



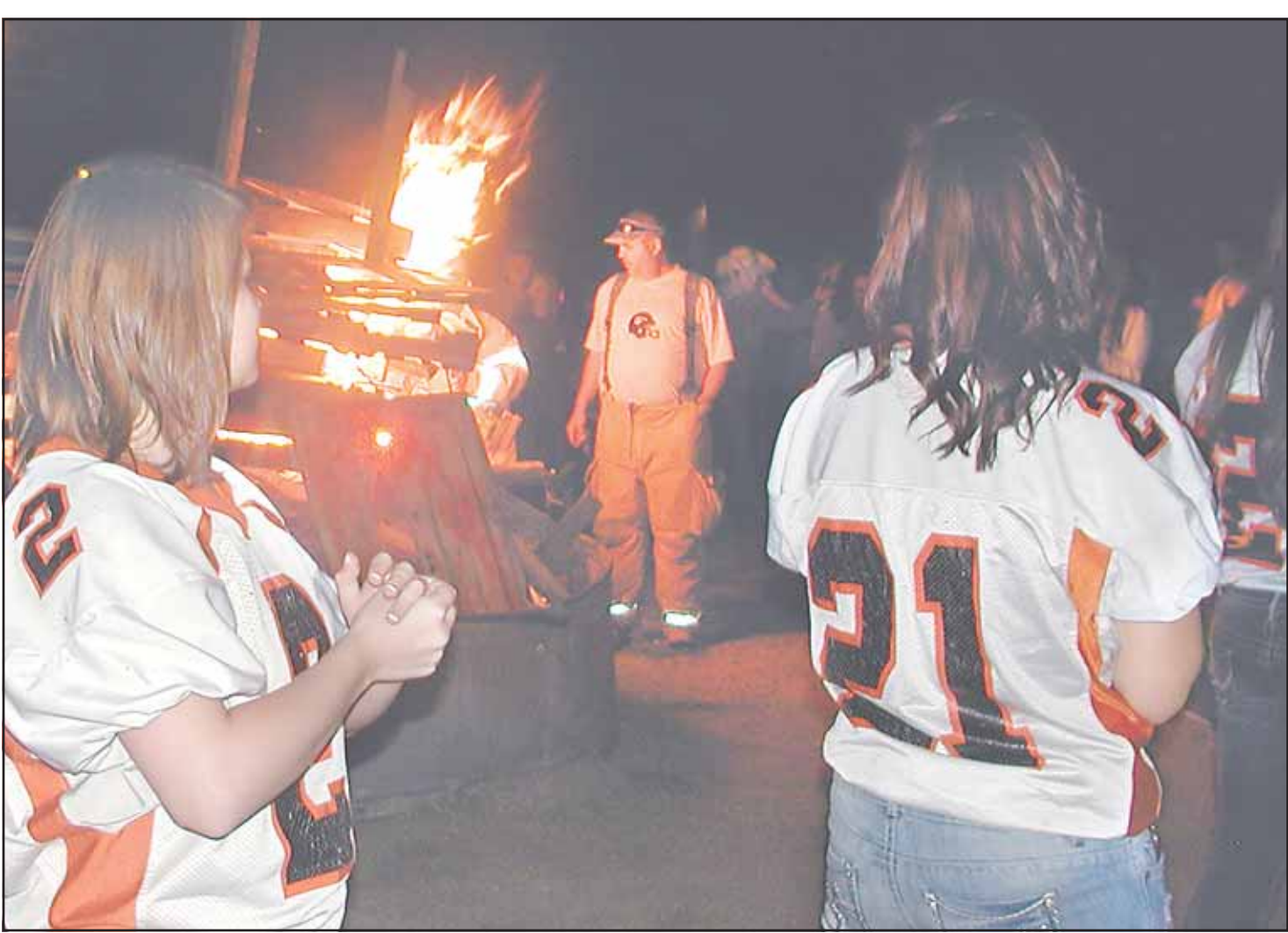
12 pages

# COLBY FREE PRESS

75¢

Friday

September 20, 2013  
Volume 124, Number 148  
Serving Thomas County since 1888

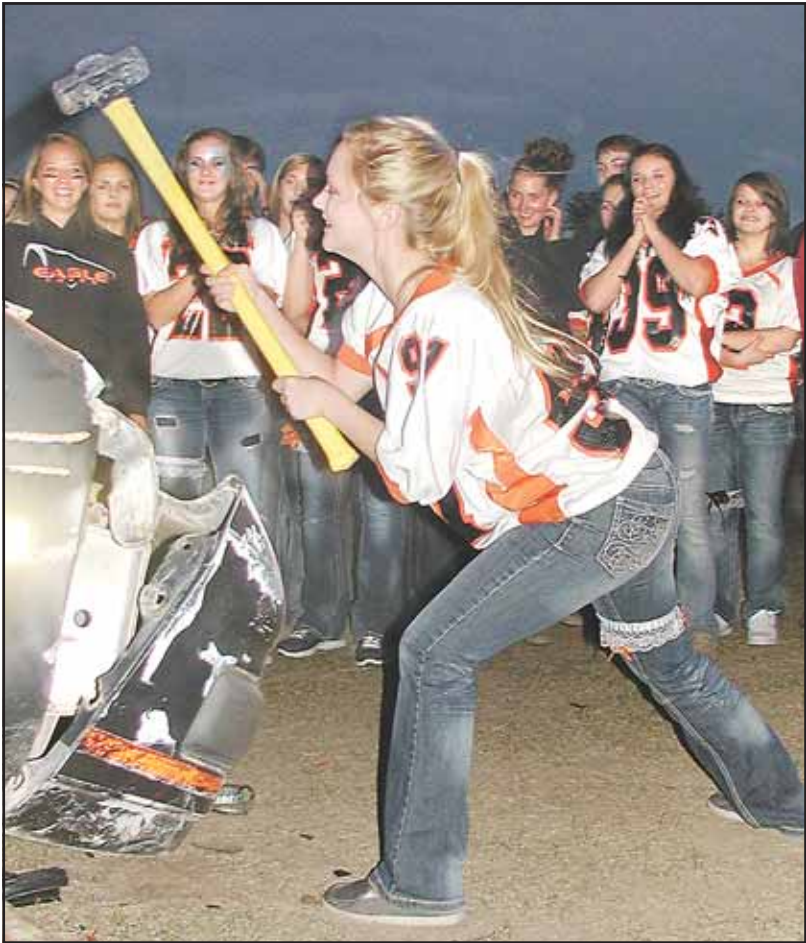


## Heating up school spirit



SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press

Old pallets and other wood went up in flames once again this year (top) to get Colby High School's students in the mood for their homecoming football game tonight against the Ulysses Tigers. Before the bonfire, future high-schooler Brody Schmitt, 4, (above left) took a swing at a car painted with tiger stripes for the occasion, along with older students (right) coaches and the principal.



## Board sees before and after

By Sam Dieter

Colby Free Press  
sdieter@nwkanas.com

The Colby School Board heard a report on energy improvements to its buildings being done over the summer at its meeting Monday night.

Scott Strom, business development manager for the firm 360 Energy Engineers, which is supervising the project, was at the meeting to show the board before-and-after pictures of the upgrades. The firm has been working with the board for about a year to plan improvements to the buildings.

Most of the work concentrated on the middle school, where old heating and cooling units were replaced. Two air handlers were added to take over the school's cooling and four hot-water heaters replaced old steam boilers. Vents were added to heat the middle school gym. The firm, Strom said, took on some of the cost when it realized that huge amounts of debris had to be vacuumed out of the school's air ducts.

The middle school roof was replaced, and the rock ballast on top was reused. An air and dirt separa-

tor was added to the high school, and drain pans were added under air handlers on the ceiling of the high school gym to keep water from dripping onto the floor. Finally, light fixtures were replaced across the district and are now controlled with motion sensors.

In other business, the board:

- Heard reports from its administrators.

Curriculum Director Diana Wieland later reported to that she went to a Kansas Association of School Boards workshop, and that Dr. Richard Villa will have a co-teaching workshop here next month. She and Joni Clark-Leiker, the high school's counselor and career director, have been talking with Colby Community College and Northwest Kansas Technical College about having high school students take technical classes. The school was unable to secure an "America's Farmers Grow Rural Education" grant from Monsanto, Wieland reported.

Wieland also told the board about Inform, a software system that measures student progress. The system helps target struggling students, she said, and teachers get access to it through websites.

High School Principal Jeff Wallingford said his students are having open lunch this week, and that has not hurt the lunch program. He said Carol Morgan has

joined the custodial staff. There are 314 students enrolled at the high school, Wallingford reported, 347 including those at the Thomas County Learning Center. This includes 81 ninth-graders, 69 tenth-graders, 75 juniors and 85 seniors. The school's seminar format has changed so there will be fewer

students in the hallways and they will have more study time. Night school is being taught from 6:30 to 9 p.m. Thursdays, with help from Sally Toth and other faculty.

Middle School Principal Robb Ross reported that 360 Energy

See "BEFORE," Page 2

## Council gives boost to housing

By Sam Dieter

Colby Free Press  
sdieter@nwkanas.com

Citing a lack of housing in town, the Colby City Council approved a resolution for a Rural Housing Incentive District along South Range Avenue at its meeting Tuesday night.

City Manager Tyson McGreer told the council the district will be able to issue bonds to finance a housing project on about 20 lots just east of Range near Sonic. State law allows any city with a population of less than 60,000 to designate the districts.

The district would help a developer put single-family houses on vacant lots behind Sonic and the Dollar General store, just south of Dillons. There are three or four houses already in the area, McGreer said. He said he could not name the developer who came up with the plan because the firm had not given him permission.

"There's several other ordinances and a lot more steps we would have to go to before we even get to that juncture," he said.

The resolution for the housing district needs to be sent to the

state for approval, McGreer said. It says the council recognizes that there is a housing shortage in town. Increased revenue from property taxes on those lots would be used to pay the bonds, McGreer said, but the county or the Colby School District, which also collect taxes in town, could petition to stop that.

The district would include about 20 lots just west of Dylan Drive, and between Dylan and Sewell Avenue on the east. Williams Avenue would be to the north.

McGreer said the developer does not have a site plan yet. The developer had the idea for housing, he said, but the plan is not specific to any one developer.

The bonds would help the developer acquire the land and pay for infrastructure such as water and sewer improvements and perhaps sidewalks, depending on the site plan. They would not pay for construction of the housing.

In other business, the council:

- Tabled a resolution to give Walmart permission to store shipping containers on its premises for 90 days during the holidays.

See "HOUSING," Page 2

## Parking deal 'nonexclusive'

By Heather Alwin

Colby Free Press  
colby.society@nwkanas.com

The Thomas County commissioners approved a parking and use easement for the developers who aim to turn the old St. Thomas Hospital building into low-income apartments on Monday.

Approval of the "nonexclusive" agreement comes after the commissioners previously turned down the company's request for an exclusive easement, presented by city representatives at previous county meeting.

At that session, commissioners said they were unwilling to grant exclusive use over the parking area south of the hospital building, on the north edge of the Thomas County Office Complex lot.

People urged the commissioners to reject an exclusive easement because it could be used to block access to the north entrance of the fairgrounds and could make parking at the Health Department

more difficult.

City representatives predicted the disapproval could prompt the developer to pull out. Instead, the developer changed its request to a nonexclusive easement.

This easement will allow both the county and the future apartment complex to use the parking area, though the new easement agreement requires the county to maintain it.

The easement is binding on the county-owned property "in perpetuity," or forever.

"My main concern," said Commissioner Mike Baughn, "is that we do nothing that would affect the use of that trafficway there."

County Attorney Kevin Berens reviewed the easement and answered several questions for the commissioners.

"Is there anything in there that would be detrimental to the county?" Baughn asked.

See "PARKING," Page 2

## College rodeo crowd hits town

Morgan Bowen practiced her roping on some straw this morning before the start of the Colby Community College National Intercollegiate Rodeo Association rodeo. Bowen is a student at Fort Scott Community College in the opposite corner of the state; she's one of 500 contestants expected to compete this weekend at the Thomas County Fairgrounds.

SAM DIETER  
Colby Free Press



8 10499 02034 8