



14 pages

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## Don't fiddle on the roof



JAN KATZ ACKERMAN/Colby Free Press

**ABOVE:** Hoxie resident D. J. Robinson went home from work Tuesday to find his carport had collapsed from the weight of snow and ice resting on it. Robinson said the boat and car sitting under the carport were declared total losses. A new homeowner, Robinson made his first payment on the house Monday. **RIGHT:** Workers cleared debris from the roof of the Colby Fire Department while taking down a wall Wednesday. City Manager Carolyn Armstrong said the entire bay is coming down because it was declared unsafe. The roof on the north bay collapsed Dec. 31 because of heavy snow.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

### Roof repair company says removing snow from roof can be hazardous

By Tisha Cox  
Colby Free Press

Home and business owners are in over their heads when it comes to the roofs over their heads. Most roofs around town remain covered with ice and snow, which, in some cases, has caused damage. The worst case was the collapse of the roof over one of the truck bays Dec. 31 at the Colby Fire Department because of the weight of heavy snow and ice. Other roof damage has occurred, making plenty of work for both roofing businesses and insurance agents. Jake Haines one of the owners at Roofmasters Roofing, Inc., said they're keeping busy. "We've received numerous

calls," he said. The heavy snow cover itself hasn't caused the problems, but melting over the past weeks has. Roofmasters have received calls from both home owners and businesses. "Some have significant damage and some have a little bit," Haines said. He explained melting and freezing snow have formed ice dams along the edge of the roofs on many homes. Water gets behind the dam, then under shingles and causes leaks inside the home. Leaks can also concentrate in one part of a roof, where weight can damage rafters inside. Haines said there really isn't anything homeowners can do to head off problems. "You can't avoid it," he said. "It's just Mother Nature."

He said getting up on top of a house under these conditions is dangerous, and shouldn't be done. "The best thing to do is to call for help in dealing with the leak, and to wait for the snow to melt," he said. Knocking snow off a roof can cause other problems. Snow piled up close to a house can cause foundation or basement damage as it melts. Jim McLaughlin, an insurance agent with Thomas County Insurance, said they have received calls about roof damage, including one total collapse. He has also had calls about gutter damage, and expects more as the snow melts. "Some damage might not become obvious until after more of the snow is gone, and that is when I expect even more calls," he said. He also advised people should find out if their insurance covers roof collapses because of weather, because that coverage is not included in all policies. At the city, City Manager Carolyn Armstrong said the outer wall of the damaged bay at the fire

**“Some damage might not become obvious until after more of the snow is gone.”**  
Jim McLaughlin,  
Thomas County Insurance

station was knocked down earlier this week, with more work to come. The inner wall on the second bay was declared unsound. "The whole thing is going to have to come down," Armstrong said. The city's fire and rescue trucks are still under cover at the National Guard Armory, where they have 30 days to store the vehicles. However, as that time is nearly up, the city is exploring other options. She said they are looking into other options, such as the former Frontier Auto building at 445 North Lake, owned by Service Oil. "We don't have an answer on that yet," Armstrong said. The vehicles, especially the rural pumper truck, must be stored inside. Exposing that truck to below-freezing temperatures can cause damage making it unusable in event of a fire. A committee has also been formed to look into constructing a new fire station. Armstrong said the city owns land along Country Club Drive, near the Co-op gas station. That property has been speculated as a future site of a new fire station. The city has more than \$100,000 budgeted for a new fire building. "The collapse changed the time frame, but the money and land are a step in the right direction," she said.

## Students, Colby museum to celebrate Kansas Day

Colby Grade School will participate in many different activities for Kansas Day on Monday. There will be a number of presenters leading these activities. January 29, 1861, Kansas became an official state. In celebration of the 146th birthday, Colby Prairie Museum of Art and History is hosting a day full of games and activities Sunday from 1 to 5 p.m. It is a free day for the community and there is something for all ages, said museum director Sue Taylor. The day will celebrate agriculture and its impact and importance in Kansas. There will be many things for visitors to do including grinding wheat, wheat weaving, planting crops, making butter, a toy farm equipment display and other fun

**Kansas Day  
1-5 p.m., Sunday  
Prairie Museum of Art and History  
in Colby**

activities and demonstrations. For the younger children, there will be a storyteller at 1:30 and 3:30 p.m. Participants can join in the ever popular "scavenger hunt" in the museum galleries or visit the "buffalo station" will include a buffalo skull, hide, games and activities about the buffalo. One of the features of the day is the exhibit "Wheat People: Celebrating Kansas Harvest." The traveling exhibit from the Kansas State

Historical Society looks at why harvest is so important. More than just economic survival for farmers, it is part of our past and our tradition. From the golden age of threshing to computerized combines, harvest time holds memories for many Kansans. Refreshments will be served, and activities are for all ages. Monday, Colby Grade School is holding many activities to honor the state's birthday.

## Snow days won't change school

By Tisha Cox  
Colby Free Press

Four missed days because of snow won't put a dent in the vacation calendar for the Colby School District. The district closed school before Christmas break and after because of snow. District financial officer Jo DeYoung said the state requires students to be in school 1,116 hours during the year. The district has about 1,200 hours built into its calendar. That is about 179 days in school. "We certainly have that in our calendar," she said. DeYoung explained there is a misconception when it comes to snow days because the school operates on an hourly system. Days missed are counted as missed hours. Superintendent Kirk Nielsen said even the incentive day ap-

proved at the Monday school board meeting won't hurt. The board gave students and staff Friday, Feb. 23, off because the district met adequate yearly progress on the state assessments in 2006. Missed school hasn't been the only problem because of snow. Repeated snowfall has made it impossible for school buses to get to some rural residences. This week, buses are staying on paved roads in the county. Nielsen said some parents have been called, letting them know where they need to meet the bus so their child can be picked up. He has even driven some of the county roads. Nielsen went out Monday to take a look at the conditions. "East-west roads aren't in good shape, but the north-south roads are in better condition. Because of many paved roads out in the country, the buses can reach most places. Things are back as normal as they

**“East-west roads aren't in good shape, but the north-south roads are ...”**  
Kirk Nielsen,  
Colby Superintendent

can be," he said. Snow removal costs are another issue. DeYoung said from the first big snow New Year's Day weekend, the district ran up \$10,000 in overtime and snow removal. There have also been a few minor problems with roof leaks at district buildings.

## Sheridan County Clerk asks for state's help with April 3 election

By Jan Katz Ackerman  
Colby Free Press

Sheridan County Clerk Paula Bielser asked officials in Topeka for help in preparing for the county's next election. The April 3 election will be for one Hoxie commission seat, four Hoxie school board seats, three hospital seats and Selden's mayor and five council seats. Bielser, who serves as county election officer, asked Secretary of State Ron Thornburg's office to help her exchange two ballot

counters she plans to quit using for more voting machines. Any machine purchased by a county must meet criteria established by Thornburg's office. Bielser refuses to use the electronic machines for the counting process of future Sheridan County elections. "We are hand counting everything from now on," Bielser said. The Help America Vote Act implemented federal mandates which required counties to purchase electronic voting equipment. Federal law requires at least one

handicap accessible machine per polling place. The equipment assists visually and hearing impaired voters and some of Sheridan County's equipment failed during the Nov. 7 general election. According to Brad Bryant, deputy of elections with the Secretary of State, Sheridan County's machines cost of about \$5,000 each. Bielser said a malfunction of one of the tabulators caused about 50 ballots to not be counted correctly, 15 of which applied to District No. 1 held by incumbent commissioner Ron Schamberger.

The situation fueled a controversy which ended with Schamberger's challenger, Victor Bielser, Paula's husband, to be overlooked as the winner despite a recount which declared him winner. Victor Bielser paid for the recount as required by state law, but the canvassing board, made up of Commissioners David Zimmerman, Keith Kennedy and County Treasurer Esther Bainter who sat in for Schamberger, refused to certify the recount election since they did not officially order it. Bryant said Bielser can use the

Automark machines she has which produce an optical scanned ballot which she can hand count. Or, she can buy iVotronic machines which produces an electronically tabulated tally of all votes cast. Sheridan County owns two Automark machines, one of which is out of order. Bielser said she not only wants to get the one machine repaired, she has asked Bryant to help exchange the tabulators the county owns for one or two more Automark machines. "There's nothing that says you

have electronic tabulators," Bielser said. "But you have to have handicap accessible voting machines. What they are is just a fancy pencil." After last November's election, Bielser called E S & S of Omaha, Neb., and was told the failure could have resulted from ink or paper used for the ballots. Nothing definite could be determined without sending the machines in to the factory for calibration. Despite asking E S & S to pick up the faulty machine, it remains at the Sheridan County Courthouse.