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Council denies rezone of Range Avenue house

By Andy Heintz

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The Colby City Council on Tuesday agreed to deny a request to rezone a vacant house in the 900 block of South Range Avenue as a neighborhood commercial zone to house a counseling service office.

Ken and Elaine Ptacek wanted to use the house as an office for Heartland Rural Counseling Services. City Manager Caro-

lyn Armstrong said a public hearing was held before the Colby Metropolitan Planning Commission, a combination of residents from the city and Thomas County, on Sept. 10. Three neighbors appeared at the meeting to voice their opposition with the rezoning, she said.

Armstrong said the commission felt turning the house into a business and rezoning the area would amount to spot zoning and recommended the council deny the request. She said the council has three options when they receive a request

from the commission. They can accept the request, override it or send it back to the commission for further examination.

Armstrong said spot zoning is when small businesses are allowed in noncommercial areas. This can lead to businesses scattered through residential areas. She said the planning commission makes sure growth is kept in orderly zones where residential and commercial areas are largely separated.

In other business, the council:

- Approved a waiver for Casa De Bur-

ritos, 345 North Franklin Avenue, that allows them to sell alcohol at their restaurant. They need a waiver because the restaurant is located within 300 feet of a the Redeeming Love Church, 320 N. Lake, making it illegal for them to sell alcohol without being given permission by the council after a public hearing. The restaurant was mistakenly given a drinking license on July 23 without a public hearing. Their license was revoked on Aug. 18 when the council learned about the mistake.

Doctor W.G. Romine the II, co-pastor at Redeeming Love Church with his wife the Rev. Orvilla Romine, said he had no problem with the restaurant selling alcohol. He said the owners of the eating establishment were good people and added that he had eaten there and planned to eat there again.

Romine did ask the owners not to sell alcohol on Sunday if they ever decide to open on that day. The restaurant is cur-

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Nebraska may stop irrigation to meet Kansas demand

HOLDREGE, Neb. (AP) — Shutting down irrigation in parts of the Republican River basin during dry years in order to send Kansas more water is being considered, but only as a "last resort," Nebraska water officials told about 300 farmers on Thursday.

The caveat didn't placate some in the crowd, who came to hear officials say how they plan to ensure that Nebraska doesn't again break a three-state compact by not sending Kansas all the water it is owed. The agreement that guides the use of the river includes Colorado as well.

"A significant source of my income comes from irrigation, so it would have a huge effect," said Doug Schluntz, who farms near Huntley and stood in the back of the jammed auditorium as the state discussed the possibility of an irrigation shutdown in parts of the basin.

That possibility is being floated following an arbitrator's opinion this summer in a dispute between the two states.

Officials say they haven't yet determined which areas might be off limits to irrigation during so-called water-short years — defined as years when Harlan County Lake near the Kansas border is less than about one-third full. Early estimates provided to The Associated Press last month showed that more than 330,000 acres could be affected. There are about 1.2 million irrigated acres in the basin, one of the most productive farming regions in the most heavily irrigated state in the coun-

try.

"It will be a loss of revenue for this part of the state," said Matt Harrison, who farms near Republican City. "Who's going to make up for the loss of state sales and income taxes — Lincoln, Omaha, Kearney?"

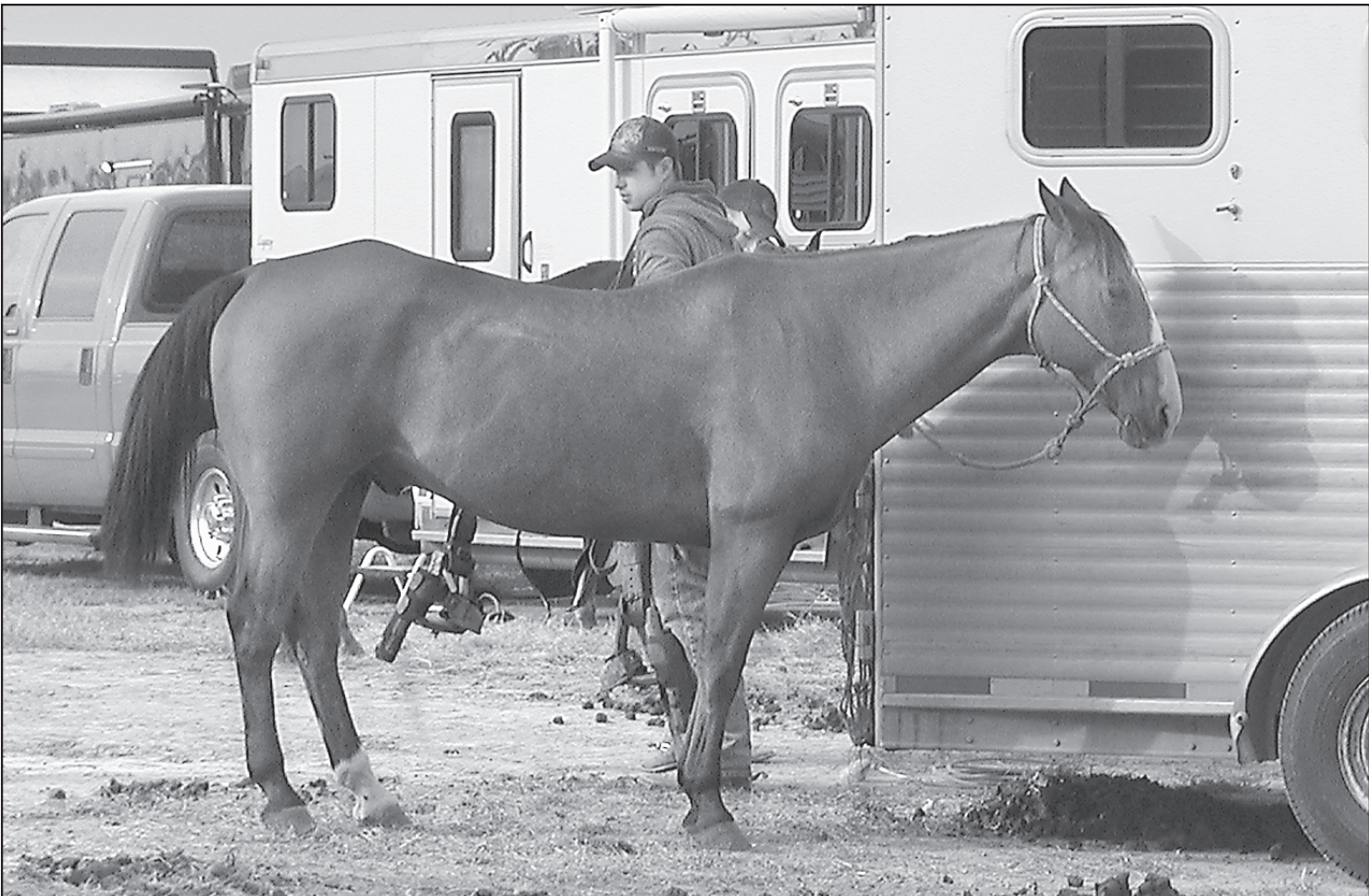
Officials have said that water-short years occur between one quarter and a third of the time. Barring an extreme drought, there probably won't be another one for at least two years, because Harlan County Lake is full today.

In July, Colorado-based arbitrator Karl Dreher said Nebraska owed Kansas just \$10,000 for overusing river water in 2005 and 2006 — a fraction of the \$9 million Kansas demanded — but that Nebraska's plan for future compliance with the compact was insufficient. Dreher didn't suggest a solution.

"The state of Nebraska will be in compliance in the future. Non-compliance is not an option," said Brian Dunnigan, the state's top water official. Asked if state's the plan might include shutting down irrigation, he said "yes, but there are a lot of things we would consider before we got there."

Those mainly include pumping groundwater into the river to bolster flows, and buying surface water — basically paying farmers not to use the water stored in reservoirs — so that it flows down the river and can go to Kansas instead of being spread on farmers' fields.

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ANDY HEINTZ/Colby Free Press

College rodeo begins tonight

College cowboys and cowgirls from all over Kansas and Oklahoma have arrived in Colby for the 12th Annual Colby Community College Rodeo for National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association competition. Events will begin at 7 p.m. tonight at the Thomas County Fairgrounds, again at 7 p.m. Saturday and the finals at 1:30 p.m. Sunday. Friday and Saturday events will include men's bronc riding, calf roping, steer wrestling, team roping and bull riding, and women's breakaway calf roping, saddle bronc riding, goat tying and barrel racing. The top 10 riders or teams in each event will compete Sunday.



Congressional candidate makes second Colby stop

By Kevin Bottrell

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Colby residents have seen three the candidates for Congress pass through so far this year, and one now has returned for a second visit.

Republican Rob Wasinger, of Cottonwood Falls, came to Colby in May and stopped in town again Thursday afternoon. Wasinger said he has already visited all 69 counties in the district and is on his second tour.

"Public service is about getting out to see all the people," said the former congressional aide.

He said he often meets people in restaurants, speaks at Kiwanis or Rotary clubs and attend community events. In Colby, Wasinger stopped at J and B Meat Market and talked with several people over

lunch.

Wasinger, former chief of staff to Sen. Sam Brownback, said his main focus is on the economy and job growth. He said he hopes to bring young people back into small towns.

"Many kids go off to college and they stay away," he said. "We want to do things to get them to come back."

Wasinger said fostering new industry, such as manufacturing plants, is one way to increase the number of jobs in rural areas.

"The debate is going to be about, What do we do? Who can be effective?" he said.

Wasinger said he favors trade agreements than benefit farmers and ranchers and policies to increase energy production, such as from offshore drilling.

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KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

Congressional candidate Rob Wasinger (front left) and John Foster (back right), a member of his steering committee, sat and talked with Wilburn Holloway of Levant and Cookie Koenig of Colby at J and B Meat Market on Thursday. Wasinger is on his second tour of the 69-county 1st Congressional District.

Briefly

College board to hear reports

The Colby Community College board will meet at Monday, Sept. 21, in the board room of Thomas Hall following a dedication outside the Pierre C. Henry Allied Health Building at 5 p.m. The agenda includes reports on the president's administrative council, the Tabor Agreement on a registered nurse to a four-year nursing degree, a part-time employee agreement for the concurrent enrollment program, the August financial report, a request for additional college credit cards, college fleet vehicles and a recommendation from two advocates for the college. For information, call Debbie Schwanke at 460-5411.

Coaches offer coffee, talk

Join the Colby High School football staff for "Coffee with the Coaches" at 9 a.m. Saturday and every Saturday after home and away football games at the

Sports Shoppe, Fourth Street and Franklin Avenue. For information, call Eagles' Coach Chris Gardener at 460-1390.

Museum to hold art workshops

The Prairie Museum of Art and History will hold the third annual Sunflower Art Affair, a collection of art workshops for high-school age students and adults, from 1-5 p.m. Saturday at the museum. Workshops will include watercolor, chalk pastel drawings, quilt block-paper piecing, decoupage and hand-sewn wool pincushions. Registration deadline is next Wednesday, and space is limited to 10 people per workshop. There will be a small materials fee for each session. For information, call the museum at 460-4590.

Red Cross offers two classes

The American Red Cross plans a first-aid class

from 9 a.m. to noon and a cardiopulmonary resuscitation class from 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday at the Thomas County Office Complex. Anyone can sign up for one or both. Registration is required by Thursday. There will be a \$45 materials fee. To register or for questions, call Sherry White at 462-7161.

College to dedicate building

Colby Community College plans a dedication ceremony for the Pierre C. Henry Allied Health Building at 5 p.m. Monday on the south side of the building. The naming honors Henry's generosity and support of education. For information, call Debbie Schwanke at 460-5411.

Sale offers nearly new dresses

There will be a formal dress sale from 6 to 8 p.m. Monday through Thursday in the First Presbyterian Church basement. There will be homecoming,

Christmas and New Years dresses, as well as some accessories. Proceeds will go to Genesis and the Salvation Army. For information, or to donate dresses, call Sue Draper at 460-6332.

Church offers Bible study

The Colby Wesleyan Church will hold Beth Moore's Bible study, "Stepping Up: A Journey through the Psalms of Ascent," from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. every Wednesday beginning next week at the Pioneer Memorial Library. A second group will meet from 9 to 11 a.m. every Thursday beginning Sept. 24 at the church, 320 W Pine. For information or to register, call Joy Rothfuss at 443-5170.



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