



City weighs using trust to fund project

By Kayla Cornett

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The Colby City Council discussed the possibility Tuesday of using money from the city's Law Enforcement Trust Fund to finance a lease-purchase agreement for an energy performance contract with Johnson Controls.

The city had been asked about letting the county use the money to finance a new jail, but after the last council meeting, City Manager Carolyn Armstrong, Police Chief Randy Jones and City Attorney John Gatz started researching the possible use of the trust for the energy project.

Armstrong said she checked with the city's auditors, the Kansas attorney general's office and the U.S. Department of Justice to make sure this approach was OK, and all felt it was acceptable as long as a provision was included for repayment in case there was a special law enforcement need for the money.

The resolution provided to the council says that the interest rate on the loan would be set at 2.25 percent, which would allow Jones to continue to pay for the Law Enforcement Training Center for a few years with the remaining money and the interest he would earn on the lease purchase.

The resolution also allows him to renegotiate the rate no more often than once every three years if the city is earn-

ing more than 2.25 percent on its excess funds.

Councilman Tim Hutfles asked how long the city has had the trust money, and Jones said they received it around June 2001. Hutfles then asked what kind of interest rate the trust has made over the years, and Jones said the rate in the beginning was 6.72 percent.

"We made \$132,000 on our CDs that we invested the \$2 million (in)," Jones said. "Within the last few years and just this last year, it was .0065, so we were making \$6,500 on a million dollars."

Hutfles asked, to clarify, whether the rate has been declining since 2008 and Jones said that is correct, adding that the 2.25 percent was the best he had seen.

Hutfles said he didn't dispute that, but was concerned since the rate isn't fixed. Armstrong said the rate couldn't be fixed because in order to use that money, it has to benefit the special law enforcement trust, meaning the city can't pay less than what its earning on its other investments or the 2.25 percent.

Hutfles said he didn't think that was a good deal because with the Johnson Controls contract, the city was offered a fixed rate of 2.75 for the whole project. Councilman Pat Mallory pointed out that it would be a good deal for the trust....

Councilman Fred Taylor said another factor of this agreement that worries him is the fact that if a law enforcement need came up, the city would have to repay

money immediately.

"This would be a win-win for the trust," Taylor said, "but I don't think for the city as a whole it's a win-win, because we're putting the water fund at risk now."

Hutfles said he initially supported the contract with a fixed rate and said that is all he is going to support now.

Armstrong said that with where the rate is at, Jones is using some of the principal from that money every year, so while the city would be paying that money to someone else, Jones would be slowly using the money up, and eventually there will be nothing.

Councilman Mike Hake asked if Jones

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Ministry center in the works



KATHRYN BALLARD/Colby Free Press

Construction workers did structure work Thursday on a new building for the Colby Wesleyan Church located at 320 W. Pine St. Pastor Eugene Rothfuss said it will be a ministry center that

will have classrooms, a kitchen and a fellowship hall. He said it could also be used for wedding receptions.

Brewster store holds fish fry to raise money

By Christina Beringer

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The Brewster Grocery Store will hold its annual benefit fish fry on Saturday and organizers are hoping for record attendance.

The catfish fry will be from 4 to 8 p.m. Saturday at the Brewster United Methodist Church, 202 Nebraska.

People are encouraged to purchase tickets in advance at the store, 325 Kansas Ave., before it closes at noon on Saturday. Or, tickets can be bought at the door of the event.

All-you-can-eat tickets are \$10 for adults and \$6 for children 6 to 11. Kids 5 and under eat for free.

Board member and volunteer Rae Stewart said this is the third year for the fund-raising event, which helps keeps the lights on and the doors open at the town's only grocery.

"The first year we had the fish fry, it helped get us way out of debt and back into the black," she said. "The second year, we were able to use the proceeds to replace some equipment and even had a little bit left over."

"This year, we hope to raise about \$4,000. It's our biggest fund raiser of the year, and we host the fish fry in addition to other, small-

er fund raisers that take place about once a month to every six weeks."

The grocery's manager, Janet Carpenter, said that before 2007, the store was privately owned. When it went up for sale, a community group decided to buy it.

The store now runs as a nonprofit organization, with a supervising board of six who are elected for two-year terms by the store's membership.

Stewart said support from the people of Brewster is pivotal in keeping the store open.

"The community helps tremendously, and I couldn't ask for more support," she said. "They are so good about donating their time and money."

"It is remarkable how many people give generously, especially Lynette Brown, who does the books and just recently went off the board, and Mike Baughn."

In addition to private support, the grocery store also receives grants. Stewart said the Thomas County Community Foundation helped buy a new cooler, which the store couldn't otherwise have afforded.

Operating as a nonprofit is unusual for a grocery, Stewart said, but the store also makes free deliv-

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Electric cars risk being tainted by nuclear association in Japan

By Yuri Kageyama

AP Business Writer

TOKYO – Electric car owners who prided themselves on being green now find themselves in a bind as Japan's government maneuvers to restart dozens of nuclear power plants idled after last year's meltdowns.

For decades, nuclear generation has been a crucial source of power here, but the tsunami-triggered meltdowns at the Fukushima Dai-ichi plant have spurred a debate over how to supply Japan's electricity in the future.

Long touted as a clean, zero-emission alternative to vehicles powered by dirty fossil fuels, electric cars are now at risk of being tainted by their association with nuclear.

If, as is possible, nuclear remains a key source of power, "then the green image of the electric car will get bashed to bits, maybe to the extent it will be irreparable," said Ryuichi Kino, who has written books on nuclear power and hybrid technology. "I have the feeling it's quite possible that

might happen."

Not long after the tsunami swept through the plant on March 11 last year, the government backed away from plans to lift nuclear power from supplying a third of Japan's electricity needs to half.

But Japan isn't abandoning nuclear power altogether. Despite the Fukushima crisis underscoring its risks, the government wants to restart some of the nation's 54 reactors after safety checks are completed.

Critics say the checks aren't good enough, and the damage from the worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl looms large, with the 20-kilometer (12-mile) no-go zone around Fukushima, as well as surrounding areas, likely to be contaminated by radiation for decades.

Composer Ryuichi Sakamoto, a longtime opponent of nuclear power, acknowledged he gets bashed as hypocritical by people on Twitter about appearing in advertising for Nissan Motor Co.'s Leaf electric car.

Many are not aware that, because he lives in New York, he can get his electricity from a company that relies solely on wind power – a kind of business that doesn't ex-

ist yet in Japan, where utility regulations remain rigid and closed.

"How we make electricity is going to diversify, with fossil fuel and nuclear power declining," said Sakamoto. People should be able to choose the kind of electricity they want to use, he said.

Electric cars were proving a hard sell even before the Fukushima disaster. And their green image has a weakness since generating electricity, unless it's from solar, wind or other clean forms, emits polluting gases.

Nissan, an electric-car leader, has sold just 25,000 Leaf cars around the world since late 2010, including 12,000 in Japan. It is targeting global sales of 1.5 million electric vehicles by 2015 in conjunction with alliance partner Renault SA of France.

Corporate Vice President Hideaki Watanabe, who oversees Nissan's zero-emission business, insists sales are on target and haven't dropped after the March disaster. The nuclear crisis has highlighted that the Leaf can be a backup storage for electricity in emergency blackouts, he said.

What's holding Leaf sales back

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Spring is in the air



KATHRYN BALLARD/Colby Free Press

These flowers were in full bloom this week at the corner of Fifth and Garfield streets. The temperature in Colby hovered in the 70s and 80s last week and spring flowers are coming up all over town.

