



# COLBY FREE PRESS

8 pages

## Council hears second firm for search

By Kayla Cornett

Colby Free Press  
kcornett@nwkanas.com

The Colby City Council heard a presentation from the Austin Peters Groups at a special meeting Tuesday on helping the city find a new city manager.

City Manager Carolyn Armstrong plans to retire this year after 19 1/2 years in Colby. The council heard a presentation last week from the League of Kansas Municipalities on providing similar services.

Marla Flentje, a consultant for the group, started by talking about her ties to Kansas and what she knows about Colby, especially the fact that Colby has only had two city managers in more than 32 years.

She told the council what the firm believes are the qualities needed for a good recruitment process for a city manager.

Flentje said it is important to have clarity and accuracy in a job description and a consensus among all of the members early in the process about what kind of

person they are looking for.

"This is an enormously important group decision-making process," she said, "and it's subject to all the advantages of group decision-making and all of the little wrinkles and challenges that come with group decision-making."

It's also important, she said, to be candid with candidates about the community assets and challenges and to provide competitive compensation and other conditions of employment that are unique to the city management profession.

Flentje said compensation doesn't have to be at the top, but it shouldn't be at the low end, because that might attract the wrong kind of candidates. She suggests setting compensation somewhere in the middle.

She said the city needs to have aggressive marketing and hospitality, along with skillful resume screening, interviewing, vetting and assessment of candidates.

The council should have open communication with city employees and the community, Flentje said, because they

have a large stake in this decision.

She said some government bodies actually go further with this idea and include employees and citizens in the process. Some use focus groups where people can tell a moderator what they think the city should be looking for. She said later in the process, the city could use a citizen screening committee or hold forums or informal sessions to get feedback on candidates.

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## Crowd hears pros, cons on tax incentives

By Christina Beringer

Colby Free Press  
colby.society@nwkanas.com

A full house pushed Monday's regular commissioner meeting upstairs into the district courtroom to allow for about 20 people who came to talk or hear pros and cons regarding the possible adoption of a Neighborhood Revitalization Program.

No decision was made on the program, which would allow the county to give tax rebates to encourage new development and improvements to existing property. Commissioners said they'll take up the discussion again at their end-of-the-month meeting on Monday, April 30.

At the end of the meeting, commissioners said they have a difficult decision to make and gave no indication of whether they will vote for or against the program.

Proponents said the rebates should encourage building new properties and improving old ones. The county would benefit from the growth, with taxes on the improvements coming online at 10 percent each year during a 10-year term.

Opponents said, however, that the county could be giving up more than half its prospective income from new development and improvements, even on projects that would have been done without the incentives. Tax incentives seldom make or break a project, one said.

Christy Rocca, director of the Thomas County Economic Development Alliance, says she hopes the commissioners adopt the program. She began the meeting by giving a presentation to help people better understand what the

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## Library has food

The atmosphere was festive Monday as Pioneer Memorial Library offered Booked for Lunch noontime talks every day for National Library Week. Monday (above), Carol Barnes, library director Melany Wilks, Sue Draper and Nick Larmer helped themselves to lunch while Debbie Tittel refilled serving dishes. Later, Nancy Pickard reviewed her book "The Scent of Rain and Lightning." Tuesday, (from left, right photo) Maxine Nelson, Marj Brown and Barb Highland enjoyed conversation and laughs. Roderick Townley reviewed his children's book.



KATHRYN BALLARD/Colby Free Press

## State seeks requests for new water plan

TOPEKA (AP) — The Kansas Department of Agriculture is accepting applications for a revised program that gives water right holders more flexibility in managing the way they use their allocations.

Changes in the state's multi-year flex account are aimed at conserving water and extending the life of the Ogallala Aquifer.

The new application form is available on the website of the state Division of Water Resources and at its offices.

A multi-year flex account lets water-right holders pump more water in any given year by "borrowing" from another year, but restricts the total pumping over a five-year period. The program is voluntary.

## Two truckers injured as rig skids sideways

Two Indiana truckers were hurt Wednesday when their rig ran into the median of Interstate 70 and overturned onto its left side.

The crash occurred about 1:05 p.m. near mile marker 66, about four miles southeast of the Mingo exit or 12 miles from Colby.

The Kansas Highway Patrol reported that Kyle Andrew Bryant, 22, New Albany, Ind., was driving west on the freeway

when the truck ran off the road on the left. The driver overcorrected, the report says, and then lost control. The truck skidded into the median, overturning, and came to rest on the driver's side.

A passenger, Thomas Joseph Warner, 27, New Albany, also was hurt. Both men were wearing seat belts, the patrol said, and both were taken to Citizens Medical Center in Colby.

## High court hears dancer tax appeal

TOPEKA (AP) — A gentlemen's club being targeted by the state took its fight to Kansas' highest court on Wednesday in case that, despite the players involved, boils down to a fairly tame issue affecting a wide spectrum of industries: contract work.

Club Orleans considers its exotic dancers contract workers,

not employees, because they rent space on the club's stage. Therefore their tips shouldn't be counted toward how much the club pays in taxes under state labor laws, much like acts booked at other entertainment venues, club attorney Mike Merriam told the state Supreme Court.

The Kansas Department of La-

bor disagrees, noting that the club charges a set price for various types of performances, and wants the club to pay a tax based on the dancers' wages to help finance unemployment benefits. Justices didn't make an immediate decision Wednesday, though the club, which is just outside Topeka, has been turned down by three lower

judges.

Although perhaps more flashy, the case isn't unique as financially struggling states look for ways to generate revenue. One expert said states are trying to regulate the classification of workers in several industries, from exotic dancers to agricultural workers to lawyers.

## Democrats to gather Saturday in Oakley to confirm nominee

By Steve Haynes

Colby Free Press  
s.haynes@nwkanas.com

The Kansas Democratic Party will hold its Presidential Preference Caucus on Saturday at meeting locations across the state, including one in Oakley for all of northwest Kansas.

There was speculation it may not draw much of a crowd, since President Obama is all but certain to get the nomination for a second term, and there aren't too many

Democrats out here to start with.

"Democrats are kind of an endangered species in Kansas," said Ken Poland of Gem, "especially in Thomas County."

Registration for the caucus for the 18-county 40th Senate District Kansas will begin at 1 p.m., with the caucus to start promptly at 2 at the Northwest Kansas Education Service Center in Oakley.

No one was certain Wednesday if any Thomas County Democrats planned to attend. Few of the precinct committee members contacted were even aware of

the caucus.

Rosalee Seemann of Colby said she would be out of town Saturday. Helen Poland of Gem, Ken's wife, said she hadn't received any notice from the party and didn't plan to go. Ken Poland, however, said today he did know about the caucus and did plan to go.

Both Seemann and Helen Poland said the Democratic precinct and township representatives had not organized as a county committee recently or elected officers. There are only 695 registered

Democrats in the county, compared to 2,915 Republicans and 1,018 unaffiliated voters, said County Clerk Shelly Harms. The county also has 22 registered Libertarians and two registered Reform Party members.

Statewide, caucuses will be held in 50 locations, one or more for each state Senate district. The party's caucuses are open to all Kansas residents, but all to vote, people must apply to register as a Democrat.

A complete list of caucus locations,

along with caucus details, can be found at [www.ksdp.org/content/delegate-selection-process-2012](http://www.ksdp.org/content/delegate-selection-process-2012).

The caucus site in Oakley is west of downtown on Second Avenue, south across the street from the Logan County courthouse. It can be reached directly from U.S. 83 by turning left at the Ampride remote pumps, just before the railroad tracks. The sign reads "NWKESC."

