



COLBY FREE PRESS

Council wary of curbside recycling proposal

By Patty Decker

Free Press Editor

Rather than Colby residents take recyclable items to a drop off point, a resident approached the city council at its recent meeting about starting a curbside recycling business.

Harvey Homes, a respiratory therapist with Citizens Medical Center and entrepreneur, appeared in hospital uniform to accentuate his professionalism while conceptualizing an idea regarding his company — Respicorp.

“The goal of the company is in recycling medical products that can be used in third world countries,” he said.

“I spoke with Mike Woofter Woofter Construction, Gerry Fulwider, Thomas County Economic Development and Lynette Koon recycling, about the idea,” he said.

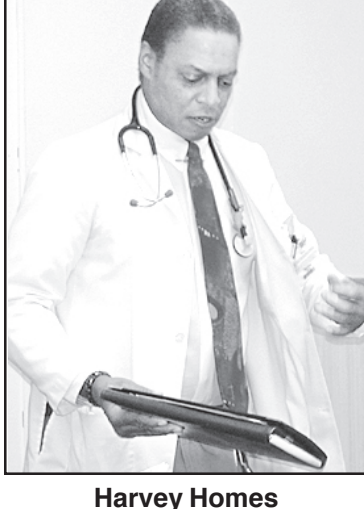
Woofter owns Woofter Construction, Fulwider is Thomas County’s economic development director and Koon oversees recycling. Homes said when he spoke with Koon, she indicated his proposal would not be in direct competition with regional recycling efforts.

He told the council he visualizes small, blue bins being placed at homes within the city limits and having his staff follow the city trash trucks on the normal route days.

“We would use two trucks for picking up recyclable items and one truck for taking the items to market,” Homes said.

The aluminum, iron, steel, plastics and glass would be separated at curbside and stored in a facility in Colby until sent off to various recycling facilities. Using proceeds from the sale of these items or even using facilities capable of recycling items into medical equipment, Homes said those products would then be exported to places like China, India and Mexico.

Mayor Ken Bieber inquired about the location for storing the



Harvey Homes

recyclable items and Homes said he was considering a facility on College Drive and Country Club, across from Lang Diesel.

Bieber also voiced concerns about the profitability of such a business and the costs involved for fuel, trucks, storage, salaries and more.

Substantiating those costs, Bieber said six full-time sanitation employees driving the route costs the city nearly \$350,000 a year.

“Based on the numbers you have presented,” Bieber said, “I don’t know that your numbers can support your claims for making this thing go.”

Homes said he was hoping to have residents buy the bins for \$10. Bieber estimated only 20 percent or less of the Colby residents would consider doing purchasing a bin.

After discussing the issue, council agreed that they needed more information.

“We need a financial plan before we consider approving,” Bieber said.

Homes said he would look at other avenues for funding, such as grants and bring back more information.

“This is the wave of the future and (the council) consider riding the wave,” Homes said.

Army helicopter crashes

KABUL, Afghanistan (AP) — The U.S. military said Wednesday that hostile fire likely brought down a Chinook helicopter that crashed in eastern Afghanistan, and officials said the status of the 17 American servicemembers aboard was “unknown.”

If confirmed, Tuesday’s attack would apparently be the first time a U.S.-led coalition aircraft here has been downed by hostile fire, representing a major new threat to the coalition. The U.S.-backed mujahideen war against Soviet oc-

cupiers in Afghanistan in the 1980s finally turned when the Afghan fighters figured out how to shoot down Soviet aircraft.

The troops were on a mission against al-Qaida fighters when the helicopter went down in mountainous terrain near Asadabad, in Kunar province.

“The helicopter was transporting forces into the area as part of Operation Red Wing, which is part of the enduring fight to defeat al-Qaida militants,” a military statement said.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Rachelle Morrison of Colby made sure her 3-month-old twin daughters Kennedy and Campbell were safely buckled into their car seats today. Morrison and her husband, Jeff, have five children, and for them, buckling up is a habit.

New child seatbelt law goes into effect Saturday

By Tisha Cox

Colby Free Press

Kansas Parents have years of experience under their belt securing their children in the car. Starting Saturday, they have to make sure who still needs to be under the seatbelt.

State law already requires children 4 years old and younger must be buckled into a car or booster seat.

The new law requires children 4 to 8 years old use a booster seat if they weigh less than 80 pounds and are under a height of four feet, nine inches.

Baughn said drivers can be pulled over and fined for having an unrestrained child in the car. He added a deputy can’t pull over anyone for not wearing a seat belt, but a motorist can be fined for the offense if pulled over for another reason.

“It’s one of many changes we’re dealing with,” he said.

The fine used to be \$20, but has increased to \$60.

Colby Police Chief Randy Jones said the new child restraint law will be one more thing for the police department to enforce.

“But the department will have to wait to see how it’s included into city ordinances to determine how they will enforce the law,” he said.

Baughn and Jones inform their respective officers with law changes during once-a-month staff meetings.

Jones said the officers get copies of the new laws, and he also works with the court to see what the fines will be when a new law is broken.

“It takes a concerted effort,” he said.

Though the sheriff and police are responsible for enforcing the law, parents also must take responsibility for keeping their children buckled in.

Colby’s Rachelle Morrison and her husband Jeff have five children, ranging in age from 10-years-old to

3-month-old twin girls.

Rachelle said she knows about the law, and has always made sure her children are buckled up.

“I think it’s necessary,” she said.

Rachelle said Carter, 7, is still too small to use a regular seat belt.

“It goes right across his neck, and in a booster seat, he’s safe and can see out,” she said.

Using seatbelts is a habit for the Morrison family.

“I’ve always done this,” she said. “It’s always been part of the routine since they’ve been little.”

She drives a Yukon, and all of the kids have their own seat in the vehicle.

It’s part of her system among her 2-year-old, then the twins, and two other boys.

“There has never been a problem with any of the children because they’re used to riding in a car seat,” she said.

School funding favored

TOPEKA (AP) — A new school funding package brokered by a House coalition, the governor and Senate leaders from both parties has become a potential solution to satisfy a Kansas Supreme Court mandate to increase funding for education.

The package — nicknamed “Mo-Jo” because it has sponsors from Morton and Johnson counties — would increase school spending by \$160 million and meet a Friday deadline for additional education spending set by the justices. Two Senate committees endorsed the plan, moving it to possible debate Wednesday.

“We’ve got to be optimistic,” said Senate President Steve Morris, R-Hugoton. “We tried to be patient with the House to see if they developed a plan. That hasn’t happened yet.”

The coalition, Democrats and moderate Republicans in the House, hoped to bypass Speaker Doug Mays and other House GOP leaders, who want to limit the courts’ power before considering new spending on education. House members were expected to have debate Wednesday on a constitutional amendment dealing with the judiciary.

And Mays, R-Topeka, promised to block consideration of the coalition-supported school finance plan.

Senate leaders said that’s within Mays’ power but unwise if legislators are to meet the pressing court deadline.

“He can do that in all probability. But the speaker will suffer the consequences of the public in doing that,” said Senate Vice President John Vratil, R-Leawood. “We spent three days hammering this out. We don’t have three days before the first of July.”

The House amendment surfaced after a day of hearings. The language is similar to the one the House rejected Sunday, but its leaders were determined to keep trying. The House has failed on two votes to approve a school spending plan.

Senators have already approved a \$161 million school package and a version of the constitutional amendment. The coalition’s package came together after three days of negotiations with bipartisan legislators and Gov. Kathleen Sebelius. Rep. Bill Light, R-Rolla in Morton County, said the coalition is still seeking the 63 votes needed to pass the plan in the House against Mays’ objections.

“It’s a positive step for getting us home,” Light said. “It’s going to be on his shoulders what he wants to do. We just have to wait and see.”

Senate Education Chairwoman Jean Schodorf, R-Wichita, said it was worth looking at any package to break the impasse.

“In the end, something’s got to happen to get out of here,” she said. “If this isn’t the last plan, it almost is.”

If justices do not like the Legislature’s response to their June 3 decision, they could issue an or-



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Cold cooking

Learning how to make fun, easy snacks was part of the Super Sitters babysitting clinic today for Mishaela Benson, (left to right) Megan Bear, Hailey Fryback, Lexie Woolf and Teal Stewart. The class learned to make Jell-O jigglers. The two-day clinic, sponsored by the Thomas County Health Department, Thomas County Extension Office and American Red Cross, was to teach children how to be babysitters.

Gambling bill alive

TOPEKA (AP) — Expanded gambling is getting another chance in the Senate, but its top leader isn’t sure the resurrected proposal will come up a winner.

“That may get a couple more votes, but I don’t know if it would be enough to get it passed,” President Steve Morris, R-Hugoton, said Tuesday night.

An 11-2 vote Tuesday by the Senate Ways and Means Committee sent the measure the full chamber as lawmakers worked in a special session that has lasted eight days. It was prompted by a Kansas Supreme Court order for lawmakers to come up with \$143 million more for education by Friday.

Like the proposal — dubbed

“Little Casino” and rejected by senators on a 22-17 vote last Friday — the latest plan calls for a maximum of 5,500 slot machines divided among pari-mutuel dog and race tracks at Kansas City, Wichita, Frontenac, Anthony and Eureka.

And like the defeated plan, the new version calls for one casino in Wyandotte County and another in southeast Kansas.

But Sen. Jim Barone, D-Frontenac, said it has one major change designed to appease opponents of widespread gambling in Kansas.

It would ban any additional casinos in the state for five years.

Antigambling lobbyist Glenn Thompson was confident the newest proposal also would fail.