



COLBY FREE PRESS

Colby to look for new activity director, coach

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

The Colby School Board Monday voted not to renew activities director Jeff Quenzer's contract. The vote was 4-3 with board members Gerry Fulwider, Joel Powell, Kevan Taylor and Dewey Augustine voting against renewal.

Board president Tracy Rogers and members Janice Frahm and Stan Molstad voted to renew the contract.

"The majority of the board felt we needed to go in a different direction for our A.D.," Rogers said.

The board had three 20-minute executive sessions to discuss personnel issues.

Rogers said its possible Quenzer's contract could come up again at the next meet-



Jeff Quenzer



Greg Koenig

ing, but he didn't know if Quenzer would come back even if the chance were offered.

Quenzer, who was at the meeting, tried to defend the job he had since 1999.

"I think they need to let people they hire do their job and not try to micromanage things," he said today.

Quenzer also thanked Rogers, Frahm and

Molstad for their support.

"They've been team players and are very good for education," he said.

The board also approved the resignation of Colby High School head football coach Greg Koenig. Koenig will continue to be with the district as a teacher. He was not at the meeting, and today cited personal reasons for his resignation.

He coached for two seasons.

Fulwider made the motion that between now and the Jan. 16 board meeting they form a committee to start the search for a new football coach and members of the public be included.

"They have a high level of interest in the football program," Fulwider said.

He said a search several years ago was blamed on the board and administration,

and gave the impression, "The board doesn't get anything done and is 'weak.'"

A coach was eventually hired, but not the candidate chosen from the search.

Fulwider said "People have said Superintendent Kirk Nielsen and Quenzer should be fired if there's not a winning football season."

He said people who react that dramatically, and if they feel so strongly, they should be involved.

Robbins asked why the board would include the public.

"You haven't lived here long enough," Molstad said.

Frahm asked if it was normal to appoint specific people to a committee, or to involve the public. She didn't think they should do it on one specific occasion if

they're not going to do it all the time.

Taylor said there was a committee when Robbins was hired, but it was made up of board members and teachers. Frahm said she wasn't against the specific people, but rather the idea.

"I know football is very important to many people but it's not the reason why we're here," Rogers said.

Fulwider said it was only a suggestion, and he said the public should be involved, and he amended his motion to read the committee should have two or three people from the community, instead of naming specific people. The board approved the motion 5-2. Also approved were contracts for principals Terrel Harrison, Robb Ross and Rocky Robbins and curriculum director Diana Wieland.

Holiday happenings



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Colby Grade School kindergartners performed a short holiday concert Tuesday in the cafeteria. Students in the district and

around the county are getting ready for their winter break, which starts Friday. The students were from Krysti Terrell's class.

City employee dies while on job

By Patty Decker

Free Press Editor

Colby City Council members were told prior to their meeting Tuesday a city employee died suddenly.

Carolyn Armstrong, city manager, told council Tab Stupka, 47, with the wastewater treatment facility, collapsed on the job Tuesday afternoon and the ambulance was summoned. Stupka has worked for the city since Feb. 1, 2001. The cause of death was not available and Armstrong had no other details.

"Not only is this hard on his family and particularly during the Christmas season, but his death also leaves a big hole in our operation," she said.

Stupka was the only certified licensed wastewater treatment operator in the city following Gary Delzeit's resignation in October. In his capacity, Stupka was responsible for taking tests, watching mineral levels, reading flows and evaluating critical information at the sewer plant.

Armstrong said she has been in touch with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment on what the next procedures are needed.

"The state and other surrounding counties have already offered help," she said. "The entire council certainly extends their sympathy to the entire Stupka family."

Funeral arrangements for Stupka are pending at Harrison Chapel, 190 S. Franklin Ave., Colby.

New York City enters second day of strike

NEW YORK (AP) — New Yorkers faced another bone-chilling commute Wednesday without their cherished subways and buses as a transit strike entered its second day, leaving both patience and shoe leather wearing thin.

With talks still stalled, a judge imposed a huge fine Tuesday against the Transport Workers Union — \$1 million for each day of the strike — and lawyers were due

back in court Wednesday.

The sanction was levied against workers for violating a state law that bars public employees from going on strike. The union said it would immediately appeal, calling the penalty excessive.

The strike over wages and pensions began Tuesday morning, just five days before Christmas and at a time when the city is especially busy with shoppers and tourists.

Chamber of Commerce director resigns; search begins for new one

By Patty Decker

Free Press Editor

The Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce is losing its director at the end of the year.

Mary Ann Downing, who became the executive director Nov. 16, 2004, will leave Dec. 30. She declined to explain why she is resigning.

She plans to continue assisting the chamber on various project, but has decided to step down from the top spot.

For Downing, working within the chamber afforded her many advantages that she was grateful about.

"I have enjoyed meeting a lot of people and the many experiences working with others as the director," she said.

"I have no plans or any idea on what I will do next, but I still plan to volunteer with events when I can."

Until replacements can be found

to fill Downing's job and the part-time position vacated by Robin Tubbs last month, chamber president Charles Schwanke said the board does have an interim director in mind.

"We cannot announce who the interim director will be," he said.

"We (the Chamber's Board of Directors) thank Mary Ann for her efforts and the time and energy she put in," Schwanke said.

During her one year, Schwanke said Downing went through all the Chamber events and functions.

"The executive director's job is demanding and there's a lot of extra time involved with events and



M. Downing

What is the chamber?

The Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce is searching for a new director and among the qualifications, Schwanke said, the person would need to look at the positive side of every facet in Colby and the county.

Some people have described the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce executive director as the community's cheerleader.

Charles Schwanke, president of the board, agrees with that description, but went one step further by saying, "The best way to describe the Chamber and its director is to read its mission state-

ments," he said.

Some of the activities the director organizes and assist with include

ment. The Chamber strives to enhance the business climate of the area it represents, improve its public image and to promote this area as an excellent choice of place to live work and visit."

As a member affiliated with the chamber since 1967 and on the board for two years, Schwanke said he believes the organization shouldn't be a political group.

"Everyone is on the same side and strives for the betterment of Colby and Thomas County."

If interested, call 460-3401 or stop by the office in the Thomas County Office Complex, 350 S. Range Ave. in Colby.

Leadership Thomas County, Colby Community College Welcome Picnic, Picnic in the Park, Pickin' On

the Plains, Celebration on the High Plains, the Christmas Parade, Santa City and the annual Colby/Thomas County Annual Banquet.

Downing also assisted with "arms" of the organization such as the Colby Promotion Committee, involvement in the annual Home Show, the Kids For Safety Program, the Community-Wide Strategic Plan, and coordinating monthly newsletters, every-other-month luncheons, and periodic seminars to help strengthen businesses, which is one of many reasons why businesses get involved with their Chamber of Commerce.

"We have about 200 members," Downing said. She has heard from many members how much they appreciated receiving e-mail communications regarding upcoming events or other Chamber-related messages.

"In today's world, e-mail is what we all do," she said.

Schwanke said he thanks Downing and all the past chamber directors for keeping membership numbers high with about 90 percent of the businesses in the county represented.

He also recognized the Colby Convention and Tourism group and how that group works closely with the Chamber.

"Leilani Thomas (director of tourism) and her group helps the Chamber on many events and, of course, the Chamber extend help the other way too," he said.

"We are self-funded by businesses," he said, "receiving no tax revenue whatsoever or being attached to the county or city."

The success of the Chamber, Schwanke said, hinges on participation by the city and county businesses through membership and/or volunteering at Chamber events or serving on the board or as a Chamber Diplomat or Ambassador.

Decision in Dover case makes Kansas standards vulnerable, some saying

TOPEKA (AP) — Critics said Tuesday that recently adopted science standards for Kansas public schools are vulnerable to a legal challenge after a federal judge's ruling in Pennsylvania against intelligent design.

But those critics stopped short of predicting a federal lawsuit against Kansas' standards, which treat evolution as a flawed theory. They said elections next year could change the state Board of Education and cause it to reconsider the standards.

"Then our state can save an immense amount of money in defending what is clearly unconstitutional and failed practices and policy," said Pedro Irigonegaray, a Topeka attorney representing educators and scientists who wanted standards reflecting mainstream scientific views that evolution is well-established. In Pennsylvania, U.S. District Judge John E. Jones III ruled that the Dover Area School Board violated the Constitution last year when it required the biology curriculum to include intelligent design, which says an unspecified intelligent cause is the best way to explain some complex and orderly features of the natural world.

Jones said the policy impermissibly promoted religious beliefs. The judge called intelligent design "an old religious argument for the existence of God."

Kansas' new standards, adopted by the State Board of Education in November, treat evolution as a flawed theory. The standards con-

tain an explicit disclaimer saying the board isn't promoting intelligent design, but critics note intelligent-design advocates drafted some passages.

"It was an effort to include intelligent design and treat it as science, disparaging evolution along the way," said Barry Lynn, executive director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State, in an interview from his Washington office. "That will not stand."

Board Chairman Steve Abrams,

an Arkansas City Republican who supported the new standards, said the circumstances in Kansas and Pennsylvania are much different, given that the Dover board mandated intelligent design in its curriculum.

"We're not doing that," he said. "It's about teaching good critical thinking skills."

Kansas' standards say the theory that all life had a common origin has been challenged in recent years by fossil evidence and molecular biol-

ogy. They also describe "macroevolution" — the theory that changes in one species can evolve into a new species — as controversial.

Neither statement reflects mainstream scientific views, prompting criticism from groups such as the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

The Seattle-based Discovery Institute, which supports intelligent design research, criticized the Pennsylvania ruling as a "futile attempt to censor science."