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Environmental drill



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Workers from Woofter Pump and Well of Hoxie continued drilling holes this week at the former Butterfield Convenience Store on South Franklin Avenue as part of an assessment for the Kansas Department of Health and Environment. Jackie Hughes, Milco Environmental in McCook, Neb., said they are checking to see if the site has any contamination that needs to be removed.

Wind farm proposal blows on county

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

Thomas County Commissioners are ready to lend support to a proposed wind farm in Thomas County.

The issue was discussed during their meeting Monday. The commissioners took no action on item, and will decide on lending their support or not at a special meeting at 9 a.m. Monday at the courthouse.

Cameron Epard of Air Stream Energy from Scottsdale, Ariz., gave the proposal to the commissioners. "This is the biggest that Kansas has seen so far."

The Thomas County proposal is for a 130-megawatt wind project between Colby and Mingo. The company has the option to lease 8,000 acres for the \$200 million project.

If successful, the wind farm would go online in late 2008. The wind farm would include 60 to 70 towers generating electricity.

Property owners would sign a 30-year lease to have the turbines built on their land. Epard said the project is part of a project with Westar Energy.

He said Thomas County was selected because of its constant wind speeds and good infrastructure for power transmission.

"It doesn't have the tall grass prairie issues," Epard said.

Epard is from the Colby area, and founded Air Stream with his brother. Air Stream is focusing on projects in the Midwest and Rocky Mountains.

The wind farm is part of a bid submitted to Westar Energy, which would buy the power. Westar is ac-

"This (the wind farm) is the biggest that Kansas has seen so far."

Cameron Epard,
Air Stream Energy, Scottsdale, Ariz.

cepting proposals to add 500 megawatts of renewable energy. Air Stream is one of the companies submitting proposals. The deadline is April 2.

Carla Olson, public information officer with Westar Energy in Wichita, said constant winds to produce power is vital.

"Varying wind speeds make a difference in production," Olson said. "It depends on the weather."

Westar produces 6,100 megawatts for 669,000 customers in eastern Kansas, Olson explained on a day like Tuesday, with cool, overcast conditions, their power load is about half of that. One megawatt provides power for about 200 customers.

Steele asked where the turbines would come from. Epard said most turbine manufacturers are not American, but the blades for them are made domestically.

The project would create 200 construction jobs, which would last six to eight months.

"There are ample opportunities for local participation in this project," Epard said.

Road improvements are in the project's budget, so the county would not have to pay for that.

Commissioner Paul Steele said Thomas County does not have any

zoning issues related to wind farms, which is an advantage.

"We're in this for the long-term," Epard said.

He has already talked to the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce and has its support. He plans to talk with city of Colby officials, and hold two or three public meetings.

Epard met with the property owners who may be impacted, and said they are supportive of the project.

In other business ...

Commissioners discussed incident training with Jim Engel, county emergency management director. Engel told the commissioners they must go through National Incident Management System training.

The training is so the commissioners and other officials will know how to handle their roles in an emergency.

For the commissioners the training is minimal.

"It's not really that bad of training," Engel said. "This is a federal government mandate."

The Colby City Council will have to take the same training, which can be done online or in a training session. Training must be completed by fall.

Golden Plains board hires help for superintendent search

By Jan Katz Ackerman
Colby Free Press

The search for a new superintendent is on at Golden Plains School District. Monday, the school board approved to hire a recruiting firm to help board members Teri Branley, Jay Todd, Mark Miller, Lane Purcell, Dennis Allison, Paul Bruggeman and Leroy Spreser select the next superintendent.

In February, the board did not renew Dr.

Roger Baskerville's contract. Baskerville has been superintendent at Golden Plains for the past seven years.

Board Clerk Betty Barnett said the board hired Matson, Steele and Associates of Oberlin to help screen applicants for the position.

"The process has already started," Barnett said. "The application deadline is April 16, interviews will start after April 23 and duties start July 1."

The cost to the district of having an out-

side firm help with recruitment of a new superintendent will be a minimum of \$3,000 or 3 percent of the salary once established. Barnett said the salary for Baskerville's replacement has yet to be set.

"It will be set according to his or her qualifications," she said. Baskerville leaves the district after having a salary this year of \$82,000 plus benefits. Kansas law allows individuals who have attained 85 points as a combination of age and time in service to draw retirement

from the Kansas Public Employee Retirement System.

The point value is figured on an individual's current age, plus the current service credit for years worked. In Baskerville's instance, he is 60-years-old and has been a superintendent for 31 years.

Baskerville told the board 15 months ago he was considering retirement, and in January it was decided his contract would not be extended. Baskerville, at that time, said he will look for another superintendent job

closer to where his wife resides in Washington, Kan.

Golden Plains School District has two buildings 10 miles apart in Rexford and Selden. The junior and senior high schools are in Rexford, and the grade school is in Selden. Besides being superintendent, Baskerville serves as principal for the grade school. This year's enrollment at Golden Plains includes 74 elementary students, 37 middle school students and 75 at the high school.

Spring is in the air

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

During a week without school books, books were still a wanted item Tuesday.

Both parents and children of students on spring break were looking for books and movies at Pioneer Memorial Library. Kim Chain was checking out books with daughters Kylie and Kaitlyn.

Both Kim and Kylie are on spring break — Kim from her job as a teacher at Colby Grade School and Kylie from Puddle Duck Preschool. Kylie said she was enjoying playing and reading.



TISHA COX/Colby Free Press

Kim Chain, left, helped her daughter Kylie play with blocks at Pioneer Memorial Library Tuesday. Kim is on spring break from her job as a teacher at Colby Grade School and Kylie is on break from Puddle Duck Preschool this week.

"I'm enjoying the time, too," Kim said.

The family had been in Garden City, watched college softball over the weekend and spent time together at home.

Pam Gehlsler has been spending time at home with twins Collin and Reagan, who are on break from Puddle Duck preschool.

Cool weather sent them to the library.

"We needed a break," Pam said. "It was time to get out of the house." The library was not the only destination out of the house.

They have spent time in the park or on bike rides.

Fourth graders Tresta Urban and Rachel Urban said they have spent time hanging out with friends, reading and shopping.

Middle school students Austin Scheideman, Tom Wilson and

Harry Scheideman, eighth graders from Manhattan, and Colby seventh grader Dalton Snyder went to the library for the movie.

Tom said they were spending their spring break playing video games and "hanging out."

Austin said they had also played outside, spending a lot of time playing football.

"We also made a homemade swing," he said.

Town remembers Colby College ally

By Tisha Cox
Colby Free Press

Colby Community College lost one of its biggest supporters. Charles Davis, 77, of Colby, died Tuesday, Feb. 27, 2007.

Davis was a former board of trustees member, served on the college endowment board and the Prairie Museum of Art and History board.

Nick Wells, director of Colby Community College's endowment association, worked with Davis when he was on the endowment board.

"His family had a tremendously big impact on the college," Wells said. "They owned the land where the college sits."

Davis' daughter, Anna Baker, said her grandmother sold the college the land.

Davis was instrumental in helping beautify the campus, including the Beatrice Davis Memorial Clock Tower, named for his mother. "It's a big focal point for the campus," Wells said. "It's one of the few things done for the enhancement of the campus. It's unique."

He also provided for the upkeep of the clock.

Davis also donated a Native American sculpture, a scale version of the Ad Astra sculpture, on top of the Kansas capital dome in Topeka,

to the college. "It is the biggest piece of art the campus has received," Wells said.

He also started the Beatrice Davis Memorial Fund, a nursing scholarship at the college.

His mother, Bea, helped catalog the first books circulated at the H.F. Davis Memorial Library on campus.

Davis was born Nov. 29, 1929, in Colorado Springs, Colo. He was a newspaper reporter from 1953 to 1969. He worked at the Wichita Eagle until 1956, then worked as the education reporter for the San Diego Union in California.

Davis later was the press officer for the California state university system. He moved back to Colby from California in 1988.

He was given an honorary associates degree from Colby Community College in 2000.

Sue Taylor, director of the Prairie Museum of Art and History, said Davis was a thoughtful, intelligent man.

"He was very active in the community, very supportive," she said.



Davis