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LEFT: Doug Lewis, the city's code enforcement officer, pointed to areas of the house at 775 S. Lincoln, owned by Joan Griggs. In assessing the exterior, Lewis noted damage to the roof, foundation, windows and other defects. **RIGHT:** Lewis looked under the shrubs at 440 E. Plum to view



PATTY DECKER/Colby Free Press

the large open hole in the house. This hole in the crawl space has allowed many cats to enter and live inside. These cats are also creating an added health risk, along with the other issues relating to the ordinance. There are no people living in either of the houses.

Fate of two Colby houses in council's lap

By Patty Decker
Free Press Editor

Two houses in Colby could be demolished following a discussion at Tuesday's city council meeting.

Should the council move forward by authorizing both houses be destroyed, it could be the first time in the city's history that this type of action was necessary.

Doug Lewis, the city's code enforcement officer, talked about the properties, one at 775 S. Lincoln, owned by Joan Griggs, and the other at 440 E. Plum, owned by Jay Epard, who is now living

in Salina.

At first, the council considered serving both Griggs and Epard with violations of the environmental code.

Instead, the council decided the two houses should be classified under the unsafe or dangerous structures ordinance.

The majority of the council agreed.

Griggs was present at the meeting, saying that she has been trying to sell the house, but has had no buyers.

She also said she believed that as long as she was paying her taxes on

the property, the city should be satisfied.

In response, council member Ken Bieber said he could not foresee anyone buying that house in its present condition.

Epard was not present. For about two years, the city has been trying to reach him with no success. City crews are already mowing Epard's yard and charging the costs back to him.

For many months, Lewis said, he has tried to work with both homeowners through letters and other avenues to get something done about these houses to no avail.

At the house on Lincoln, Lewis provided pictures to the council showing broken windows, foundation problems, exposure of the house frame where the stucco is missing, and other violations.

He did say that someone has been mowing the yard on a regular basis, but the house has been empty for quite some time.

Epard's house, Lewis said, has turned into a house for cats.

There is a hole in the back part of the structure for crawl space access and, similar to the house on Lincoln, there are holes in the roof, and other unsafe conditions.

Attempts to reach Epard have been unsuccessful as well.

With a majority of the council present, it was decided to continue discussion at the next meeting on Tuesday, July 19. Council members Jim Tubbs and Mark Beringer were absent at this meeting.

If the council acts on the unsafe or dangerous structures ordinance, it would mean that both houses could be demolished and costs charged back to the owners.

The ordinance considers unsafe or dangerous structures being those "unfit for human use or habitation because of dilapidation," defects, or

other conditions which render such structures unsafe or unsanitary.

Another aspect of the ordinance is that removal of the structure could become necessary also when it is a general blight upon the neighborhood or surrounding properties.

The amount of time offered for the owners to do something about the condition of these houses would also be determined by an order, directing the code enforcement officer authorization to proceed with action after the specified time allotted.

Colbyite earns rodeo title

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

Colby's Amy Wilson has added yet another rodeo queen title to her already impressive resume. Wilson is the 2004 Miss Rodeo McCracken and will relinquish her title during the rodeo in McCracken which runs Friday, July 8 and Saturday, July 9.

She will crown the new queen during the event this weekend.

Wilson was the 2002 Thomas County Rodeo Queen and 2000 Thomas County Rodeo Princess. She was also the 2004 Beef Empire Days Princess in Garden City. She earned first runner up honors at the state rodeo queen pageant.

Her involvement in the McCracken rodeo came from its reputation.

"There rodeo has been the best Kansas State Rodeo Association rodeo for seven years," she said, adding she earned a saddle, crown and buckle last year along with their queen title.

"They gave away prizes instead of money," Wilson said.

She said she's enjoyed her participation in various rodeo pageants and is starting another endeavor this fall.

"I have really enjoyed being the 2004 Miss Rodeo McCracken and representing the best "KPRA" ro-



Colby's Amy Wilson is the Miss Rodeo McCracken 2004. She will relinquish her title at the 2005 McCracken rodeo when the new queen is crowned this weekend.

deo," Wilson said. "I have truly been blessed to have this wonderful experience and meet so many friends along the way."

This fall, Wilson will be attending Colby Community College, majoring in agribusiness and television broadcasting. She also wants

to compete on the college's rodeo team in roping and barrel racing.

Wilson has also managed to find time to participate in other activities, including serving as the president of the Solomon Valley 4-H Club and treasurer of the Thomas County 4-H Council.

New board member welcomed

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

The Colby School Board welcomed a new member to its ranks at a special meeting this morning. Janice Frahm was sworn in to take the seat held by John Cranston who did not run for re-election last spring.

Also present and officially on board was Colby High School's new principal Rocky Robbins. July 1 was his start date. He replaced Brian Kraus who took a similar position in eastern Kansas.

The Colby School District will be getting a technology update this school year. The board approved a bid this morning to purchase the necessary equipment to upgrade the district's network.

The low bid of \$68,127.27 from SBC Datacom in Topeka was approved. The high bid of \$74,550 was from Continental Resources. The other two bids, one for \$71,382 was from CDW-G and a bid of \$73,618.75 was submitted by Southern Kansas Telephone.

Phil DeYoung, district technology coordinator, presented the bids. He said the costs were less than the estimate he brought to the board during its meeting last Thursday. And he had originally suggested they put \$25,000 aside this year and pay the rest the year after.

He said the two have now been combined into one payment, although it will be done through a lease purchase or other arrangements.

At the meeting last week, De-



R. Robbins



J. Frahm

Young explained the network needs an upgrade to keep up increasing demands on Internet-delivered curriculum and Internet use.

Also, he said if the board didn't approve a bid this morning, they would have had to wait a year to upgrade the network.

The matter of the high school girls basketball coach Tom Beckman's resignation isn't yet put to rest. Kim and Ralph Wolf and their daughter Samantha, basketball team member Zanae Baird and Susan McLemore all spoke during the public comment portion of the meeting.

Kim Wolf said she supports Beckman and was "disappointed" with the board's decision to accept his resignation last week and said the board let personal feelings interfere in their decision.

Her daughter, Samantha, played for Beckman in high school and also worked with him when helping coach the middle school's seventh grade girls team.

She said people need to respect the decisions Beckman made because he was the one on the court, not fans.

"This is one thing everyone took pride in. If things are really bad, we don't want to support him."

Susan McLemore, patron regarding coach

Baird said the thought board members were letting personal issues override the needs of students. She said laziness is the reason people won't go out for a sport.

McLemore said she knew the board was probably "sick" of the issue and said there was really nothing she could add that hadn't already been said.

McLemore said she thought it looks like the board is getting rid of people that are doing their jobs, including Beckman. She said the program has been built up to the point of success and asked the board not to tear it down.

"This is one thing everyone took pride in," McLemore said.

She added 100 percent of the board isn't against Beckman and suggested the board give the issue one more meeting. If there are legitimate concerns, she said, then get rid of him.

"If things are really bad, we don't want to support him," McLemore said.

