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Walking trail moving closer to reality



STEVE HAYNES/Colby Free Press

Sue Evans (above), executive director of the Regional Prevention Center, presented the vision for a trail system connecting all parts of Colby for walking, running and other exercise. Phase I would start with a half-mile of concrete paths at the city's new water park (see map on Page 3).

By Steve Haynes

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Backers of a proposed walking trail system for Colby unveiled their vision, starting with a half-mile of paved paths around the city's new water park and pool, at two meetings this week.

While the concrete paths around the pool are considered Phase I of the effort, organizer Sue Evans said, the group would like to see trails reaching out to stitch all of Colby together with exercise, green space and fresh air. Many in the crowd of about 30 people at the meeting Tuesday at the Pioneer Memorial Library nodded their heads in agreement.

The effort, backed by the city, the Thomas County Coalition, the Thomas County Wellness Committee and the Multipurpose Activity Center board, envisions a trail sys-

tem that spreads out from the pool "to connect all parts of Colby," a handout says.

At the meeting Tuesday were Pat Erickson from the Wellness Committee, City Councilman Dave Voss, at least six members of the coalition, a group that promotes healthy lifestyles, and Jada Tubbs of the activities center.

About 15 people attended a session Monday at the Colby United Methodist Church, including City Manager Carolyn Armstrong and contractor Mike Woofter, a member of the city Tree Board. Ken Frahm was at both sessions, and talked about his experiences walking and biking on trails in Topeka.

"The purpose is to see that everyone in Colby ... has a safe, well-lit place to walk," Evans said, adding: "We see ... into the future for an entire system of walking and biking trails."

Around the pool in Phase I, she said, plans include an eight-foot concrete path,

a playground and an "exersite" with 12 exercise stations for children (see www.fitnessstrails.com). Benches and trees would line the path, and an open area would give space for games and such. The tree board and city would pick trees to complement the pool.

"We want a trail wide enough so people can walk abreast and people can pass them," Evans said.

Each of two loops around the pool area would be a quarter mile long, she said. The playground would be similar to the one in Fike Park downtown.

"We will be purchasing everything that we can locally," she said. "If we can't get it locally, we'll try to get it in Kansas."

The "exersite" comes from firm in Australia, she added.

Phase II trails would radiate out from the

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Mayor, council sworn in Tuesday

By Kevin Bottrell

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Colby's new mayor and city council member's were sworn in at Tuesday's council meeting.

Mayor Gary Adrian and councilmen Mike Hake and Stan Schmidt took their oath of office. Patrick Mallory and Fred Taylor, who were re-elected earlier this month, retook their oaths. Dave Voss was elected council president, succeeding Jim Brown, who did not run for re-election.

Adrian began his term as Mayor by reading resolutions recognizing former Mayor Ken Bieber and former councilwoman Bev Eicher for their service. Bieber was a councilman from 1995 to 2006 and mayor from 2006 to 2011. Eicher was a councilwoman from Ward II from 2003 to 2011. The council also had a resolution for Brown, but saved it for the next meeting since Brown was absent.

Adrian had asked city attorney

John Gatz to prepare an orientation for himself and the new council members. Gatz spoke at length on the duties and responsibilities of being on the council.

"Hopefully, your motivation to be on the council is not that you have an axe to grind," he said. "Hopefully you want to make Colby a better place."

Gatz said each member has a duty to be educated on the issues that come before the council and the laws the city is subject to such as zoning, open meeting and voting laws.

Gatz said the council only has authority when it is together in an open meeting.

"As one person, you really have no authority," he said. "However, you are considered by the public to be a council member 24 hours a day, seven days a week."

Gatz also reminded the council that when conflicts of interest come up, they should leave the

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'Suitability' issue remains undecided

By John Milburn

The Associated Press

TOPEKA — Legislators will have more than the Kansas budget to address when they return to the Statehouse on April 27, including lingering questions about the money for public schools.

The budget is the marquee event, with negotiators trying to complete work on a nearly \$14 billion spending plan that includes \$6 billion in state tax dollars. Half of all state revenues goes to public elementary and secondary education.

With that in mind, Republican Gov. Sam Brownback asked legislators earlier this year to take a crack at redefining what constitutes a suitable education. The goal is to clarify what is required of the state and its 289 school

districts and prevent further legal fights over the school budget.

The Kansas Supreme Court ruled previously in a lawsuit filed by school districts that the state had failed in its constitutional duty to adequately fund schools. In response, legislators increased education money by close to \$1 billion in 2006.

Declining state revenues in recent years have forced the state to reduce school spending, prompting districts to file a new lawsuit last year. Arguments are expected to be later this year.

Brownback spokeswoman Sherriene Jones-Sontag said the governor wants to work with legislators and others interested in education to find ways to put more tax dollars in the classroom and "improve

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KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

Landowners make prescribed burns on grassland acres

Clouds of smoke seen north and west of Colby on Wednesday were controlled burns set by landowners, who took advantage of good weather to burn off their Conservation Reserve Program grass. The burns, required by the program, help get rid of dead or excess plants, slow invasions of weeds and insects and help grasses regenerate.



Briefly

Start separating clippings, trash

The City of Colby will start picking up grass separate from household trash on Monday. City officials ask that everyone leave grass clippings unbagged in a tipper can marked "Grass." Have tipper cans to the curb by 8 a.m. on trash day. For information, call the Public Works office at (785) 460-4420.

Veterans officer coming to town

The state Veterans Affairs mobile office planned to be at the Colby Walmart parking lot from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. today and 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday to help veterans and family members apply for benefits from the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. The office is staffed by a representative trained to help veterans and their family. Call (785) 220-5183 with questions.

Church plans egg hunt Saturday

The College Drive Assembly of God church will

have its sixth annual Easter Egg Hunt for children up to age 10 from 1 to 2:15 p.m. Saturday on the church grounds at 245 W. College Drive. Kids under 5 years old must be accompanied by an adult. Prizes in a coloring contest will include a bike for each age group. For information, call organizer Michelle Hillery at (785) 846-7688.

Legion to serve breakfast

The Colby American Legion Post will serve biscuits, gravy, hash browns and scrambled eggs from 7 to 11 a.m. Saturday at the post hall, 1850 W. Fourth St. Donations will be accepted. For information, call 462-3809.

Church offers breakfast Sunday

The Colby First Baptist Church will hold an Easter breakfast at 8:30 a.m. Sunday at the church, Webster Street and Grant Avenue. Everyone is welcome. For information, call the church at 462-2867.

Orchestra reschedules concert

The Pride of the Prairie Orchestra has rescheduled its spring concert, cancelled last week because of weather, to 7 p.m. next Thursday at Colby Community College's Frahm Theater. Proceeds will go to the Vernon Akers family to help with expenses for Josiah Akers, a violinist, who had emergency surgery. For information, call Carol Ann McGuire at (785) 672-2380.

Congressman to hold meeting

U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp will be here for a town hall meeting from 2:30 to 3:30 p.m. next Thursday at the Colby/Thomas County Chamber of Commerce office, 350 S. Range Ave. For information, call Huelskamp's office at (202) 225-2715.

Foundation plans fun shoot

The Citizens Foundation will hold a benefit fun shoot beginning at 11:30 a.m. Sunday, May 1, at

the Colby Trap Club west of town with competition for all skill levels. Registration includes food, 125 "rocks," prizes and gifts. Proceeds will go for the purchase of medical equipment for Citizens Medical Center and to the club. For more information, call Tama Unger at 460-1214 or Bob Luck at 462-0686.

Population talk rescheduled

Colby Community College's discussion on Dr. Patrick Carr's presentation on his book, "Hollowing out the Middle," has been rescheduled for 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 3, at the Davis Library on campus. The discussion was postponed by Thursday's lockdown. For information, call Linda Davis-Stephens at 460-5528.



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