

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE COCHISE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
WORK SESSION HELD ON
TUESDAY, JUNE 20, 2023**

A work session of the Cochise County Board of Supervisors was held on Tuesday, June 20, 2023, at 1:00 p.m. in the Board of Supervisors' Executive Conference Room, 1415 Melody Lane, Building G, Bisbee, Arizona.

Present: Peggy Judd, Chairman; Tom Crosby, Vice-Chairman, telephonic; Ann English, Supervisor

Staff Present: Richard G. Karwaczka, County Administrator
Sharon Gilman, Deputy County Administrator
Christine Roberts, Chief Civil Deputy County Attorney
Tim Mattix, Clerk of the Board
Lara Loewenheim, Deputy Clerk of the Board

Attendees: Joe Casey, Chief Information Officer

Chairman Judd called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

ANY ITEM ON THIS AGENDA IS OPEN FOR DISCUSSION

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Board of Supervisors

1. Discussion and possible direction regarding Cochise County broadband priority areas.

Supervisor English was in attendance telephonically until 1:14 p.m. when she was physically present at the meeting.

Mr. Casey presented this item using a PowerPoint presentation. Mr. Casey reported that in the first quarter staff planned to release a Request for Information (RFI) to Internet Service Providers (ISPs) that may be interested in providing broadband in the County. He stated that this process will help define specific priority areas within the County which will provide information needed to obtain grants in the future. Mr. Casey explained that this will be a public/private partnership with the ISPs, meaning the ISPs will own the network and the County will help support getting broadband service to citizens. The Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment Program (BEAD) a Federal grant of approximately \$42.5 billion for broadband service, is expected in the first quarter of 2024. Funding will be distributed to states, and then administered by the state down to the counties, cities and towns. He stated that \$2 million of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds have been set aside if matching funds are required.

Mr. Casey reviewed the definitions of served, underserved and unserved in relation to available internet download and upload speeds, and stated that these definitions are used as guidelines for the Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for BEAD funds. In response to the Board, Mr. Casey stated that dial up would fall under the

unserved category and satellite connections are not factored in.

Mr. Casey reviewed maps of underserved and unserved communities in the County, which included Hereford, Whetstone, Tombstone, Palominas, Pomerene, Bisbee, North Fort Grant Road, Graham County Border, Huachuca City, Benson and St. David, Douglas, North Ocotillo Road, Dragoon, and Parker Canyon Lake. He responded to various questions from the Board and staff throughout the discussion. Mr. Casey stated that if people in the Rural Digital Opportunity Fund (RDOF) area would like to get broadband service, they will have to wait for that company to provide service or another ISP could expend their funds to get into that area.

Mr. Casey stated that part of Sierra Vista is considered partially served where there is enough download, but not sufficient upload speeds.

The Board and staff discussed the feasibility studies that helped create the maps that depict the unserved and underserved areas. When the RFI is released, ISPs will determine the cost effectiveness of providing broadband to these areas and the County will facilitate funding. There was discussion regarding areas that ISPs had previously received funding, such as Resound Networks (Resound) for the Douglas area; Resound received the funding and have approximately four and a half years to complete the areas they received funding for. Resound indicated to Mr. Casey that Cochise County is near the top of their priorities, but they do not currently provide service to the area. Due to the funding being awarded to Resound to serve this area, no one else can request funding during that time unless they fail or do not provide broadband services. Companies could expand into the underserved areas but would not receive grant funding to do so.

Mr. Casey stated that he is working with the vendor [Finley Engineering] to draft the RFI. He anticipates it being back by the end of the calendar year to be ready for when BEAD funding is released in the first quarter of 2024.

Chairman Judd adjourned the meeting at 1:26 p.m.

APPROVED:

Peggy Judd, Chairman

ATTEST:

Sharon Gilman, Interim Clerk of the Board