

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE COCHISE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
WORK SESSION HELD ON
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2024**

A work session of the Cochise County Board of Supervisors was held on Tuesday, February 6, 2024, at 2:00 p.m. in the Board of Supervisors' Hearing Room, 1415 Melody Lane, Building G, Bisbee, Arizona.

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

Staff Present: Richard G. Karwaczka, County Administrator
Christine Roberts, Chief Civil Deputy County Attorney
Joe Casey, Associate County Administrator
Lara Loewenheim, Deputy Clerk of the Board

Attendees: Jackie Watkins, Engineering and Natural Resources Director
Joaquin Solis, Highway and Floodplain Assistant Director

Chairman English called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

ANY ITEM ON THIS AGENDA IS OPEN FOR DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTIONS

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Board of Supervisors

1. Discussion and possible direction regarding the Engineering & Natural Resources Department Informational Update, including the following topics: Engineering Division update; and Flood Control Division update.

Jackie Watkins presented this item using a PowerPoint presentation. Ms. Watkins provided an overview of the planning and design for the Moson Road improvements. She stated the design is slated for completion by mid-2025. Funding sources include \$6.1 million from Arizona state legislation for construction. In response to the Board, Ms. Watkins explained the funds are secured in the County account and cannot be claimed backed. She noted the project also involves acquiring Right of Way on approximately 44 properties after obtaining National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) clearance.

Ms. Watkins stated the Davis Road project has been ongoing for over 20 years, aiming to enhance safety and accommodate increased traffic from the Port of Entry. She explained that it involves adding shoulders to the road along its 24-mile stretch, with a declared width of 200 feet from Central to Highway 191. She stated there are two project locations: one from Highway 80 to US 191, and the other from SR8 to Central. Ms. Watkins explained the design for the latter section is about 95% complete, with Right-of-Way acquisition in progress. She stated a \$2 million grant has been secured for this project, and Federal Highways is overseeing the NEPA clearance, which is essential for advancing the design and acquisition phases. Ms. Watkins stated that as per a 2016 traffic assessment study, the project aims to widen

shoulders and improve road curves, rather than converting it into a four-lane highway.

Ms. Watkins stated that the Douglas Land Port of Entry, overseen by the federal government, is scheduled to open in 2028 near Douglas. She stated the city is managing utility installations, extending sewer and water lines, while the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) handles the Design Concept Report (DCR) for the connecting road, with ownership still to be determined between the county and ADOT. The project's design and construction costs range from \$52 to \$62 million. A watershed study has been requested by GSA for drainage in the area.

Ms. Watkins stated there are several County design projects, including assessing 61 bridges in fair or poor condition for upgrades and developing a 20-year replacement plan. She stated the department applied for a design grant for the Rucker Road bridge and are addressing sidewalk improvements in Sunsites. Culvert replacements and parking lot upgrades are also in progress. Various administrative actions are being taken, such as updating neighborhood traffic management procedures and reviewing permit fees for flood control and roadway use. She also provided an overview of stats for survey, traffic counts and signage.

Ms. Watkins stated that the Flood Control District is expecting preliminary flood studies for various areas by June, funded by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), with ongoing base-level engineering for major watercourses. She stated there are plans to revise storm water management plans in response to test results indicating contamination in certain areas, necessitating additional testing locations. Ms. Watkins explained that the proposal includes analyzing fee increases for commercial reviews, special event fees, and utility inspections to balance costs. She stated the aim is to ensure that fees cover more of the expenses, aiming for a 50% coverage target. Ms. Watkins would like to request another full-time employee for the Flood Control District due to current staff being at capacity, with a focus on managing commercial reviews and regulatory inspections from agencies like Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) and Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR).

Mr. Joaquin Solis, Assistant Director of Highways and Floodplain, stated that Leslie Canyon Pond which is a jurisdictional dam, is undergoing analysis to meet Arizona Department of Water Resources requirements. The Flood Control District aims to lower the spillway to redirect water properly and ensure safety from flooding. Ownership of the parcel is currently with the Leslie Canyon Water Users Group, but the county may acquire it to proceed with the project. The estimated construction cost is around \$3.5 million, with potential cost-sharing from Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR).

Mr. Solis stated that the project in Bay Acres aims to redirect floodwater away from the Colonia, preventing spread and controlling flow direction, ultimately guiding it under the bridge at A Avenue in Douglas. He stated the Corps of Engineers is initiating a study on non-structural flood improvements, with potential collaboration depending on funding.

Ms. Watkins stated that there is progress on the Coyote Wash, which includes completing the design this calendar year, with NEPA clearance underway and public input expected in March, aiming for finalization by July. She stated there is \$1.5 million for construction with an estimated final cost of \$5 million.

Ms. Watkins stated that the Upper San Pedro projects are progressing, with

Riverstone in phase two and undergoing site investigations. She stated efforts are underway for Bisbee effluent, including completing the DCR and determining recharge locations in collaboration with Border Patrol and Bureau of Land Management (BLM). She stated the preferred route for effluent discharge from Bisbee is along the border, with alternative routes considered due to landowner preferences.

Supervisor Judd made a comment regarding the Willcox Recharge Projects. She stated that there is another organization, Rural Water Assurance, with its own 501(c)3 status, focused on recharge projects in Sulphur Springs. Supervisor Judd stated that the organization has been instrumental in securing funding and contributing significantly to recharge efforts in the upper San Pedro region.

In response to the Board, Ms. Watkins stated that the watershed study could identify potential locations for recharge that would improve water management. She stated the grant for the watershed study, is a collaboration with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), but the department might not have the capacity to pursue additional grants. Ms. Watkins explained that grant applications and management are time-consuming, even with consultants. She stated the Flood Control District funds for the position she is requesting will go either through the budget process or by presenting directly to the board to expedite hiring.

Chairman English adjourned the meeting at 2:43 p.m.

APPROVED:

Ann English, Chairman

ATTEST:

Sharon Gilman, Interim Clerk of the Board