

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE COCHISE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
WORK SESSION HELD ON  
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2025**

A work session of the Cochise County Board of Supervisors was held on Tuesday, February 11, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. in the Board of Supervisors' Executive Conference Room, 1415 Melody Lane, Building G, Bisbee, Arizona.

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

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

Attendees: Mark Dannels, Sheriff  
Kenneth Bradshaw, Jail Commander  
Phil Bourdon, Project Manager  
Stacy Fenhaus, Bud

Chairman Antenori called the meeting to order at 2:12 p.m.

**ANY ITEM ON THIS AGENDA IS OPEN FOR DISCUSSION**

***ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION***

**Board of Supervisors**

1. Presentation and discussion on the status of the Cochise County Jail Planning Study, selection of an Owner's Representative, site evaluations, and next steps in the planning and development process.

Mr. Bourdon presented this item using a PowerPoint presentation. Mr. Bourdon provided an update on the overall project, focusing on the jail planning study and the hiring of an owner's representative. He explained the qualifications-based selection process for professional services, which included issuing a Request for Qualifications (RFQ), ranking firms, conducting interviews, and negotiating contracts. He stated the jail planning study, awarded in August 2024, included assessing the county's criminal justice system, forecasting inmate populations, and planning for future space needs.

In response to the Board, Mr. Bourdon stated the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is an internal county group that works with consultants to provide and review project information. He stated that in November, the consultant conducted interviews, collected data, and assessed the county's criminal justice system to identify ways to streamline operations and reduce unnecessary jail time. He stated the courts and other justice system stakeholders are involved in the study and review preliminary findings to determine if changes should be implemented.

Mr. Bourdon stated in late January, the consultant met with the technical advisory

committee to present key findings, an updated jail forecast, and draft space allocation plans for the jail, Sheriff's Office, and courts. He stated while the additional space planning for justice system offices is not part of the jail project itself, it helps ensure that any selected site can accommodate future needs. He stated there has been some confusion about terminology, as similar projects in other locations have been referred to as "Justice Centers" when incorporating multiple facilities. To clarify, this project is strictly focused on the county jail, though related space considerations are being reviewed.

The Board and staff reviewed the site evaluation process for the new jail project, emphasizing key criteria such as topography, environmental concerns, utilities, and accessibility. Several potential locations were identified, including sites in Bisbee, near Sierra Vista, Tombstone, and Benson, with evaluations considering infrastructure and cost implications. It was noted that the consultants will analyze these sites, ranking them based on feasibility and potential challenges. The study does not finalize a location but provides the necessary data for future decision-making.

The Board and staff discussed moving forward with the recommendation to secure owner's representative services, with a request for quotation (RFQ) issued in June and a current review of the scope of work and fee. The process is being timed to coincide with the conclusion of the planned project in May. They noted the next steps include scheduling a presentation by the planning study consultant to update on key findings and finalize details such as inmate capacity and housing configuration. Various project delivery methods were reviewed, with an emphasis on alternatives to traditional design-bid-build for this complex facility. They stated options such as design-build or construction manager at risk were discussed as a means to leverage proven designs, reduce cost overruns, and shorten construction timelines. The Board and staff stated the overall approach aims to use experienced teams and pre-existing design packages, even if it involves license fees, to achieve a more efficient and lower-risk process.

The Board and staff discussed the inmate population forecast, which was determined using historical data, state census information, and projections related to local developments like the new port of entry. The discussion also covered potential use of the facility for federal detention, emphasizing the importance of securing proper funding and avoiding overbuilding. Additionally, they reviewed project delivery methods, property acquisition, and the need for a flexible jail design that can expand or contract based on population changes. The Board requested a Work Session with Chinn Planning to discuss the data collected and discussed leasing the land instead of purchasing the property outright.

## 2. Discussion of the Jail District Budget for Fiscal Year 2024-2025.

Ms. Gilman, presented this item using a PowerPoint presentation. Ms. Gilman provided an update on the jail district budget, clarifying that the discussion was a status check rather than a preparation for the next fiscal year's budget. She explained that tax collection for the district began in January 2024, meaning only half a year's revenue—\$4.4 million—was reflected in the FY 23-24 summary. She stated the maintenance of effort funding was used first for jail operations, medical services, and mental health, with additional transfers from the half-cent sales tax covering a \$67,000 shortfall. For FY 24-25, the budget includes a full year of revenue, with \$5.2 million collected so far. She stated the district is on track to meet or exceed the projected \$8.4 million in revenue for the year.

Ms. Fenhaus provided an update on the cash reconciliation for the jail district,

addressing concerns about how much of the new half-cent tax has been used. She provided a breakdown, rolling in last year's starting balance, revenue additions, and authorized expenses, including planning and consulting fees. As of February 7, 2025, the actual cash on hand from the half-cent tax stands at \$9.35 million, indicating a strong financial position after just a year of collection. She also explained the maintenance of effort calculation, detailing how past general fund expenditures for jail operations set the baseline, which is adjusted annually based on either the GDP implicit price deflator or tax levy limitations, whichever is lower.

The Board and staff discussed various financial matters related to the jail district and employee benefits. Concerns were raised about investment strategies for the funds collected from the half-cent sales tax, with plans to address the issue in April when the county treasurer's investment broker is available. Clarification was given regarding maintenance of effort spending, ensuring that jail district funds were used appropriately, particularly for inmate meals and overtime. Additionally, the discussion shifted to retirement benefits, highlighting the challenges with the transition from a pension system to a 401(k) model, which has impacted employee retention due to lower county contribution matches and longer vesting periods.

The Board and staff discussed the revenue sources for the jail district and the order in which funds are used for expenses. The conversation also touched on the process for charging individuals for incarceration costs, with consideration being given to simplifying the fee structure for easier administration.

Ms. Fenhaus reviewed budget amendments for the jail district, including funding for the Sierra Vista Juvenile Center, Heating, Ventilation, and Air Conditioning (HVAC) replacements, and pending discussions on a fire alarm system. She stated that new jail funds from tax revenue was shifted to cover these maintenance and operations expenses. She noted life-to-date expenses for the new jail included emergency kitchen sewage repairs, legal fees for RFQ compliance, and interim public management costs. Ms. Gilman noted that with Mr. Bourdon transitioning to a part-time county employee, future costs for interim public management services would be significantly reduced.

The Board and Commander Bradshaw discussed budget overruns related to employee expenses at the jail, specifically in overtime, temporary employees, retirement, and workers' compensation. Temporary employees, primarily Department of Corrections staff working extra shifts, have helped reduce overtime costs while maintaining staffing levels. It was noted that workers' compensation costs were clarified as insurance payments based on risk assessment rates rather than direct payouts. The discussion emphasized efforts to manage staffing efficiently while minimizing overtime and ensuring adequate coverage.

Ms. Fenhaus provided an update on the wages and employee-related expenses, indicating that all costs are forecast to stay under budget through the end of the fiscal year. She highlighted a concern regarding employees funded through a Department of Emergency and Military Affairs (DEMA) grant, which is set to expire on June 30th, 2025. She stated the grant, originally \$5.8 million, has been fully utilized, and the remaining \$2.2 million is available for continued use in prosecuting and incarcerating individuals involved in border-related crimes. Sheriff Dannels stated efforts are ongoing to secure an extension, noting the state's significant budget surplus and expressed doubt that the funds would be swept.

Ms. Fenhaus explained the various mechanisms used for salary adjustments in the jail staff. She stated the jail district currently has 74 individuals employed, with additional staff funded by grants, and vacancies are not included in the figures.

The Board and staff concluded with discussions on expanding the taxpayer base and addressing staff shortages.

Chairman Antenori adjourned the meeting at 3:33 p.m.

APPROVED:

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Frank Antenori, Chairman

ATTEST:

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Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board