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City of Colby garbage collection crew empties what is called a tipper can this morning near Country Club Drive and Eighth Street. City officials are changing the garbage department. Households

will eventually be required to have one tipper can. The can will be emptied by the operator of a new garbage truck which will be purchased in the near future.

Free garbage cans available to residents

By Patty Decker
Free Press Editor

Residential households in Colby will soon be required to have at least one green tipper can following approval by the city council during its April 3 meeting.

"If someone has never purchased a tipper can, the city will provide those homes with one, but it will be city-owned," said Chris Bieker, public utilities director.

The tipper can requirement is part of the city's revisions to the garbage collection department. The cans will be used for a unique garbage truck yet to be purchased.

The operator of the truck will be able to empty the can from within the truck.

Bids for the new one-man garbage truck have been sent Bieker said and the city could be deciding on a truck by the end of the month. Once the truck is ordered, Bieker said the new garbage service could begin as early as August.

The tipper cans are only required for residential areas and not businesses, he said.

In addition, homeowners or renters can still purchase the cans for \$66 each rather than opting for the free can.

"The cans will be the property of the city," Carolyn Armstrong, city manager, reiterated, "and must be returned if the resident leaves

Colby."

Armstrong said the council emphasizes the change in sanitation service is being made because of the importance of controlling the escalating cost for trash service.

Bieker said the new service will have other advantages too.

"I think it will save in labor costs, worker's compensation claims and once the inconvenience of getting all the bugs worked out — this is going to be a plus," he said.

Another part of the new one-man garbage truck is residents will no longer be able to bag grass clippings for collection.

If someone has grass clippings, Bieker said, they will need to have a second tipper can for that, along with the can for household garbage.

"Many people hire someone to cut their grass," he said, "which would mean that whoever does the work would haul the grass to the landfill."

Bieker said his department ordered 1,200 more tipper cans this week since their inventory was low.

As for the 95-gallon tipper cans, Bieker said he has already received calls for them and many of the "city-owned" containers have been delivered.

The tipper cans are also designated with stickers and serial numbers identifying them as not privately owned.

Residents wanting a free tipper can are asked to call the public utilities department, 460-4420.

Colby police search for murder suspect

By Patty Decker
Free Press Editor

Colby police are asking for the public's help in locating a man wanted for questioning in the murder of a 23-year-old Las Animas, Colo. resident.

Henry Isom, 31, of Las Animas, is being sought by the police in Las Animas, but it's possible that he may have been in Colby or could be arriving since he has a family member living in town, said Gary Shull, Colby police detective.

"Isom could be driving a gold Kawasaki motorcycle with Colorado plates (058-HLT)," Las Animas police said.

Shull added that Isom is a black Hispanic male, 5'6" tall, 152 pounds, with a very short buzz-cut type hair length.

Chasity Ann Stine was a mother of three children whose body was discovered Monday (April 2), an official with the Las Animas police department said.

"Stine was last seen on Saturday

(March 30) getting ready for a date," a family member told police.

"When we tried to call her, she didn't answer."

In addition to calling the authorities, family and friends looked for days for her. Her body was discovered wrapped in a quilt in an empty and wide-open field in Bent County, Colo.

Isom is suspected of being involved since he was an ex-boyfriend and the father of her children.

A restraining order against Isom was ordered two weeks prior to Stine's disappearance.

If anyone has information, Shull encourages them to call the Colby Police Department, (785) 460-4460 or the Las Animas Police Department, (719) 456-1363.



Isom

Brewster water condition better

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

Brewster residents have safe drinking water and one of three wells has been put back in service.

"We are advising people that the nitrates in Brewster's city water well No. 4 are now at 5.0 milligram per liter," City Superintendent Mike Schultz said. "Well No. 2 has also maintained safe levels."

In February, Schultz notified Brewster residents they should not give city water to infants who are 6 months or younger or use the water to make infant formula.

He advised residents nitrates depletes oxygen in infants under 6 months old and causes blue baby syndrome.

Nitrates in drinking water can come from natural causes, industrial or agricultural sources, including septic systems and run off.

Levels of nitrate in drinking water can vary throughout the year, and Schultz, in March, said well No. 4 would remain out of service until the nitrate level dropped.

The wells are below the maximum contaminant level of 10.0 milligrams per liter of water, the limit allowed for use by the Federal Safe Drinking Water act of 1974.

Brewster's water is tested for nitrates on a state required quarterly basis as required by state law.

"Once again, we want to explain that nitrates turn into nitrites in the body and these inorganic chemicals can be weather related, seasonal and can be naturally occurring," Schultz said.

Humans often unknowingly consume nitrate from food rather than from water. Vegetables such as

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Mike Schultz
city superintendent

spinach, lettuce, beets and carrots contain significant amounts of nitrate.

Drinking water normally contributes only a small percentage of the total nitrate intake.

Nitrates in excessive amounts can be a serious health concern to infants under six months of age if consumed.

It is recommended bottled or low level nitrate tap water be used until further testing and the returning to safe levels.

Schultz said Brewster's underground water source runs from southwest to northeast.

He said while well No. 4 is located just south of the football field in the northeast part of town it is not likely fertilizers used on the grass are the problem.

Well No. 2 is located at the corner of Nebraska Avenue and First Street.

Well No. 3 is about 50 feet away from well No. 2.

Costs may consolidate polling places

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

Consolidation of polling places in Thomas County is a real possibility according to county officials.

The issue has come up since the April 3 election, said County Clerk Shelly Harms.

"I was approached and asked to consider consolidating voting to one location in Colby," she said.

Harms said she has not received any additional calls or letters yet, but is still considering consolidation.

High gas prices are prohibitive to hauling voting equipment across the county, as is the cost of having to hire extra poll workers. Because the equipment is bulky and heavy, she had to hire even more help to move it for the election last week.

Last week's election was the second since the county consolidated

locations after the 2004 election. The first was the November 2006 mid-term election. Voters in Thomas County cast their ballots at one location in Rexford, Brewster and Colby.

Harms is already thinking ahead to the 2008 presidential election. Tuesday, the county received four more voting machines.

For the 2008 election, for example, one machine each could be used in Rexford and Brewster with the remaining six set up at the Colby Community Building.

Advance voting would be available for three weeks before the election, either by mail or at the courthouse. In that case, the clerk's office would be open extended evening hours and Saturdays leading up to the election. Harms hopes to budget for more voting machines in the future.

The commissioners would have

the final say on budgeting for more machines, but they would not on consolidation.

"It's primarily up to the county election officer," she said. Harms is the election officer. "The first time I went with what they wanted."

Consolidation was first suggested in 2005. In December 2005, the commissioners voted to consolidate polling places.

That decision was made because of the Help Americans Vote Act, which requires states to have voting equipment compliant with the American Disabilities Act.

She chose consolidation then to save the county money but that is the reason it is being considered again now.

The county received \$44,000 from the state to purchase voting machines and had \$22,000 set aside in its own budget.

Equipment used April 3 was not

the same as what was available during the November 2006 election.

Thomas County will no longer have on its premises voting equipment from Voting Technologies International. In November, the county had problems with the equipment as it counted votes. There were also technical support problems.

The county returned those machines, and Ron Thornburgh, Kansas secretary of state, set a deadline for clerks in the seven counties that used the same equipment to pick a new company. Voting Technologies failed to comply with state and federal requirements.

Their equipment was replaced with voting machines from Diebold.

"The Diebold equipment is easier to use, and posed no problems during the election Tuesday," Harms said.

County canvasses April votes; Menlo, Gem still have empty seats

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

Thomas County Clerk Shelly Harms said the Thomas County commissioners canvassed the April 3 votes during Monday without any changes from the preliminary count.

The commissioners went over the numbers from each precinct and community.

"They have to verify the results on the reports," Harms said.

"They also open each provisional and determine whether or not they count."

She said the outcomes of none of the races changed.

Provisional ballots are from those who voter registration is suspect, but are still allowed to vote.

Fifty-seven provisional ballots were cast during the election. Of those, 56 were approved. One was not approved because the voter registration application was not signed.



Harms

The number of provisionals was high for this type of election.

"This was a bigger turnout than normal," she said.

The Colby Community College wellness center proposal on the polls helped drive up voter numbers. Voters turned down the proposal to build a \$15 million wellness center and gymnasium on campus.

The center would have increased property taxes, if approved.

Voter turnout for the election exceeded expectations with 43 percent. Harms said that is double the usual turnout for a local election. For the 2005 election, turnout was about 20 percent.

For advanced voting, 637 advance ballots were cast. That was also more than usual for an election with local questions and races.

Harms said there was one interesting outcome from the election.

"In Gem, only one candidate received write-in votes.

That was Phyllis Ziegelmeier, who is now the mayor," she said. "The city had no one file to run for city council."

Menlo had no one file for its council or mayor positions and there were no

write-ins in the election.

Ron Thornburgh, Kansas Secretary of State is investigating, and will decide what is the next step.

Troy Staats was Menlo mayor, but he did not run for re-election.

Menlo city council members are Ed Fringer, Ron Hazlett, Richard Fields, Travis Durham and Joe Carmen.

Durham and Carmen were up for re-election but neither filed.

Menlo is located east of Colby on U.S. Highway 24.

Its population as of July 1, 2006, was 55 people.