



# COLBY FREE PRESS

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## Rates inch up to keep sewer fund in black

The Colby City Council approved an increase in rates – mostly a buck or two a month – to keep the sewer department in the black at its meeting Tuesday night. Sewer customers will see increase of \$1 in base sewer rates and 5 percent in usage fees starting Jan. 1. Before the increase, the city charged residential customers and commercial customers inside

the city \$22 a month, and commercial customers outside the city \$44 a month. Debbie Zerr, finance director for the city, said this minimum covers the first 2,000 gallons a customer uses.

After that, Zerr said, commercial customers outside the city were charged \$6.50 for the next 1,000 gallons. That number will rise to \$6.83 with the in-

crease. All other customers had paid \$3.25 for the next 1,000 gallons, and will now pay \$3.42.

City officials said that residential and in-town commercial customers pay \$29.83 a month until they set their own rate based on their use over the winter. Out-of-town rates are set by usage.

The department is losing money and

will operate at a loss without the increase, City Manager Tyson McGreer said. He said the gain will be small compared to the cost of some of the sewer department's equipment.

The manager said the city budgeted \$1,274,314 next year for the sewer department, but that department spent \$1,145,099 in 2012. He said the depart-

ment had a \$98,590 loss at the end of October and will likely not break even.

McGreer and other city employees suggested either the increase that the council approved, or a 10 percent increase. This way, he said, the city will probably need to raise rates again, but the city thought people would find small rate changes more agreeable.

## City will hold public hearing on budget hike

By Sam Dieter  
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The Colby City Council set a public hearing at its next meeting for 7:30 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 23, at City Hall, on a plan to raise spending authority in this year's city budget by over \$2 million, mostly to authorize spending state and federal money city hadn't anticipated.

The city wants to change the amount of money listed under its 2013 law enforcement, special highway, E-911 and water treatment fund budgets. The extra money in the budget does not come from taxes, City Manager Tyson McGreer said after the meeting, but from other sources. Finance Director Debbie Zerr

wrote a memo detailing which subsections of these funds are to be increased or decreased and why:

In order to show the costs of a new canine unit, the city wants to increase starting cash in the Law Enforcement Fund by \$15,717, the diversion fund by \$4,583 and vehicular equipment by \$20,300. McGreer said this will be paid for out of the special law enforcement fund, which comes from drug seizures.

Under the Special Highway Fund, state gas tax is to drop by \$3,600, salaries are to increase by \$7,000, reconstruction is to increase by \$462,530, and reimbursement from the Kansas Department of Transportation for the

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## County to allow handguns on bus

By Heather Alwin  
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Thomas County commissioners voted at their meeting Tuesday to allow concealed-carry permit holders and law-enforcement officers to carry firearms on the county's transportation van.

The commissioners also agreed to hire a surveyor to settle a property dispute among neighbors in the Mingo area.

The policy change was prompt-

ed by recent changes in Kansas concealed-carry laws. County Attorney Kevin Berens had drafted two proposed policies for the commissioners, one allowing firearms for law enforcement only and one allowing firearms for both officers and permit holders.

Commissioner Mike Baughn said he was in favor of the second option.

"I'm just one of those people who doesn't think we ought to

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HEATHER ALWIN/Colby Free Press

The Colby Community College chapter of Phi Theta Kappa, an honor society for two-year college students, inducted new members in a ceremony Saturday. The inductees raised their right hands as they repeated the society's pledge. More than 60 people, including new members and their families,

attended. Club treasurer Jaydon Bixenman lighted candles as Ariel Severson, the club's public relations officer, spoke about each of the society's four ideals: scholarship, leadership, service and fellowship. Bixenman then described the elements of the society's key symbol to the inductees.

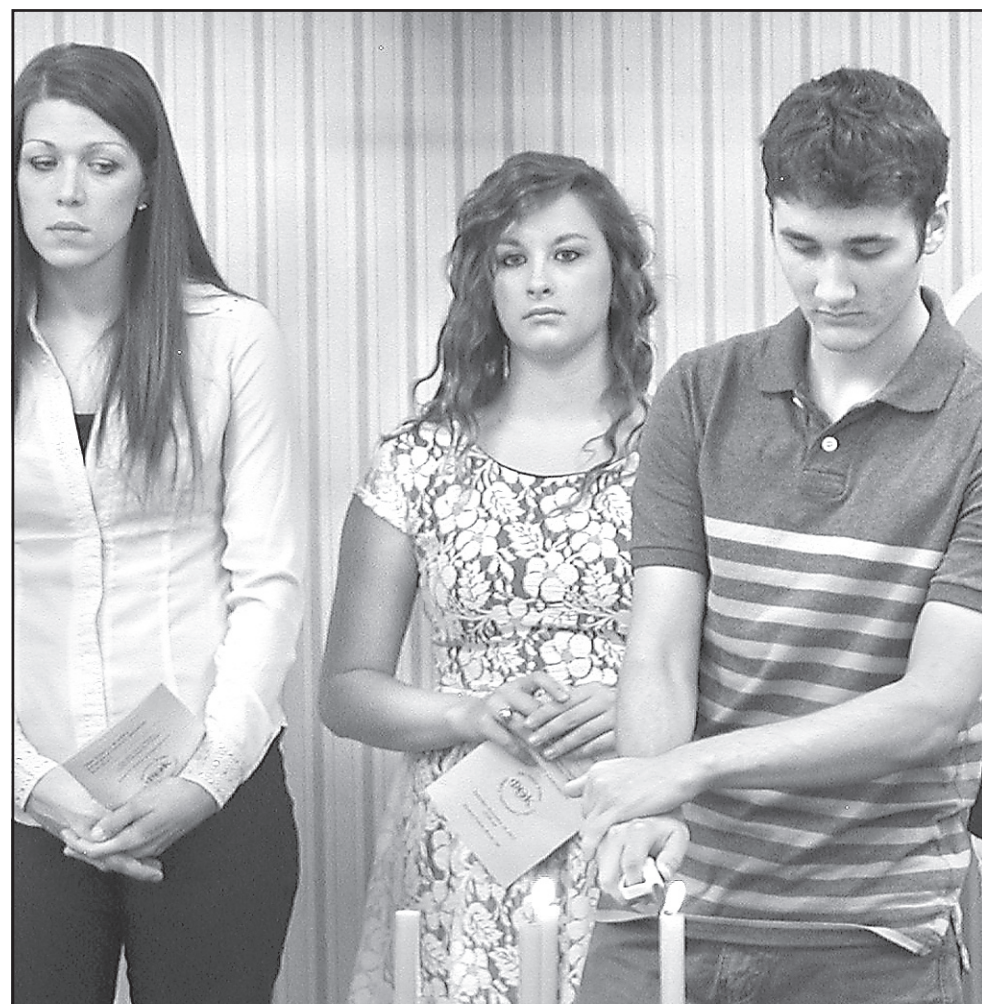
## Honorary inducts 20 at ceremony

Twenty-two new members of the Rho Iota Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa at Colby Community College were inducted into the international honor society for community college students last Saturday.

Phi Theta Kappa says it is the largest honor society in American higher education, with more than 1.5 million members and over 1,200 recognized chapters. Its primary purpose is to recognize and encourage scholarship, learning and academic achievement among two-year college students.

Membership is based on grade averages and other criteria, with members focusing on scholastic achievement and service to community and campus.

New members include Skylar Bowers, Niantic, Conn.; Shakara Bray, Hoxie; Ashlee Dinges, Ness City; Ashli Dinkel, Sharon Springs; Andrea Dizmang, Colby; Amanda Duvail, Spurger, Texas; Tatum Elder, Sharon Springs; Heather Flohrschutz, Stockton, Calif.; Melissa Franks, Wichita; Katharine Hart, Pratt; Opal Heckman, Fort Scott; Emily Klemm, Brewster; Joyce Korir, Kenya; Nichole Mainville, Logan; Stephanie Perry, St. Francis; Brianna Salas, Salina; Serena Stacy, Oberlin; Paige Todd, Gove;



Alexus Wanker, Hill City; Dana Wilson, Colby; Andrew Wood, Colby; and Jenifer Wood, Colby. Officers this year are Konnor Kriss, president; Alyse Dumler, vice president; Jaydon Bixenman, treasurer; and Ariel Severson, public relations. Advisors are Brent Wilson and Dr. Beth Fenton.

## Fries with that? College eyes Mideast

By Sam Dieter  
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Colby Community College trustees learned about a chance for the college to educate Middle Eastern students online at their meeting Monday night.

Mark Sarver, is chief executive officer of eduKan, a consortium which provides online education for Colby, Pratt, Barton County, Seward County, Garden City and Dodge City community colleges. He updated the trustees on their relationship with eduKan at a meeting Monday, he suggested that the college could play host to Middle Eastern restaurant management students in their home countries.

The main player in this program is Yum! Brands, the Louisville-based firm that operates KFC,

Long John Silver's, Taco Bell, Pizza Hut and Krispy Kreme, among other fast-food chains. Egyptian-based Americana Group, the oldest and biggest fast food franchise in the Middle East, employs about 55,000 people in the region, including many who work at Yum! restaurants, he said.

"An American degree is very prestigious in the Middle East," Sarver added. "It's very sought after."

Before he joined eduKan, Sarver explained later, he had a relationship with the people who help Yum! employees get an education. He learned that they see Colby as a preferred place to "send" their Middle Eastern workers to school for a two-year degree.

"It's very advantageous for their students to go to the Colby program," he said, "because it's very affordable and very convenient."

The classes would all be online, he said, adding that the program could be ready by spring. Yum! trains its employees for management jobs through a program called Yum! University. Sarver said he learned from the college's registrar that some of this training could count as class credit toward employees' degrees.

Students could take general education classes for an associate degree, said Debbie Schwanke, the Public Information Director for the college. They would be able to pick their own major.

Sarver added that eduKan has set up a computer program to catch "Pell runners," who apply to a school online for financial aid from the federal Pell grant system and then drop out without paying.

In other business, the trustees: Approved the resignations of Dr. Lorna Pelton, beef program

director; Brandon McLemore, admissions counselor; Brette Hankin, registrar; Troy Bielser, outreach coordinator; Sean Lydon, assistant baseball coach; and Tony Schroer, band instructor.

Approved a service agreement with American DataBank, an affiliation agreement with HCA Midwest Division Physician Practices, and a clinical education agreement with Phillips Chiropractic and Physical Therapy Center in Dodge City.

Approved the college's mission statement, which Dr. Stephen Vacik said has to be done once a year for accreditation purposes.

Went into closed session for a total of 35 minutes to discuss non-elected personnel.

## Streets dusted



SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press

Cars drove down snowy streets this morning after Colby's first snow in just over a month, and only the second one this winter. The Goodland station of the National Weather Service predicts cloudy skies and cold weather this weekend, but no more snow. Highs should be just above freezing today, in 30s over the weekend and rise into the 40s early next week.