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Bids asked for system for sheriff

By Heather Alwin
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The Thomas County Law Enforcement Center may be getting a much-needed new server and computers soon, thanks to the efforts of county employees and Ntronic Inc.'s Will Dearden, who together created a request for proposals to do the work.

The county had already received pricing from Ntronic, a computer firm based in Colby, for the whole job and from Dell for the equipment itself.

County Clerk Shelly Harms said she had heard from two other companies that were interested in submitting a bid. Commissioner Paul Steele said he sent Dearden the quote he received from Dell.

Dearden said the capabilities of the equipment Dell suggested were lower than the Hewlett Packard equipment he quoted.

"We're comparing a Ford Ranger to a one-ton truck," he said, suggesting the county go back to Dell to get a quote for better equipment.

Steele said he sent Dell a list of what Ntronic suggested for the job with instructions to quote an equal or better product, so he isn't planning to give them another chance to revise their quote.

"I think that covers our tail," said Steele. "I think they've submitted what they've submitted."

Dearden and Harms created a final version of the county's request for proposals during the commissioners' meeting Monday.

The commissioners approved the request but then had to do some research on whether they had to publish it.

Recent requests for proposals have not been published, though multiple bids have been received when county employees have called area companies and asked them to submit a bid.

Commissioner Mike Baughn dug out the county's policy book during the meeting, discovering the county's written policy is to publish requests for proposals in the newspaper before accepting bids rather than calling companies.

The commissioners agreed to publish the request for proposals in the *Colby Free Press* for bids to be submitted by 10 a.m. on Monday, Sept. 30.

In other business, the commissioners

- Passed a resolution committing the county to participate in the state's Rural Opportunity Zone student-loan repayment program.

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New ag agent starts in Colby

The Thomas County Extension office has a new agriculture and natural resources agent.

Kurt Sexton was hired effective Sept. 8 to replace Clint Milliman, who left the position last fall. He worked for a day on Sept. 9 in Manhattan, and Sept. 10 was his first day in the office.

"I like it a lot," Sexton said of Colby. "Everybody's been, you know, saying hey, and I've been meeting people."

Before he moved here about a month ago, Sexton said, he was a manager at JBS Five Rivers Cattle Feeding in Lamar, Colo., and had worked in both feed and mill management positions there. He said he moved here in part to be closer to his girlfriend. He has also met a couple friends here from the University of Wyoming, where he earned a bachelor's degree in animal and veterinary sciences.

"This is pretty much my first trip out to Kansas," he said. "I

mean, I didn't know much about it."

Sexton said he also wanted a job where he could travel and get out into the field more often. He has a background in 4-H and livestock, he said but, "the ag, horticulture side, that's kind of what I have to learn."

His first trip out of the office was to be at the Northwest Research-Extension Field Day on Sept. 11 at the experimental farm station. Other than that, he said, he is still getting his schedule together.

Agriculture and natural resources extension agents handle educational programs about agriculture, including crop and livestock production, environmental stewardship, farm and ranch management, agriculture public policy and horticulture production. They are jointly employed in a partnership between Kansas State University Research and Extension and the county extension board.



Kurt Sexton

Barn Aid campaign improves facilities

The huge Cooper Barn has some improvements, thanks to contributions to the Barn Aid campaign at the Prairie Museum of Art and History.

"For the first time ever, the Cooper Barn is now handicap-accessible and can accommodate all of our visitors and guests," said Director Sue Taylor. She said Sharon Stramel donated money for a chair lift in memory of her husband, Ron.

The barn now features a kitchenette and has been hooked up to the city sewer system, allowing for bathrooms to be installed.

"We've been very fortunate to have the support of so many people who have made these projects possible," said Taylor.

The museum estimates the expenses for the barn's improvements at around \$100,000, with \$47,000 planned for the sewer hookup, indoor restrooms, kitchen

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Homecoming on parade



R. B. HEADLEY and SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press
The Colby High School marching band played its way down Franklin Avenue, hoping for a victory over the Ulysses football team this weekend (top). Young children lined the streets (above right) while their older brothers and sisters played out what they what they hope will be the scene on Friday when Colby takes on the tigers. This sophomore appeared on his class float as a Ulysses mascot put in his place (above). The kids on the freshman float were just as eager for a showdown (right).



College attorney to get raise

By Sam Dieter

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Colby Community College trustees agreed Monday that the college should draw up a new contract for John Gatz to return as the college attorney with a 10 percent raise.

Gatz withdrew his proposal to stay on as the college attorney earlier this year after the college would not give him the raise. Board President Arlen Leiker said he talked to all the Colby lawyers and one in Garden City, trying to find a replacement, and got no serious responses.

The board also agreed to try to limit the amount of time Gatz sits in on meetings and racks up billable hours. College President Stephen Vacik said he could talk to Gatz before board meetings about some items. He said he trusts Gatz but that he does not need to be there for all of the meetings.

In other business, the board:

- Heard reports from its administrators. Vacik congratulated three new vice presidents on their work so far. Dr. George McNulty is the new vice president of student affairs, Dr.

Greg Nichols is the vice president of academic affairs, and Dr. Glenda Overstreet is the vice president of business affairs.

McNulty reported that over the last 30 days, the college sent 258 students transcripts to other schools. There were 92 students in Living Center East, 137 in Living Center Northeast, 30 in Living Center North, 11 resident assistants and three resident programming assistants. This is about the same number of students in the residence halls as last year, he said, and Dr. Vacik added the halls were about 95 percent full.

Diversity Week will be Oct. 7 to 10 and Homecoming week Nov. 4 to 9, McNulty said. A total of 60 alerts about struggling or absent students have been submitted to the college retention specialist for the year, including 35 alerts to 26 students in August and 25 by Sept. 9. He thinks that the school is in much better shape with the number of credit hours students are taking. Security issues over the last month included one sexual assault, one burglary, six liquor violations, two thefts and one student arrested on a warrant, among others.

Nichols reported that Dr. Lorna Pelton was hired as the new farm and ranch management,

feedlot management and beef-production instructor pending board approval. The college just got a nursing initiative grant worth almost \$61,000 from the Kansas Board of Regents to help pay program costs. The college held in-service meetings for outreach instructors and coordinators in Norton, WaKeeney and Colby. Communication has been improved with outreach faculty, Nichols reported, and the college has talked with Joni Clark-Leiker, counselor and career director at the high school, and Diana Wieland, curriculum director for the Colby Schools, to set up technical programs for high-school students.

Overstreet said the college has been tightening its internal controls and looking at cost-saving measures to squeeze out as much savings as possible. The staff is also trying to develop positive relationships with vendors, she said.

"I think it's a win, win, win, win situation."

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