

Weather



National Weather Service Tonight: A 20 percent chance of showers and thunderstorms before 1 a.m. Partly cloudy, with a low around 44. Southeast wind 5 to 10 mph becoming west. Friday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 73. West wind 5 to 10 mph becoming south. Saturday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 71. Breezy, with a southwest wind 5 to 10 mph increasing to between 20 and 25 mph. Winds could gust as high as 35 mph. Sunday: A 30 percent chance of rain and thunderstorms. Partly sunny, with a high near 60. Monday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 66. Tuesday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 64. Tuesday Night: Partly cloudy, with a low around 40. Wednesday: Mostly sunny, with a high near 70. Wednesday: High, 60; Low 45 Precip: Wednesday None Month: 1.84 inches Year: 3.51 inches Normal: 3.98 inches (K-State Experiment Station) Sunrise and Sunset Friday 7:09 a.m. 8:20 p.m. Last quarter Moon at 5:50 a.m. (U.S. Naval Observatory)

Council hears from second firm

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Next, Flentje went through what the firm believes are basics for the process. She said the city should have a facilitated process that gets input from each council member in a one-on-one interview and a 10- to 15-page recruitment profile with a lot of detail. She showed the council a sample of another city's recruitment profile and how it listed minimum and preferred qualifications and parameters of compensation, among other things. Other basics Flentje mentioned were preparing copy for ads, using a network to encourage people to apply, agreeing early on about base salary and benefits, getting advice about interviewing and doing formal background checks. She said skills a candidate needs to have for this job include interpersonal skills and hopefully an unblemished record. She said that making a mistake can be costly, so hiring a new manager is probably the most important decision the people on the council will make.

Flentje said her company, which she said is a Kansas-based human resources consulting firm. All of its employees have worked with or for local governments for 15 to 20 years, she said, it has a good network and has reasonably fees. Councilman Fred Taylor asked if the city would be working with Flentje if they chose her firm, and she said it would. Councilman Pat Mallory asked what the firm's fee structure is and Flentje said it depends on whether the city chooses to use optional services, but the range is \$7,000 to \$13,000 or \$14,000. Huffles asked if those prices included advertising and she said no, that would be the city's responsibility. Mallory asked what the typical turnaround time is, and Flentje said 12 to 14 weeks depending on the city's availability. Flentje then asked the council its thoughts on employee and citizen involvement. Councilman Mark Beringer said he wasn't interested in involving citizens but thought involving the staff could be a good idea. Councilman Mike Hake agreed about staff. Councilman Dave Voss asked Flentje how

many qualified resumes she thinks the city will receive; she said probably 20 to 30. Taylor then asked how many resumes total the city could expect and she said it around 100. Mayor Gary Adrian asked if the firm would want a job description and things the council would like immediately. Flentje said yes, but City Manager Carolyn Armstrong said the city doesn't have one. Adrian suggested that a few council members could come up with ideas for what should be in the job description, but Councilman Omar Weber said that they wouldn't have to do that if they hire a firm. The council's next item of business was to make a decision between Peters and the Municipal League, but the members decided they wanted time to compare the proposals and decided to table the decision until the next meeting, which will be Tuesday. In other business, the council approved an indirect sales agreement with Itron for water and electric meter upgrades. Armstrong said Itron is being purchased by Johnson Controls, the main contractor for the upgrades.

Crowd hears pros, cons of incentives

From "CROWD," Page 1

program is and how it can help a community. Rocca explained that the tax rebate program allows the county to refund the property taxes paid on the actual value added to a property due to improvements and expansions. Taxes on the assessed value of the property before any improvement would continue to be paid, she added. She then explained how the rebate incentive works. "The first year will start with 100 percent of the tax rebate given, plus administration fees," she said, "and (that) will decline 10 percent each year for 10 years. By the eleventh year, the property owner would be paying the full property tax." Rocca said the property owner needs to meet some restrictions and minimum requirements before they can be accepted, and any parcel where the owner is delinquent on property taxes or special assessment can't be eligible for a rebate. To cover office time and administration of the application, 3 percent of any rebate is retained by the county on projects costing \$10,000 to \$499,999. 2 percent for projects \$500,000 to \$999,999 and 1 percent for anything over \$1 million. Rocca said the workload would fall on the county appraiser, treasurer and clerk. Rocca said she received testimonials from other counties, including Rooks and Mitchell, where officials spoke positively of the program. She said that of the 105 Kansas counties, 80 have already established the plan and four are in the process. Ellis County, she said, offers the incentive only for businesses in

downtown Hays. Rooks County officials, Rocca said, told her that between 1995 and 1999, before the adoption of the plan, 29 new homes were built. With the plan, the number increased to 44 from 2000 to 2005 and 38 from 2006 to 2008. In five years and four months since Mitchell County adopted the plan, she said, 158 projects totaling \$4.7 million started up. "The tax rebate incentive plan will not affect property tax revenue," she said, "and is one of the few tools that rural communities have available to attract housing for families and businesses for job creation...." "Growth may be measured in the improved conditions by revitalizing homes and commercial properties. Growth may not always be in large numbers, but growing wealth or the tax base has to happen if we are to provide services as we now have them. The alternative would be to raise taxes or stop services." Several others spoke up and added to Rocca's comments, asking the commissioners to adopt the plan, including the Colby Mayor Gary Adrian, Farmers and Merchants Bank President Brent Wiedeman and Wes Bainter of Hoxie, who plans to build a senior living complex in Colby. Bainter said he has had experience in other counties that have adopted the plan. "It's one way to keep incentives fair for new and current property owners," he said, adding that if Thomas County adopts the plan, it shouldn't restrict the area like Ellis County. "Make it available to everyone," he advised. Kevin Juenemann of Colby said he works for a division of Manatron, writing software

for county government. He designed a Neighborhood Revitalization Plan software program for the company, said County Clerk Shelly Harms. "I've seen the program be adopted in other counties," he said, "and I'm not sure it is the best program for all counties. I strongly encourage the county to carefully look into it before making any decisions." He rebutted Rocca's statement that the plan does not affect property taxes, saying that the county should plan to give up about 55 percent of property taxes for all new construction and improvements on projects under the Revitalization Plan, including new construction which would have taken place without the incentives. To break even over a 10-year period, he said, the program would have to more than double the amount of new construction. Juenemann said the Kansas law does not allow for adjusting taxable values for budget or levy purposes and has no provisions to exclude Neighborhood Revitalization increments. "You cannot adjust for the shortfalls in revenue due to the rebates that cannot be gained back," he said, "and it would affect the bottom line of the county's budget." After the meeting, he added: "The county would have to double the amount of development to make up for the loss of property taxes," he said, "and based on what I've seen historically throughout the county, I don't think that's possible." He added that property taxes are only one factor that property owners consider when building or expanding, and the chance that this program would make or

break a plan is rare. "There are many reasons why a person would decide to move to Thomas County, or Colby," he said. "As it was discussed, Thomas County is a thriving and progressive community. Chances are, new construction will continue with or without (this program)." Another point that Juenemann made was that the program was developed to help blighted areas with no new construction. Before Thomas County can be accepted into the program, the county would have to declare the area as being blighted. "I don't think Thomas County is considered blighted," he said. "I disagree," Rocca replied. "As a whole, northwest Kansas is a blighted area with a shrinking population. From 2010 to 2040, the census anticipates a 29.2 percent decrease, while the rest of the state is expected to have a 13.5 percent increase. In addition, 33 percent of the population is between the ages of 62 and 65, and 60 percent of homes were built in 1969 or earlier." Although they were present, Harms and County Treasurer Donita Applebury did not speak at the meeting. However, at a previous meeting they said they are against the program. Harms said she talked with other county clerks who work with the program, several of whom said the county should avoid the program because of the workload. With the close of discussion, the commissioners thanked everyone and said they would make a decision at the end of the month. They encouraged everyone to make their concerns and opinions known before then or at that meeting.

Briefly

Library offers authors for lunch this week To celebrate National Library Week, each lunch hour this week, the Pioneer Memorial Library has had an author or speaker. The doors open for the last free lunch at 11:45 a.m. Friday. Children's librarian Judy Kleinsorge and Friends board member Ann Miner will speak on "The Joys of Books," focusing on "Tolstoy and the Purple Chair: My Year of Magical Reading" by Nina Sankovitch and "My Reading Life" by Pat Conroy. The library will be closed for refurbishing from Wednesday through Friday, May 18. For information, call librarian Melanie Wilks at (785) 460-4470.

Heartland students to put on Easter play Three performances of an Easter production, "Three Days," will be given at the Heartland Christian School gym, 1995 W. Fourth St. The play will begin at 7 p.m. tonight and Friday and 4 p.m. Saturday. Donations will be accepted to help cover production costs. For information, Deena Bandy at 460-6419.

Blood drive coming to Community Building A Colby community blood drive will be from noon to 6 p.m. today and 7:45 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Friday at the Community Building. Go to redcrossblood.org or call (800) 733-2767 to schedule an appointment. Homemade muffins will be served. For information, call Bev Vaughn at 462-3861.

Economic Development to meet at 8 a.m. Friday The Thomas County Economic Development Alliance board will meet at 8 a.m. Friday in the meeting room at the county Office Complex, 350 S. Range Ave. For information, call Christy Rocca at 460-4511.

Bar to have fund-raising poker tourney Saturday Twisters Bar and Grill, 735 E. College Dr., will hold the annual Assault Poker Tournament on Saturday to raise money for Options, a nonprofit domestic and sexual assault services organization serving northwest Kansas. Registration will begin at 1 p.m. and play at 2 p.m. The suggested donation is \$30 at the door or \$25 during pre-registration. Contact Aimy Blake at (785) 462-0427 for questions or to register.

Free 'field day' Saturday at museum The High Plains chapter of the Kansas Anthropological Association will co-sponsor a free afternoon of activities and displays at the Prairie Museum of Art and History from 1 to 4 p.m. Saturday. Exhibits will include a mock paleolithic excavation, a chance to try your hand at throwing a spear with an atlatl and a stone-and-bone tool display; a Plains Indian hunting camp with tipi, hide tanning and stone tools; and an 1880s land claim office where you can register and locate your claim. Donations are always appreciated. For information, call Rob Aiken at 443-4388 or Ann Miner at 462-6399.

American Profile We Celebrate Hometown Life Stories from hometowns just like yours. Look for us each week in this paper. Grid listing local events and profiles.

LOCAL TV Listings Sponsored by the COLBY FREE PRESS Grid listing TV programs for Saturday Evening (April 14, 2012) and Sunday Evening (April 15, 2012).