

By ROBERT PIERCE • Leader & Times Seward County commissioners gave the go ahead for two upgrades to the county's fairgrounds facility Monday night.

The first was a new public address system for the rodeo arena. Fairground worker Greg Rice said the unit is a dual zone mixer for both the rodeo arena and the pit area of the race track that would provide speaker coverage for more than 300,000 square feet.

"When they're announcing at the races or at any other event that is out there, it would cover everybody that is out in the pit area, too," said county administrator April Warden.

Rice said there are currently 15 speakers in the PA system, with only a few still working properly. The county would be responsible for the installation of the unit. One bid was received for the project, although notice was published in the Leader & Times and e-mails were sent to several companies, including some local ones. The lone bid came in from Full Compass Systems of Madison, Wis., for a cost just less than \$12,000.

Commissioner Jim Rice said although the price was somewhat high, he believed the purchase was a necessary one.

"I realize this is a lot of money, but they do a good job of doing some good things out there to update our facility," he said. "I think this is a part of the plan. It's something that is needed."

The commission unanimously approved the item, with money to come from the county's equipment fund.

The other upgrade was for the purchase of an LED sign at the fairgrounds. Greg Rice said except for the electrical work, all of the installation would be done by Visual Signs.

He added fairground officials would be responsible for changing what is displayed on the sign, as part of the package is software that will allow for easy adjustments to be made.

Commission chairman Ada Linenbroker said any community-oriented event can be put on the sign, but no advertising will be sold.

Warden said the item was budgeted for in this year's capital improvement program.

As with the PA system, commissioner Rice said the cost of the sign, which was just more than \$30,000, was somewhat high, but having the sign is a good move for the county.

"I think this would be a great addition along Western Avenue out there to let folks know what's

going on at the fairgrounds and future dates of events,” he said. “I thought this was a very good idea.”

The commission voted unanimously to approve the item, which will be paid for from the county’s CIP fund.

Warden said other issues need to be worked on with county officials before the sign is officially installed.

“We would use (the county’s information technology department) to decide what kind of connection we wanted, but in talking with other people that have LED signs, they do recommend that you can do it from your office instead of somebody having to physically go out to the sign and change it,” she said.