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TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Workers looked over the Colby Fire Department station last month while tearing down two bays damaged during a roof collapse Dec. 31. Colby City Council is researching the feasibility of building a new station.

Council ponders new fire station

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

A new fire station for the city of Colby is slowly becoming a reality. Colby City Council discussed the issue at its meeting Tuesday. The roof over the two north bays at the fire station collapsed under the weight of heavy snow Dec. 31. The two bays were torn down last month for safety reasons. A new fire station is a must-have for the city.

"This is a necessity and it will probably get done quickly," council member Phil DeYoung said. Considering what is needed to build a station, council needs time. A committee was formed with councilmen Tim Hutfles and Mark Beringer, fire chief Bob McLemore and members of the fire department. The group will look at information and portfolios from several architectural firms. The council tabled a decision on requesting proposals for station design. "This is just the first step,"

DeYoung said. The committee will present its findings at the next council meeting. Another concern, he said, is the entire Colby City Hall and fire station, attached to city hall on Franklin Avenue is on the National Register of Historic Places. City Manager Carolyn Armstrong is researching how the city should handle that. DeYoung said insurance will pay for the work that has been done at the station. Two of the fire

department's seven trucks — a rescue vehicle and rural pumper truck, were stuck in the building until the roof could be removed. The firefighters have been working out of the National Guard Armory since the collapse. The city has saved more than \$100,000 to build a new fire station, and purchased land several years ago for that purpose. The parcel is north of the High Plains Co-Op gas station across from the former Orscheln's building at 1100 S. County Club Drive.

Ethnicity huddles up in Kansas

By John Van Nostrand
Colby Free Press Publisher

According to Kansas State football coach Ron Prince, football in Kansas has gone beyond the punts, passes and kicks. Either a high school game on Friday nights or college games on Saturday afternoons, football has brought people together. "Football is a powerful vehicle for social change," Prince said Tuesday.

Prince was the featured speaker, and first of the school year, for Colby Community College's Max Pickerill Lecture Series. Prince, an African-American, spoke about the black and other ethnic settings of Kansas. February is national African-American History month. "On Friday nights, you celebrate town pride," he said. "On Saturday, fans support their state. Fifty, 60, 70, 80, 100 thousand people come to one place and celebrate who they are."

Prince, 37, reminded the students, college staff, fans and residents in the crowd of Kansas' history, especially during the westward development of the United States.

In the 1850s, the Kansas-Nebraska Act determined if Kansas were to allow slaves. Prince said Kansas' choice was important considering to the south was the diverse economic interests the rest of the country was utilizing. To the west of Kansas, was the vast territory slowly being developed.

"People of this state chose freedom," he said.

Prince said, afterward various towns across Kansas were established by a diverse ethnic group because those people knew Kansas wanted freedom. Nicodemus, about 80 miles east of Colby, was established in 1877 by former black slaves.

"There is diversity in this state. Those people have freedom and opportunity on their minds," he said.

Prince, either through his family or his years in football, would experience diversity even more. Born in Omaha, Neb., and raised in Junction City, Prince saw the cultural diversity through his father's military career.

"My father had a positive attitude," he said. "He said there are no strangers. There is no race, only the human race."

In the neighborhood he lived in, strong with military families, he met people of German and Asian decent.

"There is diversity in this state," he said.

At about the same time he was learning that, other parts of the country did not have such a mixture of people. Prince referred to Prince Edward County in Virginia closing its public schools in the early 1970s rather than having black and white

... there are no strangers. There is no race, only the human race."

Ron Prince, Kansas State football coach

students in the same class.

"In my lifetime, to have that much callousness and hate," he said. "What we've been doing since 1850, some places were not even in the late 1960s and early 1970s."

The University of Virginia had its first black football player in 1972. Kansas State's first black player was in 1949.

After graduating from Junction City High School, Prince played football for two years at Dodge City Community College. He was named an all-conference offensive tackle and had various academic honors. After Dodge City, he transferred to Appalachian State in Boone, N.C.

After his college playing days, Prince returned to Dodge City in 1992 as a volunteer assistant coach. After one season, Prince was hired as an assistant coach at Alabama A&M.

In 1994, Prince coached the offensive line at South Carolina State for one season then went to the University of Virginia. Kansas State hired him in December 2005. Prince has said he has always thought about coming back to Kansas.

In his first season with the Wildcats, Prince coached them to a 7-6 record which ended playing in the Texas Bowl.

Prince said he has a good attitude about Kansas. Knowing how popular the T-shirts that state I love N.Y., "we need to feel the same about Kansas," he said. "I'm proud to be associated with this state. If you are from Hoxie, Saint Francis, Colby, you ought to be too."

Next for Max Pickerill

According to Tom Moorhouse, chairman of the committee that organizes the Max Pickerill Lecture Series speakers, Ralph Nader is tentatively scheduled to speak at 7 p.m. Tuesday, April 17.

Nader ran for president in the 2004 election as an independent. Nader was known before his political aspirations as a consumer advocate.

Nader's speech is expected to be about global warming.



Prince

County waits for payment

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

It is uncertain how Thomas County will fare when it comes to reimbursements of state and federal money for storm clean up.

Asking for some of the \$362 million dollars of clean up money is many days, if not weeks away, according to Thomas County Road and Bridge Supervisor Clair Schrock.

"I talked with the FEMA guys yesterday and they are planning on a meeting in the next 10 days," Schrock said.

Staff members of the Federal Emergency Management Agency has been meeting with city and county officials in the 44 western Kansas counties to determine how much damage money is needed to repair roads, water and electrical systems, and a variety of other public service features.

Once the estimate of damage is obtained, cities and counties can submit plans for projects which fall in to two categories. A large project is one with damages totaling more than \$59,000 and a small project is one under that threshold.

"We'll probably submit a lot of small ones," Schrock said.

He said the most difficult part of this job in determining damage is to differentiate when the damage took place during the Dec. 28-31 storm or after it.

"When stuff thaws out we'll look at road damage and costs of snow removal," Schrock said.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Sister Loretta Podlena, librarian at Sacred Heart School, second from left, worked with Abby Kuper, Courtney Tinkham and Brock Horinek Friday. Kuper is from St. Joseph School in Oakley. Students from the Oakley school came to Colby to celebrate Catholic Schools Week, said principal Dave Evert. The students worked on crafts and other activities.

Wheat farmers happy with snows but fears remain

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

This year's wheat crop still lies buried under a blanket of snow.

How the snow might affect the crop is up in the air, but one thing is for certain — farmers are glad for the moisture. Fears are the amount of snow, and how long it will cover winter wheat crops, may eventually cause damage.

Mark Myers grows corn and wheat on his ground southwest of Mingo. He said the crop should be

all right for now, and as long as no ice forms on the top of the soil.

"Right now I think we're all right," Myers said. "It's better than being too dry. We have the potential to plant another crop if the wheat is dead. It's a blessing either way."

The wheat lies dormant during winter months and will not grow until the weather warms up.

January has provided much snow. The area has had years of dry weather.

Myers has also talked to neigh-

bors who have dug through the snow to check on their wheat. He said they say things are fine so far.

Gerald Tubbs, who has been farming more than 60 years, said he has not seen anything wrong yet.

"I've been through many snowy winters, but there hasn't been a snow this good. I can't see how this could hurt anything," he said.

A late freeze would damage the crop, but as long as the ground doesn't freeze, Tubbs said the crops should stay healthy.

It's a blessing either way."

Mark Myers

"I think it's doing just like it should," Tubbs said.

Brian Olson, area agronomist with the Northwest Research-Extension Center in Colby, said the moisture from the snow should help more than harm.

"If the wheat crop suffers damage, farmers can always plant something else for fall. We don't know what's going to happen with

the wheat," he said.

He cautioned farmers to keep an eye on their crop, just in case. Ice could cut off oxygen to the wheat, and cause damage.

The snow is not beneficial for just crops. It will also go a long way in helping improve pasture conditions.

"It's definitely a blessing," Olson said.