



# COLBY FREE PRESS

8 pages

## City imposes \$100 fines on bad yards

By Kevin Bottrell

Colby Free Press  
kbottrell@nwkansas.com

Colby residents had best keep weeds under control or face fines up to \$300.

The Colby City Council voted at Tuesday's meeting to impose fines on residents who don't cut their own weeds and refuse to allow the city to do it for them. The fine for the first offense is \$100. For a second offense within an 18-month period, the fine is \$200, and for a third and any subsequent offense, the fine is \$300.

City Building Official Rick Dickman said when there is a property in violation of the weeds ordinance, the city's first step is usually a courtesy letter. City staff may also try to contact the homeowner or renter in person or over the phone. If the situation isn't taken care of, he said, the city sends

a certified letter. If the weeds still aren't taken care of after 10 days, the city can mow.

However, said City Manager Carolyn Armstrong, the city was running into some situations where people were refusing to let the city onto their property or had fenced in yards or left dogs out, so city workers couldn't get in to do the mowing. Before now, there was not a penalty in the ordinance for that.

The City Planning Commission prepared the new ordinance, which included the fines, and City Attorney John Gatz had reviewed it before the meeting. The revised ordinance passed unanimously with the exception of councilman Tim Hutfles, who was absent.

In other business, the council:

- Approved sending a notice to the State Preservation Office of

See "FINES," Page 2

## More listeria cases confirmed in Kansas

TOPEKA (AP) – Kansas health officials say two additional cases of listeria have been linked to tainted cantaloupes from Colorado, bringing the total to seven.

The Kansas Department of Health and Environment said Tuesday the seven cases include two resulting in deaths. The agency did not say when or where the cases occurred.

The federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports 100 confirmed illnesses and 18 deaths nationwide linked to bacteria in cantaloupes from a single Colorado farm.

Symptoms of a listeria infection include fever, muscle aches, diarrhea and vomiting and can show up two months after the tainted fruit has been consumed.

## This won't hurt a bit



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

A volunteer prepared to give a flu shot at Wednesday's flu clinic put on by the Thomas County Health Department. The department used the clinic as a drill for outbreak procedures.

In the event of a disease outbreak, volunteers – such as the ones at the clinic – would be inoculated first and then they would inoculate the general population.

## Cornfield fire's cause remains unknown

By Kevin Bottrell

Colby Free Press  
kbottrell@nwkansas.com

The cause of the fast-moving fire that blazed through a cornfield in southeast Colby on Tuesday remains a mystery, says Fire Chief Bob McLemore.

McLemore said the fire started by the side of the temporary detour of Willow Drive, and given that location there could be any number of causes, including a cigarette butt thrown from a car or hot parts on a vehicle passing by.

The low humidity, about 13 percent, and the high winds, up to 43 mph, caused the fire to spread quickly. It spread by "crowning" or quickly burning through the tops of the corn plants. McLemore said the fire had spread all the way to the north end of the field by the time the department arrived. A wide dirt road on the south side of the Red River sunflower plant, however, prevented the fire from spreading any more that direction and allowed firefighters easy access.

The fire did burn a pile of railroad ties sitting by the Union Pacific tracks and some of a property – including some hay bales – owned by Paul Stevens.

The department sent out two



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

A Colby police officer, a worker from APAC Kansas and another man watched the progress of the cornfield fire on Tuesday. Volunteers from several companies and agencies helped fight the fire.

pumper trucks and two tankers. The Gem Fire Department also responded, and the county sent

out tankers and front end loaders. Tom Sloan, who farms the field, was used to create fire lines. Work-

See "CAUSE," Page 2

## State attorney sets up shop in area

The Sherman County courthouse has a new resident as an assistant attorney general opened her office on Monday.

Assistant Attorney General Nicole Romine, who serves in Attorney General Derek Schmidt's criminal litigation division, opened her office on Monday.

Romine will handle criminal prosecutions for the attorney general's office, working with county attorneys on local prosecutions and working on criminal appeals from the office in Goodland.

Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt said he decided to base one of his criminal prosecutors in Goodland to work closely with law enforcement and prosecutors in the western part of the state.

"This new arrangement will help ensure our office remains in close contact with the criminal justice needs of western Kansas," Schmidt said. "It is consistent with my commitment to be sure the attorney general's office services the entire state."

Romine said she looks forward to the challenges and opportunities of her new assignment.

"I am truly excited for the professional and personal changes this transition will bring about," Romine said. "I look forward to building positive relationships with local prosecutors and providing them with efficient access to the services of the criminal litigation division. My husband and I look forward to becoming a part of the Goodland community."

Romine is the first full-time, general-assignment criminal prosecutor on the attorney general's staff based outside of Topeka in recent Kansas history. Schmidt has three drug prosecutors posted with task forces in Southwest Kansas and Southeast Kansas.

"We're working to be good partners with our colleagues in local law enforcement agencies and local prosecutors' offices throughout the state," Schmidt said. "It's a priority for me that we work closely together."

## Restructured Kansas Arts Commission has big dreams but few dollars

By John Hanna

The Associated Press

TOPEKA – The Kansas Arts Commission is losing to its last \$5,000, but even after losing state and federal funds, it still expects to raise enough private money to support local groups and programs, its top two leaders told skeptical legislators Wednesday.

Members of the Legislature's Joint Committee on Arts and Cultural Resources weren't the only people harboring doubts. Spokeswomen for two advocacy

groups fear that local programs are languishing, and one said the best solution for the commission is to tap the resources of another state agency.

Gov. Sam Brownback vetoed the commission's budget in May, making Kansas the only state in the nation to eliminate its arts funding. Brownback, a Republican who took office in January, said the arts still will flourish with private dollars and the state must focus on core functions such as education, social services and public safety.

His veto prompted the National En-

dowment for the Arts and the Mid-America Arts Alliance, a private group based in Kansas City, Mo., to cut off funds. The Arts Commission lost nearly \$2 million, the \$689,000 legislators set aside and \$1.3 million from the NEA and the alliance.

Yet commission Chairwoman Linda Browning Weis and Vice Chairwoman Kathryn Herzog, both appointed by Brownback after his veto, remained optimistic about its ability to support arts programs.

Herzog told legislators that the commission hopes to hire an executive direc-

tor and plans to evaluate past grants to local agencies so that it has a list of which ones have been the most effective. Also, she said, it is kicking around ideas for statewide arts festivals.

Weis, a Manhattan real estate broker with an extensive background in music and music education, even began her testimony with a 5-second snippet of an Italian aria.

"We have the arts at heart, folks – I want you to understand that," she said. "We are doing the best we can."

Some Arts Commission members were

vocal critics of a plan from Brownback to eliminate the commission and reduce the state's funding for the arts to a \$200,000 subsidy for a private, nonprofit Kansas Arts Foundation. Legislators rejected the plan.

The governor's subsequent veto didn't

See "ARTS," Page 2



8 0 4 8 7 9 1 3 8 9 8 3