



# COLBY FREE PRESS

## Landfill might raise fees

By **Patty Decker**  
*Free Press Editor*

Colby City Council at its meeting Tuesday learned county landfill rates for household garbage could increase 3.5 to 14 percent and construction and demolition fees could rise 50 percent by the first of the year.

City Manager Carolyn Armstrong, Public Utilities Director Marc Gilman, and Councilman Jim Tubbs learned of the proposal while attending their annual landfill advisory meeting with the Thomas County Commissioners.

The purpose of these annual meetings, Armstrong said, is to discuss ways of making use of the landfill as fair as it can be for everyone — whether living within the city or county.

One issue Tubbs talked with the commissioners about last week was the city's interest in keeping taxes from going up in 2006 should the county increase costs for normal household garbage.

Armstrong told the council 90 percent of the county's solid waste revenue is collected from the city by way of the sanitation department.

"Our municipal solid waste costs \$28 a ton and calculating 5,000 tons which is about the annual amount dumped, the city pays the county \$140,000," she said.

Should the county raise the rate from \$28 to \$32 per ton (14 percent), the city would be looking at paying \$160,000. If the rate goes from \$28 to \$30 a ton (7 percent), the city would pay \$150,000. Even if the county considers a \$1 increase or about 3.5 percent, the cost would go up from \$140,000 to \$145,000.

As to why city taxes might increase should the county raise landfill fees, Armstrong explained the sanitation department is an enterprise fund, meaning it operates strictly on the money it generates from the service. If the sanitation department does not collect enough from its portion on the utility bill, the cost would be passed on to the city's residents and businesses.

Tubbs and Armstrong also told council the county is considering raising the construction and



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

A front-end loader was used to scrape dirt in the new pit at the Thomas County Landfill today. The county will start using the new pit as early as January because the old pit is full, said landfill supervisor Larry Jumper. Neither the new cell nor the old pit are lined.

demolition tipping fee from \$10 a ton to \$15 a ton, a 50 percent increase.

Tubbs said he questioned some of the county's reasoning as to who pays and who doesn't pay fees at the landfill. Residents living within the city limits of Colby, Rexford and Brewster pay for anything that goes across the weight scales. However, some Thomas County residents pay and others don't. Tubbs spoke of a situation he knew about involving one county individual dumping 14 tons of clothing and was not charged any fees.

"This makes no sense," Tubbs said. The commissioners said they would check into that. Another concern Tubbs said involved the old pit on the east side of the landfill and that it was his understanding that municipal solid waste and construction and demolition items were being dumped into the same pit.

"Maybe the county is filling up the hole as fast as they can since a new cell is dug," he said.

Tim Hutfles, councilmember,

said it was his understanding that there are different requirements for municipal solid waste and construction and demolition.

It was the majority of the council's understanding that the two types were disposed of separately since solid waste, by law, must be dumped in a "lined" pit and covered everyday while construction and demolition didn't mandate covering each day.

"The commissioners told us that all solid waste and construction would be dumped in the same lined pit," Tubbs said.

Armstrong added that it was her understanding from the meeting and the Kansas Department of Health and Environment that solid waste must be dumped in a lined pit and construction debris did not require that.

According to information provided by landfill supervisor Larry Jumper, the total amount of tonnage each year at the landfill is 10,000 tons. Of that, 5,000 tons is the normal household garbage-type and of

that 90 percent is generated by the City of Colby.

The other 10 percent is from Brewster, Rexford and the county. The remaining 5,000 tons includes construction and demolition, grass clippings, trees and other similar waste.

Armstrong reiterated that at the meeting, they were told anyone in the city would pay fees, while there are exceptions for individuals in the county, citing the county individual dumping 14 tons.

She also said any information reported from the Dec. 12 landfill advisory meeting could have changed by now.

However, council did want to go on record with concerns about placing both construction and household garbage together in the lined pit, the reasoning behind the procedures and fees as to who pays and who does not for items crossing over landfill scales, and the probability of increased fees.

## Whooping cough found in the county

By **Jan Katz Ackerman**  
*Colby Free Press*

State officials say whooping cough is on the rise in northwest Kansas.

Sharon Watson, communications director for the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, said Wednesday the state has confirmed two cases of whooping cough in Thomas County.

There have been no cases of the disease in the area for the past five years.

"There were two confirmed cases in northwest Kansas in 1999, and no cases in Thomas, Logan, or Sheridan Counties within the past 10 years," Watson said.

With the increase in the disease being seen across the state, Watson said the likelihood of a continued increase in northwest Kansas calls for vaccination of children.

"There are 20 confirmed cases in northwest Kansas now, so the likelihood of it spreading exists," Watson said.

"This makes it important to get infants, those under 1-year-old, vaccinated because they are more likely to suffer severe consequences."

Symptoms of pertussis, commonly known as whooping cough, are similar to a cold or resemble the flu including a runny nose, sneezing, fever, and a mild cough. Symptoms can last up to two weeks and are followed by increasingly severe coughing spells.

Fever, if present, is usually mild. Symptoms appear between six to 21 days, averaging seven to 10 days, after exposure to the bacteria.

"During a classic coughing episode, the signature whoop is heard when the patient struggles to breathe," Watson said.

"Cough usually produces thick mucus.

"Vomiting may occur after a coughing episode and the lips and nails may turn blue due to lack of oxygen.

"The patient is left exhausted after the coughing spell."

Watson said the Center for Disease Control urges individuals who suspect they have pertussis to limit contact with unvaccinated children and see a physician as soon as pos-

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sible. She said the single most effective control measure is immunization of the most vulnerable population (children under 1 year of age) against pertussis.

Immunization is recommended at ages 1, 2, 4, 6, and with a booster at kindergarten entry.

Infants are at highest risk for pertussis-related complications, including seizures, encephalitis "swelling of the brain", severe ear infection, anorexia "severe loss of appetite" and dehydration. She said pneumonia is the most common complication and cause of infantile pertussis-related deaths.

Prior to 2005, there was no vaccine for children 11- to 18-years-old, or for adults.

"The vaccine begins to wear off after a child gets to be around 10-years old," Watson said.

She said the booster shot is available for children 11- to 18-years-old and will provide them protection as well as reduce the possibility they bring the illness home to young children.

Watson said prevention is key to containing whooping cough.

"If you or a member of your family is exhibiting symptoms including cough for two weeks or longer without other explanation, please contact your physician," she said.

"There are medications to treat the infection and relieve the symptoms."

## State needs to help all students

TOPEKA (AP) — As legislators waged fierce debates over education funding in recent years, the state was shortchanging its poor and minority students, according to a new report from the Education Trust Inc.

The report, released Thursday, calculated the gap between the state and local revenues available to the poor students and those for rich students at \$151 per student in 2003, the last year data was available for all states. The gap was even larger between whites and minorities, rising to \$1,773 per student.

The study excluded federal dollars. The study also didn't take into account the additional \$290 million Kansas legislators pumped into K-12 education during 2005.

The new spending was a response to Kansas Supreme Court rulings ordering more money, including higher amounts spent on poor, minority and special needs students. Kansas spends more than \$3 billion on K-12 education.

But Alan Rupe, a Wichita attorney, said legislators haven't yet solved the basic problem

## School donates to Genesis

By **Tisha Cox**  
*Colby Free Press*

Students and staff at Colby Grade School showed the spirit of the holiday season by collecting 16 boxes of food for Genesis of Thomas County.

The school turned in the donations to the food bank Tuesday.

In what has become an annual event sponsored by the Parent-Teacher Organization, the Helping Hands Giving Tree collected more food than ever before, said Marilyn Friesen with the PTO.

Friesen said this is the third year for the food drive, which is used to replenish the food bank for winter after its Christmas baskets were given out.

A group of fifth grade students, including Kyle Peterson, Shasti Stupka, Alexa Schindler, Kenzie Curry, Megan Bear, Baker Bugbee, Zell Bieberle, Kade Lemieux, Cameron McLaughlin and Kaid Wright helped load up the food. Friesen said this year, the stu-



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Colby Grade School students Baker Bugbee, Zell Bieberle, Shasti Stupka and Kyle Peterson helped sort food donated by students

and staff to Genesis of Thomas County. It was part of the annual Helping Hands Giving Tree program sponsored by the PTO.

on Genesis' list.

And, she said, students can still donate food by dropping it off in the

grade school office after winter break is over.

Many students were still hoping

for an opportunity to give, so they have extended the time for students to donate food.