

Opinion

Your turn

Confusion still exists

Vernon Flanagin
Colby
It is apparent that confusion still exists regarding the proposed college building project. The legal notice, Resolution 2, appeared in the January 26 and February 2 issues of the Colby Free Press and should be carefully read by all Thomas County residents.

The facts are these:

- All costs given are approximate (estimated).
- The project has been described as a \$20-million facility. This does not include amounts required for maintenance, taxes, or insurance on the Project.
- Of the \$20 million:
 - Approximately \$4.49 million will be generated in the form of general obligation bonds. This \$4.49 million bond question will be on the April 3 ballot, and you as taxpayers in Thomas County will have the opportunity to cast your ballot on this proposal.
 - Approximately \$5 million is expected to be generated in grants and private donations.
 - The expected total of all payments to be made by the College pursuant to the LeasePurchase Agreement over 20 years as described in Section 6 of the published Resolution is \$15,950,000.
 - As mentioned in Section 6 of the Board Resolution, the LeasePurchase Agreement will go forward without any voter consideration unless a petition is signed by the required number of qualified voters (about 130) requesting that it be on the ballot at the next election.
 - The bottom line is that if a petition is not filed within 30 days from the Friday February 2 publication date, this multi-million dollar proposal will not be on the April 3 ballot and can be automatically spent by the College Board without the voters of Thomas County having the opportunity to have any say in the matter.

We feel that anything involving this much money and affecting the residents of the entire county for a long period of time should come before the voters. Contact phone numbers to sign a petition are 462-5411 and 462-0461.

Where to write, call

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-4774
U.S. Sen. Sam Brownback, 303 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. 202/224-6521
U.S. Rep. Jerry Moran, 2443 Rayburn House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515. 202/225-2715 or Fax 202/225-5124
State Rep. Jim Morrison, State Capitol Building, 300 SW 10th St. Rm. 143-N, Topeka, Kan. 66612. 785/296-7676 e mail: jmorriso@ink.org web: www.morrisonfamily.com
State Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer, State Capitol, 300 SW 10th St., Rm. 128-S., Topeka, Kan. 66612, 785/296-7399 ostmeyer@senate.state.ks.us

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail jvannostrand@nwkansas.com or pdecker@nwkansas.com. Opinions do not necessarily reflect the *Free Press*.



More mild than wild

I watched the most of the Grammys Sunday. I can't say I was impressed, but it's been a really long time since I saw or heard anything on that awards that has left an impact.

There was, however, one tiny bit of spark left in the annual awards that honors the best in music each year.

The Dixie Chicks won at least three awards, which was vindication for the band.

The Texas trio has been around several years now and drew criticism a few years back for comments against President George W. Bush.

In their acceptance speech for the last award of the night, the members said music is one form of freedom of speech, and the awards are an expression of that, and people should keep at it.

Plus the whole thing was rather somber compared to past years.

I don't think that's a bad thing, but the Grammys has definitely become more respectable than it was in the late 80s or early 90s.

More importantly, the awards are a reflection of what plays on the airwaves on the radio.

Of course that has changed with the evolution of technology and the advent of the MP3 and iPod, but even though the method of delivery has changed, the music itself hasn't really.

There is still rock, country, blues and everything else.

As far as other bands go, I still can't believe the Red Hot Chili Peppers are still going strong. They've been around since I was in high school, and I graduated in 1992.

Tony Bennett, Burt Bacarat, Stevie Wonder, the Eagles, The Police, Tom Petty, Smoky Robinson and other "old timers" still hold their own with the likes of Justin Timberlake, Wolfmother, Gnarl Barkley and more.

Strange, yet amazing at the same time.

Wild weather

I can't believe upstate New York is heading for a record 11 feet of snow. I'm still reeling from two feet of snow last month and almost six continuous weeks of snow cover here.

I just can not imagine what 11 feet would be like — all at the same time.

I don't know that this area has ever had that much snow at once, except maybe during the last ice age about 10,000 years ago.

Maybe the weather is working itself out. We've had what could be considered mild winters the past few years, and for the first time in a while, the area is getting a real taste of how harsh the season can be.

Global warming keeps getting mentioned



Tisha Cox
● Off The Beaten Path

when it comes to the weather. The phenomena is just starting to gain mainstream acceptance, but even I have to admit it might not have started in recent years.

And even if it did, people might not have recognized the effects because weather records have only been steadily kept for about the past century.

Anything before that and it's mainly left to written accounts and what people have observed.

Either way, there is still almost six weeks left of winter, and a never mild spring after.

Over the past month, I've had people point out to me that the last big snow storm for western Kansas was in October 1997. Fortunately, I missed it. I was in school in Stillwater, Okla., and all we got was rain and cooler than normal weather.

One of my friends from Tulsa e-mailed me last week, talking about how bad the weather has been down there — cold and icy.

They normally don't get weather like that, and have weather that is downright mild compared to what we have here in the winter. They get ice, not snow.

And as much as the weather here sometimes drives me nuts, I'll take snow over ice any day.

Tisha Cox is a general assignment reporter/photographer for the Free Press. Her column appears on Mondays. tcox@nwkansas.com.

State in the running for new lab

Kansas is in the running for a \$451 million federal laboratory to research and develop counter measures to animal, human and zoonotic (infecting both animals and people) diseases.

The proposed facility will provide the nation with an integrated research and response capabilities to protect the public health and enhance the nation's capability to protect livestock and the livestock industry from both naturally occurring and internationally introduced disease threats. This research facility will employ anywhere from 250 to 500 scientists, technicians and other support staff.

Kansas is one of 11 states that has qualified for this phase of the laboratory site selection process of the federal government. In fact, Kansas has two sites in the competition, one in Manhattan and the other in Leavenworth. Both of which would make excellent sites for the location of the federal laboratory.

— — —

I have been receiving some mail and calls regarding the depletion of water by building so many ethanol plants in Kansas.

It is important to know that the water used for ethanol production must be purchased from existing water rights owners. If the water rights cannot be purchased then the plant construction may not proceed. Further, the water rights obtained cannot exceed 85 percent of the total water rights the previous owner held. That takes 15 percent of the existing water rights "out of production" leading to a net savings in water usage potential. Thus, the building of ethanol plants actually conserves rather than increases usage of water.

— — —

Meals provided by lobbyists are a topic of discussion and possible legislation. It is not unusual for a legislator to approach a lobbyist and request the lobbyist take a few fellow members to lunch somewhere in Topeka. That practice is often referred to as "finding a pigeon."

I rarely attend lunch with lobbyists unless it is Dutch treat or I am paying for the lobbyist meal as well as mine.

I always felt the practice, at best, was rude to the lobbyist and thus I avoided most noon lunches outside the building unless they were open to all legislators including staff. Seems like many lobbyists have agreed with me and this year complained about the practice.

The news media heard about it, contacted some lobbyists and I expect to see an expose' of the practice in the very near future. I totally support a ban on any meals provided to legislators unless it is open to all legislators including the staff.

This would not apply to legislators constituent groups providing their legislators a meal while they meet with him/her in Topeka. It would apply only to registered lobbying organizations.

— — —

My Governmental Efficiency and Technol-



Jim Morrison
● Rep. Dist.

ogy Committee are attempting to create legislation to enable people to search and easily find budget information, including both historical data as well as current and proposed budget modifications.

I hope to have a mechanism whereby you will be able to visit www.kansas.gov, our Kansas web site, and simply find information regarding what road projects are planned for any county, city or local unit of government, how much it cost and how it will be financed (general fund, federal funds, grants etc). That search process is actually quite simple but politically extremely difficult to accomplish.

Kansas has a wonderful search function for developing reports regarding school district information. The URL is ksde.org/popular.shtml.

The location for school finance information is located at www3.ksde.org/leaf/leaf.html. This provides an example of what we would like to do for the entire state of Kansas budget. Break it down to understandable and relevant information fitting your needs. This "transparency in budgeting" process is very difficult to legislate.

Senator Ralph Ostmeyer and I will be visiting the district Saturday for our listening tours and information sessions. The times and places should be advertised in this newspaper so be sure to check the times and please come ask questions and let us hear your opinions on the issues.

Thank you very much for the honor of electing me to be your representative. I look forward to seeing you at the informational meetings.

COLBY FREE PRESS

155 W. Fifth (USPS 120-920) (785) 462-3963 Colby, Kan. 67701

State award-winning newspaper, General Excellence, Design & Layout Excellence, Column Writing, Editorial Writing, Sports Columns, News, Photography.

Official newspaper of Thomas County, Colby, Brewster and Rexford.

John Van Nostrand - Publisher
jvannostrand@nwkansas.com

NEWS

Patty Decker - Editor
pdecker@nwkansas.com

Tisha Cox - General Assignment
tc Cox@nwkansas.com

Jan Katz Ackerman, Area Reporter
ackermanjk@ruraltel.net

ADVERTISING

Crystal Rucker - Advertising Sales/Director
crystalr@nwkansas.com

Kristi Powell - Advertising Sales
kpowell@nwkansas.com

Emily Wederski - Advertising Sales
ewederski@nwkansas.com

BUSINESS OFFICE

Lea Bandy - Circulation Manager
lea@nwkansas.com

Jeanette Applegate - Bookkeeping & Ad Building
japplegate@nwkansas.com

Evan Barnum - Systems Administrator
support@nwkansas.com

NOR'WEST PRESS

Jim Bowker - General Manager

Richard Westfahl, Lana Westfahl, Jim Jackson, Delisa Allen, David Erickson, Betty Morris and Dana Huthansel

THE COLBY FREE PRESS (USPS 120-920) is published every Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday, except the day observed for Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas Day and New Year's Day, by Haynes Publishing Co., 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701.

PERIODICALS POSTAGE is paid at Colby, Kan. 67701, and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Colby Free Press, 155 W. Fifth, Colby, Kan., 67701. THE BUSINESS OFFICE at 155 W. Fifth is open from 8 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Monday to Friday, closed Saturday and Sunday. MEMBER OF THE ASSOCIATED PRESS, which is exclusively entitled to the use for publication of all news credited to it or not otherwise herein. Member Kansas Press Association, Inland Press Association and National Newspaper Association. SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Colby by carrier: 4 months \$40, 8 months \$56, 12 months \$74. By mail with in Colby and the nine-county region of Thomas, Sheridan, Decatur, Rawlins, Cheyenne, Sherman, Wallace, Logan and Gove counties: 4 months \$53, 8 months \$65, 12 months \$82. Other Kansas counties: 4 months \$60, 8 months \$70, 12 months \$85. All other states, \$85, 12 months.

Nor'West Newspapers

Haynes Publishing Company

Mallard Fillmore
● Bruce Tinsley