



City seeks help to buy airport land

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The Colby City Council approved a \$20,000 contract with a Nebraska firm to help the city buy up land around the airport at its meeting Tuesday night. The city will pay Midwest Right of Way Services Inc., an Omaha firm, \$19,655 to help with land acquisition for a new runway. Midwest is attempting to buy property from two landowners to extend the airport runway to the north. Airport board records show that the board has been talking about making deals for the land or condemning the properties. The agreement says that Midwest will make "final offers" to the property owners and help find new properties for them that are of a similar value. City Manager Tyson McGreer said the city needs to buy about 100 acres of land north and south of the airport, and that the two landowners are the last ones out of 13 the city has been talking with.

The project was started before he became manager, he said, and has been going on for several years. Airport Manager Mark Ostmeyer said that the airport needs to shift the runway to the north, lengthen it and widen it as part of the updated master plan it approved in 2005. The north-south runway will be shifted 1,200 feet to the north, then be extended by 1,000 feet and widened by 25 feet, Ostmeyer said. The end goal is for the runway to be 6,100 feet long and 100 feet wide. The bigger runway will be able to better accommodate larger planes, he said, making easier for them to approach the airport with navigation instruments. In other business, the council:
• Awarded a bid to Oasis Travel Center for fuel service for city vehicles through June 30, 2016. The contract allows charges for the cost of fuel from the rack, plus applicable tax and freight, with a margin of four cents per gallon for the cost of city fuel.

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Petition begun for courthouse

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An anonymous group calling itself Preserve the Thomas County Courthouse has generated an online petition to County Commission Chairman Paul Steele, asking him not to tear down the courthouse. As of this morning, the petition had 334 signatures. Over 100 comments have been left on the petition's website, mostly from residents or former residents of Colby. "History needs to be preserved," wrote Tara Schroer of Colby. "This is what we learn from, and what we use to see into the future with. Surely another solution can be found in order to preserve this historical building. Barry Hielt of Manhattan wrote: "Contrary to what others feel, the young people in the county do have ties with this building. The significance of it is not only for the older citizens in our county." "Many of us may not live in Colby, but still consider Colby our home. The Court House should not and cannot be torn down. I am sure there are alternatives that would work just as well if not better, and I am hoping the creativity of my hometown will save it's courthouse." Carol Kennedy of Colby wrote: "It just seems irresponsible to even consider destroying the most prominent historical landmark in Thomas County!" When asked to comment on the petition, Commissioner Mike Baughn said "It's certainly the right of the people to petition. I have no concerns about it." Baughn has previously said he would like to see some cost analysis completed before anything is done with the existing courthouse. He is backing a new jail and possibly a judicial center in the same building, but not necessarily replacing the century-old courthouse. Steele said he had no comment. The courthouse, built in 1906 and 1907, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on Nov. 21, 1976. The building's nomination form states, in part, "The Thomas County Courthouse has served for 70 years as the county's seat of government and is a landmark structure for the community. It is a late but finely constructed example of the Richardsonian Romanesque style and the work of an important early Kansas architect, J.C. Holland. Its large proportions are enhanced by the flatness of the surrounding plains which give the building feelings of permanence and strength." The petition and comments are available at www.change.org/petitions/thomas-county-commissioners-do-not-tear-down-the-historic-thomas-county-courthouse.



DEBBIE SCHWANKE/Colby Community College
These students (above) were really anonymous as they modeled paper mache face masks they made with the help of art instructor Rebel Jay at the Colby Community College Kid's College last week. Chemistry instructor Jeff Stephens (below) created fire with soapy water and natural gas bubbles while 12-year-old Cosette O'Brien and 10-year-old Michael Carstens watched. Drew Starbuck (left) dissected a frog.

Kids take on college classes

Colby Community College sponsored a five-day Kids College last week, drawing about 20 students in fourth through eighth grades. The kids got a taste of college life, learning about plant and animal life through biology, blowing up things in chemistry, learning how to create projects using technology and improving their leadership skills. The participants got to express themselves

through art and music and learned about becoming a crime-scene investigator for a day. College instructors Heidi Bulfer, Jeff Stephens, Iryna McDonald, Crystal Pounds, Brad Bennett, Randy Berls and Rebel Jay were in charge of the sessions. Penny Cline, who organized the kids college, said college President Dr. Stephen Vacik was the one who first got the idea for the college. It took about four months to prepare for the events, she said and got positive reviews from the participants. "The kids had a great time," Cline said, "in fact they were asking me by the end of the week what we were going to do next year." Students dissected frogs, learned some fun chemistry skills, such as making a flash fire, developed group web pages, made individual face masks and completed the week with a music performance.

Rio Grande fire still growing

DEL NORTE, Colo. (AP) — Tourists and business owners forced to flee a popular summer retreat in the southwestern Colorado mountains resigned themselves to a long wait as fire officials declined to speculate when they might be able to reign in an unprecedented and erratic blaze raging through the Rio Grande National Forest. The fire more than doubled in size over the weekend, growing to an estimated 117 square miles, authorities said. And heavy winds fanning the fire through the drought-stricken, beetle-killed forest showed no signs of relenting before Tuesday, fire officials said. "They just said they had no idea how long it would be before we could back in South Fork," said Mike Duffy, who owns the South Fork Lodge. Duffy said he and his wife Mary were able to get their personal possessions before fleeing fast-advancing flames that officials on Friday feared would overtake the town. But with the fire still within three miles of South Fork, they are worried about the long-term impact of a prolonged evacuation and news reports about the massive blaze threatening the tourist town.

Summer visitors include many retirees from Texas and Oklahoma who come to the mountains to flee the heat, and the high season should be just beginning. "Here we are the 23rd of June. We had to tell people not to come because we are not there," Duffy said. "I just don't how much more of an affect it will have. Everyone's bottom line is going to get... See "FIRE," Page 2

Boost or bust? Ethanol debate heats up

WASHINGTON (AP) — It's a dilemma for drivers: Do they choose a gasoline that's cheaper and cleaner even if, as opponents say, it could damage older cars and motorcycles? That's the peril and promise of a high-ethanol blend of gasoline known as E15. The fuel contains 15 percent ethanol, well above the current 10 percent norm sold at most U.S. gas stations. The higher ethanol blend is currently sold in fewer than two dozen stations in the Midwest, but could spread to other regions as the Obama administration considers whether to require more ethanol in gasoline. As a result, there's a feverish lobbying campaign by both oil and ethanol interests that has spread from Congress to the White House and the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court today rejected a challenge by the American Petroleum Institute, the oil industry's chief lobbying group, to block sales of E15. The justices left in place a federal appeals court ruling that dismissed challenges by the oil industry group and trade associations representing food producers, restaurants and others. Tom Buis, chief executive officer of Growth Energy, an ethanol industry group, hailed the decision as victory for U.S. consumer, who will now have greater choice at the pump. "Now that the final word has been issued, I hope that oil companies will begin to work with biofuel producers to help bring new blends into the marketplace that allow for consumer choice and savings," Buis said. The group had argued that E15 was dangerous for older cars. Putting fuel with up to 15 percent ethanol into older cars and trucks "could leave mil-

lions of consumers with broken cars and high repair bills," said Bob Greco, a senior institute official who has met with the White House on ethanol issues. The ethanol industry counters that there have been no documented cases of engine breakdowns caused by the high-ethanol blend since limited sales of E15 began last year. "This is another example of oil companies unnecessarily scaring people, and it's just flat-out wrong," said Bob Dinneen, president of the Renewable Fuels Association, an ethanol industry group. The dispute over E15 is the latest flashpoint in a long-standing battle over the Renewable... See "ETHANOL," Page 2

Death ruled natural

The case of a man found in his apartment earlier this month after he had not been seen for several days has been ruled a natural death. The Colby Police Department reported that Neal Edward Bishop, 60, was found in his apartment the morning of June 6 by his landlords, Robert C. and Bonnie L. Petersen. They were checking on him because he had not been seen

since 6 p.m. on June 4. Police were called to the apartment at 485 S. Mission Ridge just after 11 a.m. Dr. John Dygert, who was assigned to the case, ruled that Bishop died of natural causes and no autopsy was ordered. Authorities called the man's brother, Virgil Bishop, who lives in Colorado, and Baalman Mortuary took care of the funeral arrangements.

