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Sports park to get 12 all-turf fields with \$2.6 million cost

MARY ALFORD The News-Enterprise Sep 10, 2019 Updated 5 hrs ago

A turf conversion project at Elizabethtown Sports Park was discussed in spring 2016. Now, three years later, a bid for the project has been accepted.

Elizabethtown Tourism and Convention Bureau Executive Director Janna Clark informed Elizabethtown City Council members Monday during their work session of the commission's decision to accept a bid from AstroTurf, a company based in Dalton, Georgia, for synthetic turf conversion of all 12 baseball and softball fields at the park.

The commission's vote at its Sept. 4 meeting was unanimous.

The cost of the conversion is estimated at roughly \$2.6 million. Tourism had \$2 million for the project budgeted in the 2017-2018 fiscal year. It carried over to the 2019-20 fiscal year. Clark said the additional \$600,000 will come from capital escrow, which is earmarked for Sports Park projects.

Clark said in 2016 they were continuing to see a big demand to hold events on diamonds, especially baseball. She said they also realized the struggle with rainouts because of the ability of the fields to recover from rain and what it takes to get multiple fields playable after several inches of rain are received just prior to events.

Tourism and Convention Bureau staff requested park staff hold initial conversations with the company that installed the championship field synthetic turf. Clark said they were able to obtain a top-line estimate of cost.

In 2017, Clark said they had an economic impact study and held discussions with current and potential sports organizations about the idea of doing the conversion and how that would help them recruit, retain and operate events at the park.

Then in spring 2018, a professional review of park operations, completed by Huddle Up Group, emphasized the overall benefit to the community and ESP's industry reputation (less rainouts) for turf conversion.

Elizabethtown Tourism and Convention Bureau Commission investigated the possibility of doing this construction during the off season of 2018-2019, Clark said, but opted to wait until the new operations company was selected so they could manage the construction from start to finish.

This summer, Sports Facility Management, a third-party operator of the park, began compiling documents to create a full request for bid for the project. The bid packet was published Aug. 16. Clark said they had five bids.

Clark said mobilization on the project is expected to begin around Oct. 14 and to be completed no later than Feb. 21, 2020.

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