



Toe fishing



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Puddle Duck Preschool student Kailey Shields tried to pick up marbles out of a bucket of water while “toe fishing” as teacher Amy Jennings and students Trey Miller and Makenna Mettlen

watched. Today was “Splish Splash Day” at the school and included several water-related activities. This is the students’ first week at preschool.

Amateur rodeo could be in future

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

The issue of changing the Thomas County Free Fair rodeo from a professional to an amateur event was discussed at the fair board meeting Thursday. It’s not the first time the board has had that discussion in the past year.

Board president Stan Strange said he doesn’t think a professional rodeo is the way they should go and could put on a cheaper rodeo if they switched to an amateur event.

And, he said, it might bring in more local competitors and their families to watch.

Strange said it’s something they need to consider, or possibly cutting back to one night of rodeo action.

“That’s just how I feel,” he said. “I don’t want to do away with rodeo.”

Such a change could save money and they need to look at ways to do that.

Board member Gary Garrett, who is on the board’s rodeo committee, said the biggest expense for the event is the added money for each event.

In defense of a professional event, Garrett said professional rodeos tend to be a “better production” than an amateur rodeo.

Mark Anderson, board member, said if they cut the added money down to nothing, cowboys won’t come.

Board member Darrel Dible said

the only way to get enough contestants is to pay better than anyone else. Besides the cost of putting on the event, they have to deal with timing because the Thomas County rodeo is sandwiched between Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association events in Dodge City and Cheyenne, Wyo.

Strange said they need to find out more about the amateur circuit before they do anything else.

The board also talked about putting up a building on the grounds to use for preparation and cooking for the fair barbecue and storage.

Dible handed out a plan for what the structure could include, like a cooking area, sink, steel cabinets and more.

Anderson said it’s something the board will have to consider if they want to keep doing the barbecue themselves at the fairgrounds.

Dible asked if there was any interest because if there wasn’t, he wouldn’t try to get any estimates or go any further with the idea.

Strange said it was a good idea, one they shouldn’t just forget about.

“It’s got a lot of good points,” he said.

In other business, the board approved:

- The financial report and bills.
- Went into executive session for 15 minutes to discuss personnel issues. Back in regular session, they approved giving groundskeeper Cheryl Kogler a \$550 bonus.

State’s investigation of clinics gets broader

TOPEKA (AP)—Attorney General Phill Kline is seeking access to medical records of girls and women who have had abortions because he believes the documents will help him prosecute two clinics that provide abortions.

Kline’s chief deputy, Eric Rucker, told the Kansas Supreme Court on Thursday that the records of 90 patients are indispensable to an investigation of misconduct by the clinics, as well as cases of child abuse and child rape. A Shawnee County judge subpoenaed the records last year at Kline’s request.

Rucker disclosed that Kline believes each of the 90 records con-

tains evidence of multiple felonies and misdemeanors, many of them committed by the clinics, making Kline’s investigation far broader than previously acknowledged.

The clinics, operated by Dr. George Tiller in Wichita and by Planned Parenthood of Kansas and Mid-Missouri in Overland Park, want the state’s highest court to block the subpoenas or at least narrow them significantly.

The clinics have argued Kline is targeting them because he opposes abortion.

They also want the court to take the unusual step of holding the attorney general in contempt.

Lee Thompson, a Wichita attorney representing the clinics, told the court that the subpoenas are too broad.

Later, during a news conference, he said the clinics are entitled to have more information about what crimes Kline is alleging.

“Both clinics categorically deny having committed any felonies,” Thompson told reporters. “Today was the first time in this proceeding, either before the district court or in the papers, that allegation has been made.”

In Thursday’s arguments, Thompson argued that forcing them to comply with the subpoenas would

violate patients’ privacy. Rucker told the court Kline respects the patients’ privacy but has a duty to investigate potential crimes.

Rucker said the clinics’ potential crimes include violating state restrictions on late-term procedures and failing to report child sexual abuse.

Without evidence from the medical records, the investigation of the clinics and of child sexual abuse could not go forward, he said.

Thompson, a former federal prosecutor, said it’s routine for the subjects of subpoenas to challenge their scope — and for courts to narrow them.

Education board to discuss new commissioner

TOPEKA (AP) — The State Board of Education is scheduled to meet Monday to discuss its appointment of a new education commissioner, but members are divided on what qualifications that person should have.

Board chairman Steve Abrams wants the board to make a decision by Sept. 23 on replacing Andy Tompkins, who left the commis-

sioner’s job in June for a teaching position at the University of Kansas.

But Abrams, an Arkansas City Republican, acknowledged, “That will be pushing it pretty hard.”

Abrams made his comment after board members spent four hours in closed sessions Wednesday discussing how to rank candidates. The next meeting is set for 6:30 p.m.

Monday at the board’s offices in Topeka.

Led by its majority of conservative Republicans, the board decided to give equal weight to a candidate’s education experience and political or business experience.

Other members say such an approach is a mistake.

“I think education experience is a top priority,” said Janet Waugh, a

Kansas City Democrat.

In June, the board deadlocked over two finalists, former Manhattan Superintendent Sharol Little and Deputy Education Commissioner Alexa Posny. Little eventually took a job in Colorado.

Abrams told The Topeka Capital-Journal that the board has “a bunch” of candidates, but declined to give more details.

City to begin conservation plan on fuel

By Patty Decker
Free Press Editor

In light of rising fuel costs, the Colby City Council instructed the city manager to look at conservation efforts at its meeting this week.

Additionally, Carolyn Armstrong, city manager, said that if the price of fuel continues to rise the 2006 budget will not be able to cover it.

“Our fuel prices are depleting the 2005 budget and the 2006 budget was at \$2.30 to \$2.50 per gallon,” she said.

The proposed fuel conservation plan will encompass the police, fire, administration and all public works vehicles, said Carolyn Armstrong, city manager, and will be in effect Monday, Sept. 12.

Without revealing all the details of the new plan due to the sensitive nature of police work, Armstrong did outline in detail the fuel conservation plan for all non-critical situations.

One of the most important parts of the new plan, which concerns the public, she said, deals with non-emergency utility readings and turning on and off electric/water meters.

All effective Monday, Armstrong said, all service orders will be faxed to the public works department each day at 9:45 a.m. and 2:45 p.m. The fax will then be given to the electric department with items requiring special handling.

The water department staff will take care of the service orders at 10:30 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.

“This will eliminate multiple trips to city hall, picking up and bringing back service orders and multiple trips to turn on or off services especially on shut off day,” she said.

If service is being turned on, a representative has to be present, which is different from the past procedure of letting individuals select the time. In other words, effective Monday, the only times available will be between 10:30 and 11 a.m. or between 3:30 and 4 p.m.

In other areas, the 13 vehicles in administration and public works

will be parked at the city facility and not driven to and from work by employees.

“They will also be relieved of the requirement to pay federal taxes for the privilege of driving a vehicle home,” Armstrong said.

Although the personal use of city vehicles for lunch, shopping, and taking children to school is not a change, it will be monitored closer, she said.

As for coffee breaks, Armstrong said the new plan will no longer allow for city crews to return to the shop for breaks unless the crew is working close to that area (four to six blocks).

“Employees will be required to take food and beverages with them for break in their vehicles or at a nearby facility and sewer employees will take their breaks at the sewer plant,” she said.

Other fuel conservation efforts will include:

- No city vehicles being used to transport an employee to work;
- Driving vehicles home for on-call purposes will be limited to four — water, sewer, electric and street;
- Fire vehicles will be left at the fire station except for the on-call worker;
- Weekly fire truck drive checks will be shortened unless further evaluation is required;
- Fuel for the K-9 unit will be charged to the forfeited drug money account, known as the Special Law Enforcement Funds;
- No officers will be allowed to take a vehicle out of the city for transportation to and from work, meals or breaks with the exception of the K-9 vehicle;
- Officers cannot use city vehicles to transport spouses, children, or to go to and from the fitness center.

The city, she said, is attempting to do the same as every household in Colby and across the nation are already doing at this time.

“I believe we have a moral and fiscal responsibility to save as much money as we can during this crisis,” Armstrong said. “Our efforts are aimed at doing everything we can to protect the taxpayer’s money.”

Helping victims



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Jennifer Sorenson, a librarian at Pioneer Memorial Library, tallied fines Wednesday evening. This week, the library is donating money from fines to the American Red Cross for Hurricane Katrina relief. Sorenson said they’ve averaged about \$20 a day. She added because the money is being donated, it’s been motivation for people to come in and pay their fines.

