



# City council approves water, electric upgrades

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The Colby City Council had lingering questions about the recommended upgrades for the city's water and electric meters Tuesday, but after more discussion, the members agreed to approve the \$2.2 million project.

Councilman Tim Hutfles started the discussion by asking for a clarification of what the leak-detection system on the new water meters does. Cris Christenson of Johnson Controls said if a leak is detected, the system will isolate the location of that leak to within three houses. Then, city workers will go out and pinpoint the leak.

Councilman Dave Voss asked Christenson about other cities comparable to Colby where Johnson Controls has done this kind of work. Christenson said they have done more than 1,000 of these projects, and he had provided City Manager Carolyn Armstrong with a list of the comparable cities. Armstrong said she was unable to find this list, but Voss said that was OK.

He then asked if the firm had any alternatives or options to make the project less expensive. Christenson said he wished he could give them alternatives, but he thinks he has provided a valuable project to the city.

"I think it really speaks for itself," Christenson said. "There's some good opportunity for 'all to reduce some of the water loss...."

"I think the prices came in phenomenally

well, I think they came in a lot lower than historical shows for what Colby was paying."

Christenson asked if Councilman Fred Taylor, manager here for MidWest Energy, could jump in and tell the council his feelings about the price of the project. Taylor said he calculated the different options, such as breaking up the project in pieces instead of doing it all at once, and he broke out the water expenses from the electric.

In water, he weighed the benefits that will come from the leak-detection system against how much money the city has lost due to leaks. Currently, he said, the city has \$18,000 in real water loss in one year and Johnson has estimated that the city will eliminate \$11,000 of that. It has guaranteed 50 percent of the benefit.

Taylor said that the city might receive somewhere between the guarantee and the \$11,000 because the city will get the benefit based on how much effort it puts into fixing the leaks.

He said he figured the it will take 12.9 years for the city to get its money back from the water part of the project, based on the costs and the fees without interest, and about 16 years with interest.

Taylor also said based on the aging water system the city has, the line losses right now are over 1 million gallons a year, which means 76 percent of Colby's water losses are from leaks.

"Are we sure those numbers are right?" Voss asked. "Because that seems like an astronomical amount of loss."

Armstrong said they are correct and she has the reports to back that information up.

Councilman Pat Mallory said another thing the council should factor in is when the state is going to step in and hand down fines and regulations on water loss.

Voss asked if the 23 percent water loss reported in the *Colby Free Press* was the correct number, and Tim Mense of Johnson Controls said it was initially, but after they tested the production meters, they found that the city is producing more water than the firm originally thought and therefore the actual water loss is closer to 30 percent.

Hutfles told the council that he called several other towns of various sizes, including Hays, Scott City, Garden City, Abilene, Goodland and Oakley, and none of them has a leak-detection system. He said one reason was because none of them has much water loss and when they did have a leak, they would find it themselves.

"If we're going to hire our own guys, they're going to be tested, you're going to provide them with the equipment. Why couldn't we just buy it ourselves and find our own leaks?" Hutfles asked. "With a 15- to 16-year payout, we obligate ourselves in millions of dollars. Say we do find these leaks, where are we going to get the money to fix them?"

Mallory pointed out that the leak-detection system accounts for only \$103,000 of the project.

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# It's time to change clocks

Bane or blessing, it's once again time to set our clocks ahead an hour this Saturday night in order to be on time Sunday morning when Daylight Saving Time makes its annual appearance.

Look up Daylight Saving Time and you'll find all sorts of claims for both sides of the question, from reduced crime

rates to having trouble reading sun dials.

However you feel, though, here are the facts: Daylight Saving Time begins at 2 a.m. Sunday and ends at 2 a.m. Sunday, Nov. 4, the weekend after Halloween. Move your clocks ahead one hour in spring and back one hour in fall, or "Spring forward, fall back."

# Job creation drives bills in Congress

By Joan Lowy  
*The Associated Press*

WASHINGTON – The lure of roads, bridges, buses and trains isn't enough anymore to drive an expensive transportation bill through Congress. So to round up votes, congressional leaders are pitching the bills as the hottest thing around these days: job generators.

But do they really create more jobs? The answer from a lot of economists is not really. The bills would simply shift spending that was creating jobs elsewhere in the economy to transportation industries. That means different jobs, but not necessarily additional ones.

"Investments in transportation infrastructure, if well designed, should be viewed as investments in future productivity growth," said Alice Rivlin, a former director of the White House Office of Management and Budget under President Bill Clinton.

"If they speed the delivery of goods and people, they will certainly do that," she said. "They will also create jobs, but not necessarily more jobs than the same money spent in other ways."

Indeed, the question of job creation is relatively unimportant when compared to other significant economic benefits of maintaining and improving the nation's aging transportation system, such as enabling people to get to work and businesses to speedily move goods, say economists and transportation experts.

But that hasn't diminished the jobs claims being made on Capi-

tol Hill. "This legislation would put 2 million middle-class Americans back to work right away," Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, D-Nev., said Thursday, as he fumed about nearly 100 amendments that have delayed action on the Senate's version of the transportation bill.

In the House, Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, made a transportation bill the election-year centerpiece of the GOP's jobs agenda last fall when he unveiled its broad outlines. To make sure nobody missed the point, the bill was dubbed the "American Energy and Infrastructure Jobs Act of 2012."

Support for the five-year, \$260 billion House bill has since fallen apart. Conservatives thought it would spend too much money, and Democrats and some Republicans balked at policy changes they say would undermine mass-transit, weaken environmental protections and penalize union workers. Boehner is struggling to craft a new bill with some mix of policy and spending that can win passage.

Urgency is growing because the government's spending authority for highway and transit programs – and its legal power to levy most of the 18.4 cents a gallon federal gas tax – expires at the end of this month. But even if that hurdle is cleared, the trust fund that finances highway and transit programs is expected to go broke sometime next winter.

President Barack Obama has

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# Swimming pool removed



A construction crew was at work Monday tearing down the old Colby Swimming Pool on Fifth Street. It was on the Kansas Register of Historical Places, but it was released by the state for demolition in December.

KATHRYN BALLARD/Colby Free Press

# Political icon says Kansas should support front-runner

By John Hanna  
*AP Political Writer*

TOPEKA – Kansas political icon Bob Dole urged fellow Republicans on Thursday to support front-running presidential candidate Mitt Romney in the state's caucuses, potentially boosting Romney's chances in a state where main rival Rick Santorum figures to do well.

Romney's campaign released a statement from Dole, the 88-year-old former U.S. Senate majority leader and 1996 Republican presidential nominee, two days ahead of Saturday's voting at 96 locations across the state. The statement also came a day after Santorum, a former Pennsylvania senator favored by many anti-

abortion GOP conservatives, held a rally in the Kansas City suburb of Lenexa.

Santorum's campaign countered with its own list of more than 60 endorsements, including former Rep. Todd Tiahrt, who represented south-central Kansas in Congress for 16 years and is now a Republican National Committee member. The list also included six conservative state legislators and leaders of the anti-abortion group Kansans for Life. No one, though, is as prominent as Dole.

Dole called Romney a "main-street conservative" and said the former Massachusetts governor would have "great success" as president working with both Republicans and Democrats in Congress. Dole formally endorsed Romney before Iowa's first-in-the-nation caucuses in January.

"I've known Gov. Romney for some time and Kansas would be

well-served if he wins in our state on Saturday," Dole said in his statement. "Gov. Romney holds a lead after winning six states on 'Super Tuesday.' If Gov. Romney can do well here, he'll be much closer to his goal."

Romney also has the endorsement of Kansas Secretary of State Kris Kobach, a conservative Republican known nationally for helping lawmakers in Alabama and Arizona draft tough state laws that crack down on illegal immigration.

Forty delegates to the Republican National Convention are at stake in Kansas' caucuses, but Romney so far has no plans to visit the state ahead of the voting. Both Santorum and Texas Rep. Ron Paul have planned multiple events Friday in Kansas.

Kobach said that Romney's

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# Meeting with the public



Rep. Rick Billinger and Sen. Ralph Ostmeyer spoke at a meeting Saturday in the Student Union at Colby Community College. Topics at the meeting included exemptions for hometown carnivals and property taxes.

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