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‘Hard 50’ to be sought for defendant

By Heather Alwin

Colby Free Press
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The man charged with killing 27-year-old Colby resident Teri L. Morris on Feb. 9 could face a “Hard 50” prison sentence if he is convicted of that crime. Kansas Attorney General Derek Schmidt filed a

motion Thursday indicating he will seek the special sentence for defendant William Andrew Shank, 25, of Garden City.

Shank is charged with first-degree murder, aggravated arson and aggravated burglary for his actions in connection with Morris’ death.

Schmidt’s motion requests that the court conduct

a separate sentencing procedure if Shank is convicted of first-degree murder. This second proceeding would determine whether Shank would be required to serve a mandatory 50-year prison term before he first becomes eligible for parole.

This special sentencing proceeding, available in cases with aggravating circumstances, was made

possible by a modification to Kansas’ Hard 50 statute earlier this year.

Schmidt also asked for an upward departure from Kansas’ sentencing guidelines if Shank is convicted of a lesser offense than first-degree murder.

Shank’s trial is scheduled to begin Monday, March 24, in Colby.

Cold cancels Light Parade

The Christmas Light Parade planned for this weekend has been cancelled due to cold weather.

Brette Hankin, director of the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce, said that people involved in the parade decided it would be better not to have it this year because of cold tempera-

tures. It was scheduled for 5:45 p.m. Sunday in downtown Colby.

Hankin said Santa City will be open from 1 to 5 p.m. Sunday as scheduled

The soup supper that had been set for the end of the parade at the American Legion will also go on as planned.

Blast of cold to last weekend

The snow and frigid wind that blew into Colby the middle of the week should stick around through the weekend.

Jesse Lundquist, a meteorologist with the Goodland station of the National Weather Service, said this cold front is the result of cold air dropping down from Canada. Lows were still in the 20s and 30s until the cold front hit on Wednesday.

“And looking at the next few days,” he said, “it looks like this cold is going to stick around.”

Jet stream winds should bring warm air across southern Kansas but leave Colby with the same cold weather, he said, and probably will not get warmer until Tuesday. The Weather Service predicts a 20 percent chance of snow Saturday, 40 percent chance Saturday night and Sunday, and a 20 percent chance on Sunday night.

Lundquist said that cold snaps like this are not uncommon in December.

“It’s well below normal, but not uncommon,” he said.

High temperatures in Colby and Goodland were 13 and 12 degrees respectively, he said, about 32 degrees below normal for this time of year. As close as northern Nebraska, there have been temperatures in the negative teens this week.

In Colby, the weather service predicts temperatures will drop to three degrees below zero tonight, the Weather Service predicts, and lows will be under 10 degrees all weekend long. Wind chill could bring temperatures to almost 20 below.

Much of northwest Kansas is under a wind chill advisory from 9 p.m. tonight until 11 a.m. Saturday.

Highs will be in the 10s over the weekend, and Lundquist said they will rise into the low 30s on Tuesday and the high 20s on Wednesday.

City tables bids on tower

By Sam Dieter

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The Colby City Council tabled a decision on repainting and making small repairs to the city water tower at its meeting Tuesday night.

The council debated the pros and cons of three different bids at the meeting. They held off on a decision so that City Manager Tyson McGreer could check references on the company with the lowest bid.

Utility Service Group, which already offered to work with the city, has proposed an agreement to work on the tower for \$465,000, and also offered a \$40,000 “mixer” that would keep cold water from settling in the bottom of the tank. Jetco Limited, based in Lake Zurich, Ill., bid the project for \$588,900.

The lowest bid by far, for \$339,339, came from Cunningham Inc. McGreer said he had not finished checking references from that company, which is based in Riverton in southeast Kansas. He asked the council to give him some time to examine the company’s references if they chose to go with it.

“Albeit it’s a greatly reduced price than anybody else, some

times you go ‘why?’” he said.

The council members were unwilling to go with any single company. No one from Cunningham has inspected the water tower itself, although McGreer asked if he had ever seen the tower.

“His exact quote was I’ve driven through there and saw it once,” he said, “and I think he stayed at one of our hotels.”

He went on to say that the city of Grant, Neb., entered an agreement with Utility Service when he was the administrator there. Jake Dugger, representative for the company, was at the council meeting and explained that the company already works with many cities in Kansas.

Dugger also came to the council’s Nov. 5 meeting, when he first proposed an agreement with the city. He then offered Colby a one-year “evergreen agreement,” from Utility Service, separate from the bid the city got Tuesday.

The city would be able to cancel the contract at any time the contract comes due for renewal, but Utility Service would be bound to stay in the agreement as long as the city pays its bills. The company would take over over painting and maintenance for \$139,152 a year for the first five years. After

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Season welcomed in song



Colby Community College’s musicians entertained crowds Tuesday night with their winter concert. Following the concert band, the Sunflower Singers also performed three numbers, including this rendition of “Baby It’s Cold Outside” (top). Before the concert’s official start, audiences were welcomed by a solo performance from Haley Hake of LaVeta, Colo., (above left) and selections from choir director Randy Berls and his voice students, including Alex Helms of Atwood (right). The Trojan Concert Band played three numbers and the Trojan Stage Band and Trojan Concert Choir also performed.

HEATHER ALWIN/Colby Free Press

Trustees target fund raising

By Sam Dieter

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The Colby Community College Trustees talked about money at a special meeting Thursday afternoon.

Fund raising has been an especially pressing topic a recent meetings. The trustees had a special meeting in October to talk about raising badly-needed money to increase the college’s cash reserves, and ask for help from the Colby Community College Endowment Foundation.

The topic of Thursday’s discussion was how to raise \$225,000 for the college by the end of the year. That would bring in a total of

\$500,000, thanks to the foundation. College President Stephen Vacik said he had received \$25,000 from the Pete Henry Foundation as part of his “Campaign for Change.” This is the only “new money” the college has in hand for the campaign, although others have promised to raised more.

At its annual meeting on Oct. 10, the foundation promised to match up to \$250,000 that the college raised as part of the campaign by Dec. 31. This needed to be “new money,” not cash that had been pledged to the college before then.

The trustees went over lists of businesses they want contact about giving to the campaign at their meeting.

“I was just trying to figure out who would miss the students more than anybody,” Trustee Linda Vaughn said.

Vaughn thought banks and food industry businesses like restaurants and grocery stores would miss the college the most. Trustee Dale Herschberger said The Bank was a good potential donor. A story that ran in the Colby Free Press pointed out that the business was recently rated as one of the best banks in the

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