



College financial reserves up

By Heather Alwin
Colby Free Press
colby.society@nwkansas.com

Colby Community College leaders say they feel the college is financially viable, despite its recent struggles.

The college is not in danger of closing soon, said Chief Financial Officer Glenda Overstreet, though there are times during the year when it experiences cash flow issues.

But access to increased financial support is important for the future to the college's long term future, she said.

"In an effort to be transparent as well as honest about financial concerns of the college, I am afraid that shared information may have been misconstrued or taken out of context," said President Stephen Vacik. "At this time, (the college) is working to rebuild needed reserves even as we carefully monitor our expenses against our revenues."

The school's cash balance, or uncommitted funds, declined from \$2,329,000 in 2008 to its lowest point at \$567,000 in 2011. In 2012, the cash balance increased to \$973,000, and to \$1,408,000 in

2013, said Debbie Schwanke, the school's public information officer.

Alan Waites was the financial officer at the college from 2008 until Overstreet took over this summer.

Shortly before he left, Waites told the trustees that the college finances were no longer being monitored by the Higher Learning Commission. The commission put the college on financial monitoring in 2011, he said, because of its overall financial performance.

"I think it's been a real challenge and an ongoing issue," Waites said of the college's financial situation. "In my entire time they (cash reserves) were never as strong as you would like them to be."

The school implemented financial changes in fall 2013, said Overstreet, to address its financial problems.

The college's accounts payable, or the amount of money it owes, changes throughout each month as bills are paid and new charges occur, said Overstreet.

The school spends much of its money at the beginning of each

See "COLLEGE," Page 2

County passes tax abatements

At their meeting Monday, the Thomas County commissioners approved 19 tax abatements totaling \$11,648 and one tax roll correction adding \$444 in taxes.

County Appraiser Bruce Webb said these corrections are not uncommon, with many resulting from personal property exchanges that may not have been reported. State appraisers provided some assistance earlier this year, he said, and they may have made a few errors since they were unfamiliar with some of the assets.

Personal property tax abatements were: \$126 for John and Brandi Jones for a motorized scooter that was taxed in two counties; \$244 for Russell Jorgensen for trucks that were assessed by the state; \$318 to Jonathan and Caitlan Collett for a mobile home that had been sold; \$357 to Jim and Judy McKee for a truck that was traded in; \$51.04 to Jon Humburg for a decrease in value caused by an error in the age and brand of a mobile home; \$76 to Dorothy Libertus and Shawna Kerr for a mobile home that was sold; \$730 to David Barnes for a truck that was assessed by the

state; and \$662 to Joseph Babst for property that is tax-exempt because it is used for farming.

Truck tax abatements were: \$1,001 to George and James Tubbs for a truck that was traded in; \$333 to Ronald Dible for a truck he traded in; and \$532 to John F. Morgan for a truck that belongs to his son, John M. Morgan. The truck was added to John M. Morgan's taxes, causing a \$444 increase.

Real estate abatements were: \$6 to Glenn and Christine Griffin, Lucas Moore and Lacy Moore and \$6,945 to the City of Colby for three properties that should not have been placed on the tax rolls.

The commissioners abated \$164 to Danny and Karla George for minerals on three properties they own. Mineral rights are generally not taxed separately if the property owner also owns those rights.

The commissioners abated \$100 for a special assessment on property owned by Corelogic Tax Services. The amount was a debt owed to the City of Rexford for mowing services but had already been paid.

Kansas man arrested in airport car bomb plot

By Roxana Hegeman
Associated Press

WICHITA (AP) - A Kansas man accused of planning to detonate a car bomb at a Wichita airport was arrested today at the airport, authorities said.

Terry Lee Loewen, 58, planned to drive a car that he believed was full of explosives into a terminal at Mid-Continent regional airport, U.S. Attorney Barry Grissom said.

Loewen was charged with one count each of attempting to use a weapon of mass destruction, attempting to damage property and attempting to provide support to terrorist group al-Qaida. Authorities

said he was trying to support "al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula."

Investigators said Loewen is an avionics technician who lives in Wichita and works at the airport. He had been under investigation for about six months after he made statements about wanting to commit "violent jihad" against the U.S.

Authorities said they believe Loewen acted alone. No other arrests are expected.

Wichita Mid-Continent Airport had 68 scheduled commercial flights today, according to flight tracking site FlightAware.com.



Sing a song for Christmas

EVAN BARNUM and SAM DIETER/Colby Free Press

The fourth graders at Colby Grade School (above) lifted their hands to the air at their Christmas concert Thursday night at the grade school auditorium. Tabriz Sadridenov (left, at right), Alizah Schielke and Julianne Hamilton took turns singing one of many Christmas songs from around the world for the fourth grade program. Last Friday, Susan McLemore (left, below), Madisyn Haggard Monica Bugbee-Miller, Brandon McLemore and Blake McLemore turned out in spite of the cold weather to play Christmas songs for residents of Fairview Estates. Susan McLemore organized the pick-me-up for residents that she did physical therapy for until about a year ago.



Conservatives back budget pact

Andrew Taylor

Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) - After a sweeping vote by conservative Republicans controlling the House and President Barack Obama's Democratic allies, a bipartisan budget pact is in the hands of the Senate, where it will encounter stronger but probably futile resistance from Republicans.

The modest package passed by the House on Thursday would ease the harshest effects of another round of automatic spending cuts set to hit the Pentagon and domestic agencies next month. Supporters of the measure easily beat attacks on it from conservative organizations that sometimes raise money by stoking conflict within the Republican Party.

At the same time, Democrats who were upset that the bill would not extend jobless benefits for the long-term unemployed suppressed their doubts to advance the measure to the Democratic-led Senate, where Obama's allies appear set to clear it next week for his signature.

The measure faces a key test vote on Tuesday in the Senate, when Democrats will need at least 5 GOP votes to overcome a filibuster hurdle. Minority Republicans are trending against the measure despite sweeping

House GOP support on Thursday.

Senate Democrats promise to force a vote on extending unemployment benefits when the chamber reconvenes after 1.3 million people lose their benefits on Dec. 28 will force GOP leaders to knuckle under and extend aid averaging under \$300 a week to people who've been out of work longer than six months.

The bipartisan bill breezed through the House on a 332-94 vote, with lopsided majorities of Republicans and Democrats alike voting in favor.

Thursday's vote was a big win for House Speaker John Boehner, R-Ohio, who earlier in the day lobbed another salvo at conservative interest groups that routinely attack Republicans for supporting legislation they deem not conservative enough. But that is what Republicans can achieve given the realities of a divided Washington.

"If you're for reducing the budget deficit, then you should be voting for this bill. If you're for cutting the size of government, you should be supporting this budget," Boehner said. "These are the things that I came here to do, and this budget does them. Is it perfect? Does it go far enough? No, not at all. I think it's going to take a lot more work to get our arms around our debt and our deficits."

Republican Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida criticized the deal, saying it takes the country in the wrong direction.

"I mean, compromise just for the sake of compromise, so we can feel good about each other, I don't think is progress for the country," Rubio said Friday on CBS *This Morning*.

"We have a government that continues to spend more money than it takes in at an alarming pace. That is going to trigger a debt crisis. It is stifling job creation. It is holding American ingenuity back," Rubio said.

Sens. Kelly Ayotte, R-N.H., and Lindsey Graham, R-S.C. - who went on a 2012 swing-state tour blasting Obama for the automatic cuts to the Pentagon - have announced their opposition to the deal, despite its relief for the military. Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., is likely opposed to it as well, but is holding off on announcing his position, a move that seems motivated by a desire to avoid damaging its prospects on Tuesday.

The measure would bring a temporary cease-fire to the budget wars that have gridlocked Washington for much of the three years since Republicans reclaimed control of the House.

