



COLBY FREE PRESS

Council will take new bids on structure

By Patty Decker

Free Press Editor

Bids to tear down a house on West Plum were rejected during Tuesday night's city council meeting after one of the bidders left out the cost of removing items from the premises.



Armstrong

Colby City Manager Carolyn Armstrong said specification sheets were sent to Hutfles Sand and Excavating, Knowles Construction and Zerr Demolition without realizing that another bidder, Rundel Excavating was available to bid the project.

While Rundel Excavating was the lowest bid, the owner, Bob Rundel, was unaware the bid included more than just taking the structure down.

Armstrong said Rundel put in a good faith bid, which was submitted before the bid sheet included the extra cost of moving items from the house into a semi-trailer. The council agreed and by a majority vote decided to throw out all bids and rebid it. One council member, Tim Hutfles, was absent.

Regarding the contents at the West Plum location, the council was unaware of the items until the actual demolition process was underway. According to Armstrong, after repeated calls to the owner, Jay Epard, who did not return her calls, it was agreed that the contents would be removed and stored in a semi-

trailer. The contents will be photographed prior to sealing the trailer and if there is significant value, the property will be used to defray the city's expenses. However, if there is no value, the city will do whatever is necessary, including a lawsuit, to dispose of the items.

New bids for the West Plum property will be opened prior to the next council meeting scheduled for Tuesday, Nov. 15.

The council also agreed to give the property owner at South Lincoln an extension of 30 days to tear down the structure.

The reason for the extension was because Gerald Griggs, owner, has been making progress on removal of the house and requested an extension in order to complete the project, Armstrong said.

Bids were received for the South Lincoln property by three contractors, but are being held in order to allow Griggs the 30-day extension.

In other council business:

- Council members approved the change order for the Willow and Franklin Street project. The change order is a reduction in price, Armstrong said, of \$6,700. She said the change order simply documented any change in quantities and added items during the construction.

- The final pay request to Sporer-Willow and the Franklin Street project, along with engineer's final certificate was also approved for \$5,000. Both the change order and final pay request are related to street work near the new Wal-Mart location as agreed in earlier council meetings.

'Leaving' kids at play



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Middle and clockwise are: Jackson Pfeifer, Dalton Schuette, Taylor Chessmore, Colton Davis, Josey Friesen, Abe Friesen, Eva Mull and Maddie Turner enjoyed playing in the leaves this morn-

ing at Kids Port in Colby. The children and their teachers took advantage of the warmer fall weather to spend some time outside and toss leaves around.

County approves concrete work

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

The Thomas County commissioners discussed concrete repair at the courthouse and Thomas County Office Complex during their Monday meeting.

Maintenance man Jim McGuire

discussed the repairs, which will be done by him with assistance from the road department.

Part of the repairs needed at the courthouse came about from damage during repairs to the clock tower earlier this year.

Thomas County Commissioner

Paul Steele said they would also like to do something about drainage issues at the courthouse.

Water runoff from the roof pools at the base of the building and he would like to do something to carry the water away from the building to minimize water damage.

The commissioners next meeting will be on Monday at 9 a.m. at the Thomas County Courthouse. The meeting is open to the public.

For questions about meetings or how to bring items to the commissioners attention, call Shelley Harms, county clerk, 460-4500.

Strategic planning group discusses need for public input

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

The county planning core committee met for the first time since April Tuesday at the Quality Inn in Colby.

The meeting included a discussion on where they need to go next. Getting public input on the task forces that will be set later this month is one of the main goals they want to accomplish.

Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce director Mary Ann Downing was pleased with the progress made, even though there's been a lapse in the progress.

"People are starting to think and come up with different ideas, and think out side the box," she said.

At the next meeting on Tuesday, Nov. 15, core committee members will need to choose what task force

they want to get involved with. Downing said all the members will either need to lead a task force or serve on one.

From there, they will set priorities and see what needs to be accomplished. Public input will be key through that process, she said, and anyone in the county with an interest can get involved.

Downing said those interested in being on a task force can call the chamber at 460-3401.

Anyone can be on the task forces, which will include the following four areas: live, shop, visit and work.

Those will be broken down into subjects like beautification, water, agriculture, education and more.

She said the task force effort will be the most challenging part of the process.



Scott Focke

During the meeting, chairman Scott Focke said the task forces will establish their own goals to reach

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Mary Ann Downing, executive director
Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce

objectives.

Committee member Omar Weber wanted to know who would oversee that.

Focke said it would be an ongoing process and groups and organizations already working on issues can get involved in the task force stage.

"A common plan is key here," he said.

Downing said one area that needs

to be emphasized is entrepreneurship and capitalizing on the assets already in the county.

She said the entrepreneurial spirit of the area needs to be rekindled, and it all leads to education. If people are provided with the necessary education, they can start their own business if they choose to follow that path.

Already, the framework is in place to offer the needed tools in the

county.

Downing said Colby Community College is considering courses in entrepreneurship, and she thinks it's a positive they're doing so.

The group discussed the results of a survey given to Colby High School students the week before school got out last year.

She was surprised by the response many students answered the county's small town atmosphere was a reason why they would consider coming back to raise a family.

The core committee's work started in March and its purpose is to develop a new long-term strategic plan for Thomas County.

The first meeting was sponsored by the Pro-active Committee, a joint effort between the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce and the Colby Promotion Committee.

Mother, son seek new counsel

By Jan Katz Ackerman

Colby Free Press

A mother and son won't be going to court as soon as expected.

Eric S. Schiltz, 24, and his mother, Connie Schiltz, 41, were in Thomas County District Court on Wednesday but their attorney, Charles Stewart of Oakley threw the judge and county attorney a curveball.

Stewart told District Judge Glenn Schiffner he thought being a court appointed attorney for both the mother and her son presented a conflict. He withdrew from the cases.

The duo were arrested on Aug. 4, after Connie Schiltz allegedly attempted to take a screwdriver hidden in a shirt and a bag of chewing tobacco hidden inside a radio into Thomas County Jail where Eric Schiltz was being detained.

Schiltz and his mother were



Eric S. Schiltz

both charged with the alleged attempt to take contraband into a penal institution.

Schiffner told Stewart the cases

had been on file for at least 75 days and he should have made an attempt to withdraw from them before informing Thomas County Attorney Andrea Wyrick and him.

Both Eric Schiltz and Connie Schiltz told Schiffner they plan to plead not guilty in the cases and asked to have a preliminary hearing before District Magistrate Judge Richard Ress.

After Stewart officially withdrew from the cases, Ress appointed Doug Spencer, of Oakley, to represent Connie Schiltz.

Cal Williams, of Colby, was appointed as Eric Schiltz's attorney. Preliminary hearings in both cases have been set for 1:30 p.m. Dec. 20.

Both Eric Schiltz and Connie Schiltz remain out of jail on recognizance bonds while they wait for their cases to be heard.

Tax collection better than expected

TOPEKA (AP) — With the state collecting more taxes than expected, officials are preparing to revise the fiscal forecast that legislators and Gov. Kathleen Sebelius will use in budgeting.

University economists and legislative researchers plan to meet at 1:30 p.m. Thursday with Department of Revenue officials and members of Sebelius' budget staff. They'll emerge with new projections for state revenue collections through June 2007.

Four months' worth of good budget news have preceded the meeting. According to the Department of Revenue, the state collected nearly \$1.6 billion from July 1, when the 2006 fiscal year began, through Oct. 31, which is nearly \$99 million more than forecasters had anticipated.

Also, tax revenues during those four months were running 10 percent ahead of collections for the same period last year.

The new forecast is expected to make next year's job of fashioning a fiscal 2007 budget easier, though lawmakers still will face pressing financial issues.

"I think it's going to be very positive," Senate Ways and Means Committee Chairman Dwayne Umbarger, R-Thayer, said Wednesday. "I am very optimistic that we're going to get a good report."

In June, the estimating group predicted the state would collect \$4.83 billion in tax revenues in fiscal 2006, with the total growing about 3.4 percent over fiscal 2005.

Starting in July, the state has collected about \$46 million more than anticipated in income tax revenues, with much of the \$697 million coming from the taxes withheld from workers' paychecks.

Those revenues also are 12 percent greater than the amount collected during the same four months last year.

And corporate income tax collec-

tions, at \$90 million, are nearly \$29 million ahead of expectations — and nearly 40 percent higher than the July-through-October period in 2004, the Department of Revenue said.

"It means things are improving in Kansas economically," said Budget Director Duane Goossen. "It's pretty simple. You get more collections when more people are working and making money and corporations are profitable."

Alan Conroy, director of the Kansas Legislative Research Department, said some Kansans are likely to ask whether the state's economy is "on the edge of a bubble that's ready to burst again."

But he added: "Individual job numbers look great. Income taxes look great. There are still a lot of positive signs."

Still, more optimistic revenue projects don't necessarily translate into easy budget discussions next year for Sebelius and legislators.

