

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE COCHISE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
REGULAR MEETING HELD ON  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 25, 2025**

A regular board meeting of the Cochise County Board of Supervisors was held on Tuesday, February 25, 2025 at 10:00 a.m. in the Board of Supervisors' Hearing Room, 1415 Melody Lane, Building G, Bisbee, Arizona.

Present: Frank Antenori, Chairman; Tom Crosby, Vice-Chairman; Kathleen L. Gomez, Supervisor, telephonic

Staff Present: Sharon Gilman, Interim County Administrator; Joe Casey, Interim Deputy County Administrator; Paul Correa, Chief Civil Deputy County Attorney; Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board

Chairman Antenori called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m.

**ANY ITEM ON THIS AGENDA IS OPEN FOR DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION**

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**THE ORDER OR DELETION OF ANY ITEM ON THIS AGENDA IS SUBJECT TO MODIFICATION AT THE MEETING**

***CALL TO THE PUBLIC***

Eli Dalton-Webb was called upon but did not speak.

Jo Ann Gasper was called upon but did not speak.

***PRESENTATION***

Presentation by Ms. Vada Phelps, Executive Director of Arizona@Work - Southeastern Arizona, on the Annual Report for July 2023 to June 2024, to highlight events and accomplishments.

Vada Phelps, Executive Director of Arizona@Work-Southeastern Arizona, presented this item. Ms. Phelps provided an overview of the program's purpose and funding structure. She explained that the organization operates under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and serves Cochise, Greenlee, and Graham counties. Despite a reduction in funding due to low unemployment rates, the program continues to support job training efforts, including a successful police academy partnership with Cochise College. She also highlighted their strong audit results, commitment to workforce development, and engagement with local businesses and board members.

Mary ann Hockstad from Catholic Community Services spoke about the impact of Arizona

at Work on individuals facing employment barriers. She highlighted common challenges such as education costs, childcare, and lack of basic job skills. Through three success stories, she showcased how the program helped individuals like Dora, a single mother now pursuing a medical degree; Francisco, who achieved his dream of becoming a firefighter; and Jose, who transitioned from high school to a cybersecurity career. She emphasized the program's role in providing support, encouragement, and practical tools for success.

## **CONSENT**

### **Board of Supervisors**

1. Approve the Minutes of the regular meeting of the Board of Supervisors of February 11, 2025.

### **Elections**

2. Approve the appointment of three Democratic Party Precinct Committeemen, by recommendation of their Cochise County Party Chairman, to serve through the October 1, 2026 term.

### **Finance**

3. Approve demands and budget amendments for operating transfers.

Vice-Chairman Crosby made a motion to approve consent agenda items 1-3. Supervisor Gomez seconded the motion.

Chairman Antenori called for the vote and it was approved 3-0.

## **PUBLIC HEARINGS**

### **Development Services**

4. Adopt Zoning Ordinance 25-05 to rezone tax parcel 407-83-006 (District 2) from R-36 (Residential District, one dwelling per 36,000 square feet) to RU-4 (Rural District, one dwelling per 4 acres) pursuant to the application of Pedro De Castro.

Chairman Antenori opened the Public Hearing.

Vice-Chairman Crosby made a motion to adopt Zoning Ordinance 25-05 to rezone tax parcel 407-83-006 (District 2) from R-36 (Residential District, one dwelling per 36,000 square feet) to RU-4 (Rural District, one dwelling per 4 acres) pursuant to the application of Pedro De Castro. Chairman Antenori seconded the motion.

Matthew Taylor, Planner II, presented this item using a PowerPoint presentation. Mr. Taylor presented a request to rezone a property on Denim Road from R-36 to R-4, initiated by applicant Pedro De Castro. He stated the 40-acre property, located about 1.5 miles west of Douglas, is currently undeveloped, with plans to divide it into four 10-acre parcels for residential use and an impound yard. He stated the Planning and Zoning Commission

found no opposition from nearby property owners and recommended approval with a 7-0 vote, despite a portion of the land being in a flood zone. He stated staff also recommended approval without special conditions, and the applicant was present for questions.

Chairman Antenori called for the vote and it was approved 3-0.

5. An appeal by Michael Clement (applicant) of the Planning and Zoning Commission's denial of Docket SU24-19, a Special Use Authorization request for two guest lodging units at 163 N. Cherokee Trail (District 3).

Vice-Chairman Crosby made a motion to hear an appeal by Michael Clement (applicant) of the Planning and Zoning Commission's denial of Docket SU24-19, a Special Use Authorization request for two guest lodging units at 163 N. Cherokee Trail (District 3). Chairman Antenori seconded the motion.

Matthew Taylor, Planner II, presented this item using a PowerPoint presentation. Matthew Taylor presented an appeal regarding the denial of two guest lodging units at 163 North Cherokee Trail, west of Benson. He stated the Planning and Zoning Commission originally denied the request, despite staff recommending conditional approval with quiet hours and parking restrictions. He stated the applicant argued that existing structures already set the property's density and that some commissioners did not provide individual reasoning for their votes. He stated public responses included five in favor and one opposed. Mr. Taylor presented the board with three options: approve the appeal with conditions, deny it, or modify the decision to allow one guest unit instead of two.

Michael Clement, Applicant, presented his appeal, arguing that the Planning and Zoning Commission's decision was arbitrary, particularly regarding how some commissioners justified their votes. He emphasized that staff had recommended approval and that the proposed guest units would not change the character or density of the area, as they would be within existing permitted structures. The units were intended for family members, including his mother-in-law, and would provide affordable housing options. As a compromise, he offered to drop the garage from the request, allowing approval of at least one additional unit.

The Board, staff, and applicant discussed the appeal, clarifying that the request was for family use rather than short-term rentals. Michael Clement confirmed he had lived on the property for over 10 years and was seeking the modification due to family needs. The Board reviewed three options: approving the appeal with conditions, denying it, or modifying the Planning and Zoning Commission's decision to allow one guest unit instead of two. Concerns were raised about zoning consistency, but ultimately, a board member recommended granting the appeal, emphasizing that the structures already existed, staff had recommended approval, and the commission's denial was a close decision.

Chairman Antenori made a motion to grant the appeal. Vice-Chairman Crosby seconded the motion.

Chairman Antenori called for the vote and it was approved 2-1 (Crosby opposed).

Chairman Antenori closed the public hearing.

## **ACTION**

### **Board of Supervisors**

6. Approve the Over-the-Counter sale of tax deed properties as set forth in the attached Exhibit A, plus related administrative fees.

Vice-Chairman Crosby made a motion to approve the Over-the-Counter sale of tax deed properties as set forth in the attached Exhibit A, plus related administrative fees. Chairman Antenori seconded the motion.

Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board, presented this item. She presented a request for approval of a bid on a parcel that remained unsold after the previous year's tax deed land sale. She stated a bid of \$4806.75, plus a \$25 administration fee, was received for the parcel listed in Exhibit A and Staff recommended approval of the bid.

Chairman Antenori called for the vote and it was approved 3-0.

### **County Sheriff**

7. Approve Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) 2025-027, between the State of Arizona Department of Public Safety (AZDPS), and Cochise County Sheriff's Office (CCSO), to enhance law enforcement services to deter, apprehend, prosecute and detain individuals charged with drug trafficking, human smuggling, illegal immigration and other border-related crimes within Cochise County, through the cooperative efforts of AZDPS and the CCSO-Local Border Support, in the amount of \$1,924,858.19, effective July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2026.

Vice-Chairman Crosby made a motion to approve Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) 2025-027, between the State of Arizona Department of Public Safety (AZDPS), and Cochise County Sheriff's Office (CCSO), to enhance law enforcement services to deter, apprehend, prosecute and detain individuals charged with drug trafficking, human smuggling, illegal immigration and other border-related crimes within Cochise County, through the cooperative efforts of AZDPS and the CCSO-Local Border Support, in the amount of \$1,924,858.19, effective July 1, 2024, to June 30, 2026. Chairman Antenori seconded the motion.

Robert Watkins, Commander, presented this item. Commander Watkins presented an opportunity for the Cochise County Sheriff's Office to employ 12 staff members dedicated to combating drug and human smuggling in the county. He stated the initiative aims to enhance law enforcement efforts in addressing these critical issues.

In response to the Board, Commander Watkins explained that the Sheriff's Office is focused on enforcing Arizona laws related to border crimes, including illegal immigration and human smuggling. He cited the human smuggling statute (ARS 13-2323) as an example, where individuals concealing migrants from law enforcement are charged under Arizona law. He emphasized the importance of prosecuting those who violate these laws in the context of border-related offenses.

Chairman Antenor called for the vote and it was approved 3-0.

## Development Services

8. Approve a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Allo Fiber, committing \$2,000,000 in matching funds to support Allo's forthcoming application for the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program administered by the Arizona Commerce Authority.

Vice-Chairman Crosby made a motion to approve a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Allo Fiber, committing \$2,000,000 in matching funds to support Allo's forthcoming application for the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) program administered by the Arizona Commerce Authority. Supervisor Gomez seconded the motion.

Joe Casey, Interim Deputy County Administrator, presented this item. Mr. Casey provided an update on a proposal aimed at improving broadband throughout Cochise County. He mentioned that Allo was awarded the proposal last year, and the agreement would move forward if Allo does not receive the BEAD grant. He stated the county and Allo would collaborate to agree on a project to use the funds to expand broadband access to residents across the county.

The Board and staff discussed the allocation of \$2 million for broadband expansion in Cochise County, specifically for the proposal submitted by Allo Fiber. Several questions were raised regarding the eligibility of areas for funding, with some concerns about "pockets" of unserved areas within the county, especially in zones that are marked as covered. The conversation highlighted that while Allo was the highest-rated proposal, other companies did submit bids, though Valley Telecom did not participate. The \$2 million funding is meant to support Allo's expansion, but some areas with existing federal funding (e.g., through Valley Telecom) are excluded from the BEAD funding, which has caused confusion about potential service gaps.

Jo ann Gasper was called upon but did not speak.

The Board and staff discussed the consequences of not awarding the \$2 million to the bidder. If not awarded, the proposal process would need to restart, potentially leading to the area remaining unserved. The main concern was whether the bidder would still submit a proposal to the state without the \$2 million incentive, with two possible outcomes: either they wouldn't submit or would increase the bid price by the same amount. There were concerns about the lack of broadband in rural areas and whether it would be profitable for companies to serve them.

Chairman Antenori called for the vote and it was approved 2-1 (Antenori opposed).

## Human Resources

9. Approve the Cochise Combined Trust premium rate structure for medical, dental and vision benefits for fiscal year 2025 - 2026.

Vice-Chairman Crosby made a motion to approve the Cochise Combined Trust premium rate structure for medical, dental and vision benefits for fiscal year 2025 - 2026. Chairman Antenori seconded the motion.

Jennifer Graeme, Human Resources Director, presented this item using a PowerPoint presentation. Ms. Graeme presented details about Cochise Combined Trust, which

includes the County, Cochise College, and Central Arizona College. She outlined the various vendors supporting the trust, such as Gallagher for benefits consulting and Ameriben for medical claims, and provided a breakdown of employee enrollment in different health plans. The trust has introduced changes, including the addition of behavioral health services through Teledoc and shifting pharmacy benefits management to RX Benefits. Ms. Graeme also discussed plan changes, such as increased co-pays and changes in high-deductible health plans, and proposed rate adjustments for the upcoming fiscal year.

Vice-Chairman Crosby discussed concerns about inflation, highlighting several sectors that may see price increases, including medical supplies, pharmaceuticals, oil, technology, and construction materials. He expressed the belief that government actions contribute to inflation and suggested that if compensation increases are given to employees to cope with inflation, it may lead to a reduction in personnel. He emphasized that the only inflation adjustment benefit that could be provided to constituents would be through reducing their tax burden.

Chairman Antenori called for the vote and it was approved 3-0.

## **STATE & FEDERAL LEGISLATION**

10. Discussion and possible action regarding state and federal legislative matters listed or described in the attached County Supervisors Association Legislative Policy Committee Agenda, the Arizona Association of Counties (AACo) Legislative Policy Committee Agenda, and the proposed State budget, and other matters related thereto.

The Board discussed several state and federal bills. One notable bill, HB 2651, would require voting machines and their components to be made in the U.S. starting January 2029, though it's expected to be blocked in the Senate. Another bill, HB 2774, seeks to remove counties' authority to zone for nuclear power plants, though the Board expressed openness to discussions on such a plant in the county. Additionally, there was concern over SB 1148, a bill proposing a 22.5% match for 401k contributions for corrections officers, which could significantly impact county finances. Lastly, the Board discussed a proposal to amend food tax rates, which could greatly affect local economies, particularly in Douglas.

## **REPORT BY SHARON GILMAN, INTERIM COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR -- RECENT AND PENDING COUNTY MATTERS**

Ms. Gilman provided an update on her upcoming schedule, mentioning that over the next two weeks, she'll be meeting with department directors to discuss their budget development plans. She noted her calendar will be full of these meetings but assured she's available if needed. On March 5th, 2025, she will attend the Cochise County Tourism and Economic Council meeting and meet with city managers involved in the agreement to discuss concerns about the return on investment.

## **SUMMARY OF CURRENT EVENTS**

### **Report by District 1 Supervisor, Tom Crosby**

Vice-Chairman Crosby deferred his report.

**Report by District 2 Supervisor, Kathleen L. Gomez**

Supervisor Gomez deferred her report.

**Report by District 3 Supervisor, Frank Antenori**

Chairman Antenori deferred his report.

Chairman Antenori adjourned the meeting at 11:54 a.m.

APPROVED:

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Frank Antenori, Chairman

ATTEST:

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Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board