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School board gets a look at district budget

By Kevin Bottrell

Colby Free Press
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The Colby School Board got a preliminary briefing on the district's multi-million dollar budget at its meeting Monday and examined the changes from the 2010-2011 budget.

The district always budgets for a 4 percent enrollment decrease, said Business Manager Jo DeYoung, even if it may not see as much actual decline. Last year the district lost only 1 percent, about 10 students, but Superintendent Terrel Harrison said budgeting conservatively allowed

the district to weather the state's mid-year budget cuts better.

"The last two years it's saved us," Harrison said. "We were cut in the middle of the year and it didn't hurt us near as bad."

This year, the district's mill levy is increasing by two mills, from 46.3 to 48.3. Current valuation estimates put a mill in Thomas County at about \$59,000 for the district's general fund and \$64,000 for all other funds. There is a per-household exemption for the general fund.

Some of the two new mills will go to capital outlay. When the school board approved the five-year capital outlay plan

last year, it authorized the district to levy up to five mills, with the understanding that the district would levy only two mills until the high school is paid off in 2014-2015.

However, DeYoung said, this year the state shorted the district about \$57,000 in aid to the supplemental general fund. The district had planned on getting about \$720,000, but only received \$661,750, and so it had to tax more to make up the difference. DeYoung said the district already knows the state will short them again by about \$120,000 for this coming school year.

To combat this, the district is transfer-

ring \$86,000 left over from 2010-2011 taxes into capital outlay and only putting in .8 of the two new mills for 2011-2012. The remaining 1.2 new mills will go directly into the supplemental general fund.

DeYoung said this way the equivalent of two mills will be put into capital outlay and enough will be put into the supplemental general fund to make up for the state's cuts without raising local taxes further.

"We think this is what best serves the district, the board and the taxpayers," DeYoung said.

On change on this year's forms, De-

Young said, is that the state is asking for school activity fund balances. DeYoung now has to gather data on some sports fund raising, but some activities like FFA are exempt.

Board member Omar Weber asked DeYoung what the state is after in asking for the activity fund information. DeYoung said she thinks that some boards want more control over the funds, since before now they are money that can be spent without board approval.

"We're not talking about a lot of money in Colby," she said.

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Vying for the crown



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

Thomas County Fair Queen contestant Jessica Eshbaugh showed off her riding skills at the horsemanship portion of the competition Sunday at the fairgrounds. The winning queen, princess and junior princess will be crowned Monday, July 25, at the rodeo.

Genre-defying band to perform here on July 24

By Tomi Miller

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Long-time country band Diamond Rio will perform at 6 p.m., Sunday, July 24, at the Colby Community Building, to kick off the Thomas County fair festivities. The community can look forward to a chance to view a veteran band with a modern twist.

"It is always fun to get out in front of new people and see their reaction to our music," said band member Gene Johnson.

Johnson plays the mandolin and sings harmony for Diamond Rio. He was first introduced to at age 4. His dad was a square dancer and a fiddler, so he grew up around bluegrass music.

"I just grew up learning to play music," Johnson said. "I thought everyone did. I was surprised when I started school and not everyone knew how to play."

Johnson is one of six members in the band. The other members are Dana Williams, bass guitar and harmony; Brain Prout, drums



COURTESY PHOTO

The six-man band Diamond Rio will perform at 6 p.m. Sunday, July 24, at the Colby Community building.

and percussion; Dan Truman, keyboard; Jimmy Olander, guitar; and Marty Roe, lead vocals and guitar.

The band got its start in the early 1980s. Truman, Olander and Roe met and formed the Tennessee River Band. The band played together for a few years, then started playing on the road, where their fan numbers began to drop. The group decided constant traveling was harder than expected. After

several years the band lost and gained members. After the first drummer left, Prout joined and the group hired Johnson as a harmony singer. By 1989, the band had acquired Williams and the same six guys have been performing together ever since.

"A lot of people thought that the Tennessee River Band was a bluegrass band, and some thought it

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Theater, fans prepare for Harry Potter finale

By Tomi Miller

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The wait for many wizard fans will be over on Friday when the "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2" premiere reaches the Colby Cinema.

The cinema is doing a special showing of the movie. Starting at 9:30 p.m. Thursday, the theater will show "Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1" and the new Part 2 will premier afterward at midnight.

"I've sold about 70 advanced tickets to the special showing," said Scott Lindberg, cinema manager.

Lindberg said that he doesn't expect a full house for the showing of the first part of the Harry Potter movie, but he thinks there will be close to a full house during the midnight premiere.

The theater will be selling tickets for \$15. The ticket includes both shows and will be sold up until the night of the movie. Tickets can be bought at the Colby Cinema located on South Range.

"This (the double feature) was kind of a gamble for the movie theater," Lindberg said. "Either it will be a hit or a miss."

Lindberg said that depending on what movie series is showing, cinema goers can sometimes expect to see fans dressed up for the event.

"When we have special showings for 'Pirates of the Caribbean' we see people dress up, not so much for 'Twilight,'" he said. "Some Harry Potter fans will

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State Board of Education to ask for \$525 million more

By John Milburn

The Associated Press

TOPEKA — The Kansas State Board of Education on Tuesday approved requesting a \$525 million increase in funding for public schools in the next fiscal year.

The 10-member board approved the proposal 6-3. The request will be finalized by education department staff members and sent to Gov. Sam Brownback. Board member Kathy Martin of Clay Center abstained from voting.

Board members said the increase would fund items that state law requires public school districts to

provide, restoring cuts made in recent years as state revenues have declined.

"Our districts have cut as much as they can. They've cut to the bone, they're starting amputations," said board member Janet Waugh, a Kansas City Democrat.

Supporters of the request argued they were elected to advocate for Kansas students, and to ask for anything less than what is legally required in the law is a disservice.

Conservative members said while it may be the law, it is unrealistic to expect the Kansas economy to

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Laying down a new surface



KAYLA CORNETT/Colby Free Press

City crews put down a seal on Plains Avenue on Tuesday. The Public Works Department is sealing several streets this week including Ninth Street, Thompson Avenue, Lynn Street and 10th Street.

Officer stands mute on rape charges

By Carleen Bell

The Norton Telegram
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Answering charges relating to an alleged rape on April 10, former Norton Police Officer Ryan L. Zweygardt "stood mute" during his arraignment Monday morning in Norton County District Court, effectively pleading not guilty to the charges.

Judge Preston Pratt presided over the arraignment and read the charges, which include two counts of rape, one count of aggravated

battery and one count of aggravated sodomy. On behalf of his client, attorney Dan Walter informed the court that his client stood mute on all four charges.

Walter explained Monday afternoon that standing mute in response to charges allows his client to potentially change his plea at a later date and "complain about defects" in the charges.

Zweygardt, a Colby Community College graduate originally from St. Francis, was arrested April 21. Since then he has been held in the Graham County jail.

A 19-year-old Norton woman has alleged that Zweygardt forced her to perform sex acts at his home on April 10. Zweygardt had a preliminary hearing Thursday morning, which included testimony from the woman about events leading up to the alleged assault.

With the arraignment complete, a jury trial has been set for Sept. 8 and 9 in Norton County District Court.



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