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Land board weighs grass and water options for amphitheater site

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Heavy equipment parked in November 2022 at Cam-plex Park, as ground clearing for an amphitheater was underway at Cam-plex Park.

Ed Glazar

The ground at the amphitheater site at Cam-plex park is nearly ready for the next leg of the project to begin. The questions Campbell County Public Land Board members face is what type of grass to grow and how to grow

it?

Land board members approved an irrigation system as its top-ranked choice, meaning negotiations can begin to try finalizing a deal to get the system installed.

The G&G Landscaping proposal is \$385,000 for a center-pivot watering system, in which the above-ground sprinkler system 360 degrees around a central point, watering the field beneath it.

Land board members preferred that option to two beneath-ground irrigation systems, similar to one at a golf course, each of which cost significantly more money.

Chalk Buttes Landscaping submitted a plan estimated to cost \$900,000 to \$1.3 million. G&G Landscaping, in addition to the option the land board chose as its priority, also proposed an in-ground irrigation system that would cost about \$950,000.

Besides the cost savings, the positives of the above-ground system are its low maintenance, simple winterization, no sprinkler heads scattered across the lawn and that it could be installed within the project's timeline to maximize this summer's grow season.

The downside is that the above ground system requires tires for the system to pivot around the field, creating tire tracks. It also involves the visibility of the infrastructure itself jutting up from the ground.

The field could be prepped and seeded between May 15 and May 26, according to the G&G proposal. The in-ground system has a later timeline in each company's proposal.

Both of the proposals for in-ground irrigation systems came in well above the \$500,000 price-range land board members and Cam-plex officials had earmarked for the remainder of the project.

Land board members had talked about the preference for an in-ground system, but once the estimates came back, decided that the roughly \$1 million price tag was just too high.

“Sometimes things just cost too much ... I would rather go to the commissioners and ask for more bodies out here, than go to the commissioners and ask for a very beautiful lawn,” said Aaron Lyles, Cam-plex executive director.

“If it saves us a million dollars, I think it’s worth it,” land board member Laura Chapman added.

The pivot-system is a natural turf grass option, although the plan had once been to re-seed the amphitheater site with native grass, said land board chairman Darin Edmonds.

“Originally, when this started, it was going to be native, it was going to look like it did, only re-graded,” Edmonds said. “We were never part of the conversation, to put it as politely as I can. Cam-plex and the land board were never part of the conversation about what we wanted, what we would like, those recommendations were coming from the group.”

The amphitheater site will host the nightly activity for the 2024 International Pathfinders Camporee. The conversations with Camporee officials about the amphitheater planning has been centered around turf grass, Lyles said, but not how the grass is grown and whether it’s watering system is above or below ground.

Jake Goodrick