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County attorney resigns post Tuesday

By Vera Sloan

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The Thomas County Commissioners read a letter of resignation Monday from County Attorney Bruce Flipse, saying his last day in office would be Tuesday.

The letter, dated Thursday, did not state a reason for the resignation, and Flipse could not be reached for comment. The county attorney's business won't go untended, however.

District Judge Glenn D. Schiffner said he talked to the governor's office Monday

morning to confirm that he could appoint an interim attorney to serve in Flipse's place until the county's Republican Central Committee comes up with a nomination for a permanent replacement. Judge Schiffner appointed Margaret Mahoney of Oakley on Tuesday.

Commission Chairman Ken Christiansen was absent Monday, but the remaining two commissioners only had a few items on the agenda. Approval of the last meeting's minutes was delayed until the next meeting when Christiansen can be there.

County Appraiser Mary Cech was called in to explain abatements for tax-

payers who had paid their taxes under protest. Cech said the reason for the abatements was that property she had placed a value on had actually sold for less. The new owners had a hearing with Cech to protest the valuation.

Since market value is generally established by sales price, Cech said, she lowered the valuations for taxing purposes. She told the commissioners that if the owners aren't satisfied with the new valuation, they can register a complaint with the state Board of Tax Appeals. However, the county's role in the process is finished.

Commissioner Byron Sowers reported he had met with Shirley Weber from the Local Emergency Protection Planning office and learned that the governor has decided to discontinue any state money for the program. The Thomas County office serves a 16-county area, he said. Sowers said the office has nearly \$100,000 in reserves and it looks like it will be able to remain open for a year.

"We need that office to stay open if it can," said Commissioner Paul Steele. "They're the ones that check to make sure our groundwater is safe to drink."

He recalled an incident in the Menlo

area several years ago when a spray pilot had stored chemicals that threatened groundwater, which fell under the office's purview.

In other business, the commissioners:

- Paid bills totaling about \$93,500.
- Approved transfers from the road and bridge fund of \$150,000 to the special equipment fund, used to save up for large purchases, and \$150,000 to the special highway improvement fund.
- Approved an extension of the weed-free forage inspections by the state Department of Agriculture.

Farm Bureau to hand out bread

By Vera Sloan

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It's not uncommon to hear, "Can you believe the price of groceries.... Do ya think they keep this stuff in the safe at night?"

But America, and Thomas County, can take heart. By next Wednesday, Feb. 23, known as "Food Checkout Day," most families in America have already earned enough to pay for the year's food.

American Farm Bureau units across the nation, including Thomas County, will celebrate that fact with their annual Food Check Out from 2 to 5 p.m. that day at the Colby Dillon's store and during the entire week at the Brewster Food Market.

Farm Bureau members will set up several stations at Dillon's in celebration of the affordable, high-quality food Americans take for granted. They will be handing out samples and recipes featuring protein, fruits and vegetables, grains and dairy products.

At 4 p.m. next Wednesday, Farm Bureau members will go to

the bread aisle and hand out 100 loaves.

"We want to promote and thank the farmers in Thomas County who help feed not just our county, state and nation, but who also feed the world," said Relda Galli, a member of the checkout committee.

Sue Draper, who heads up the county committee, said in Thomas County, the Farm Bureau will be giving a bag of groceries to families with new babies that week, as well as giving out 25 loaves of bread at the Brewster Food Market during the week.

"Last year, we purchased \$200 worth of hamburger to give to the Genesis Food Bank, and contributed \$100 each to Heartland Christian School and Colby Elementary School for the Back Pack program," Draper added.

"Sometimes we cringe when we see the price of food in our grocery stores," Galli said, "but when we put it in perspective with what the rest of the world pays for food, we have reason to celebrate the economy of good food in America, and we thank our farmers for their part in it."

Chief justice says cuts will hurt courts

By John Hanna

AP Political Writer

TOPEKA — Kansas Supreme Court Chief Justice Lawton Nuss warned legislators Tuesday evening that any budget cuts for the judicial branch will close court offices for extra days and halt an effort to make operations more efficient.

Nuss used most of his State of the Judiciary address to outline plans for examining the court system's operations this year. Last month, the Supreme Court formed a review commission, and two weeks ago, it launched an intensive study of workloads in judicial offices across the state.

But speaking to a joint session of the Legislature in the House chamber, Nuss noted that budget problems last year forced the court to close for four days, sending employees home without pay.

Legislators haven't proposed

cuts in the judicial branch's current \$125 million budget so far, even as they consider reductions elsewhere. Gov. Sam Brownback asked lawmakers to trim spending from other budgets and roll over the savings to help close a projected \$492 million shortfall for the fiscal year beginning July 1.

"Less funding than that means closing courts, very quickly," Nuss said. "I fully appreciate that this is a big request, given the economic situation, but I ask you to please consider this: Fundamental rights of Kansans are jeopardized when courts are closed."

Nuss also urged legislators to avoid touching the judicial branch's request for a 5.2 percent increase in its total budget for the next fiscal year, which would increase its spending by \$6.5 million to \$131.5 million.

"Funding cuts also jeopardize

See "COURTS," Page 3



ANDY HEINTZ/Colby Free Press

Colby High fans, dancers don pink for cancer fight

The student section (above) was decked out in pink at the Colby High School basketball games Tuesday at the Community Building. The unusual color scheme was part of the Pink Zone breast cancer fund raiser. Coordinator Stacey Lee (right) raffled off pink cake, cookies and cupcakes to help the Northwest Kansas Foundation for Hope throughout the games. Colby College Trojans fans should get their pink clothes out for another Pink Zone night at the basketball games against Butler County Community College at 6 and 8 p.m. tonight.



Briefly

Program to detail Kansas forts

The Prairie Museum of Art and History will offer a program on "Kansas Military Forts" as part of its monthly Food for Thought series at noon Thursday. Leo E. Oliva, a retired Fort Hays State professor, will lead the discussion. A light lunch will be served. Call the museum at (785) 460-4590 for details.

Genesis to meet on Thursday

The annual meeting of Genesis-Thomas County Inc. will begin at 6:30 p.m. Thursday at the Thomas County Office Complex conference room, 350 S. Range Ave. Everyone in attending is invited. For information, call President Wynn Duffey, 462-6342.

Rotary to feed game crowd

The Colby Rotary Club will hold a soup supper from 5 to 7:30 p.m. Tuesday at the Community

Building during the Colby High School basketball games against Norton. For information, call Gary Adrian at 460-2981.

College to offer general ed

Colby Community College will have open enrollment for General Educational Development courses from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. next Wednesday and Thursday, Feb. 24, in the basement of the Davis Library at the college. The college is offering courses in the classroom and online in math, reading and technology. For information, call Jill Kriss at 460-5486.

Storm spotter class here March 7

The National Weather Service will offer its annual Storm Spotter Class at 6:30 p.m. Monday, March 7, downstairs at the Community Building. For information, call the Goodland weather office at (785) 899-7119.

Baptists offer eight-week study

The First Baptist Church plans a "40-Day Bible Adventure" program Thursdays from March 10 to April 21, covering the full sweep of the Bible story as it has played out in history. There will be two sessions, one from 1:30 to 2:30 p.m. and another from 7 to 8 p.m., at the church, Grant and West Webster. Everyone is invited. Call 462-2867 for information.

Senior group offering tax help

The American Association of Retired Persons will offer tax preparation help for low- and middle-income taxpayers — with preference to those 60 or older — by appointment until April 15. For information or to set up an appointment, call Earle Rice at 462-2990.

Apply now for foundation grant

The Thomas County Community Foundation is

accepting applications for the "Kids Can Do!" The grants provide \$200 for nonprofit organizations or classrooms. Applications are due by March 1. For information, go to www.thomascountycommunityfoundation.com or call 460-9152.

Head Start looking for kids

Head Start, a tuition-free preschool, is accepting applications for its 2011-2012 school year. The school accepts applications all year long for kids aged 3 and 4. For information, or to get an application, call 460-6067.



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