about the firing of Paul Hammeke and Dr. Margarita Hammeke came after some 20 residents and employees were allowed time for public questions and comment.

Former board member Nettie Richmeier asked the board if they believed the Hammekes had enough time to settle in to their jobs and whether money spent to "get them here and get rid of them" was

worth it.

Of the \$93,000 tab, \$35,000 was for recruitment, a sign-on bonus and moving expenses, and the balance for severance packages.

Richmeier also wanted to know if the complex faces closing because of the board's recent action and expenditures.

"Not one of us on this board, or the employees, of the hospital wants that. As a board member, I don't see that as a possibility of closing the doors.

"This is a hump in the road and we've got to get over it," Carder said. Richmeier for a second time asked if 30 days on the job was enough for the Hammekes.

"We felt so or we wouldn't have terminated their contracts," Cooper said.

"As a board member, and a taxpayer, I wouldn't have taken that action if I didn't feel it was necessary," Carder added.

Larry Cressler told the trustees as former county commissioner he knew the taxpayers supported the complex wholeheartedly. He cautioned the board about the need to keep the taxpayers' support. "You are risking losing the support of the taxpayers if you keep squandering money and going into secrecy in meetings. This county has always had good support, but you'll lose it if you continue this," he said.

