

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE COCHISE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
WORK SESSION HELD ON
THURSDAY, MARCH 6, 2025**

A work session of the Cochise County Board of Supervisors was held on Thursday, March 6, 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 10:00 a.m.

ANY ITEM ON THIS AGENDA IS OPEN FOR DISCUSSION

INTRODUCTIONS

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Board of Supervisors

1. Review of agenda items for the Board of Supervisors/Directors meetings and work sessions for the week of March 9, 2025.

Sharon Gilman presented this item. Ms. Gilman and the Board reviewed the upcoming agenda items for the March 11th meetings, including the Library District, Flood Control District, and Jail District meetings, which will only involve consent items with no action. Ms. Gilman stated the Regular Board meeting on Tuesday, March 11, 2025, routine consent items such as minutes and demands will be addressed, along with an appointment to the Local Workforce Investment Board. She stated the Board will review the annual renewal of the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) with the State Board of Equalization for a tax appeal hearing officer. Ms. Gilman stated there would be public hearings regarding water services franchise, Cactus State Utility Operating Company, LLC.

Vice-Chairman Crosby and Mr. Correa discussed the water services franchise item and whether franchise fees could be imposed in the future without voter approval. Mr. Correa clarified that no franchise fees currently exist, and while the contract language allows for future possibilities, there is no automatic implementation. Vice-Chairman Crosby raised concerns about ensuring that any potential fees would require voter approval rather than just Board action. The discussion emphasized maintaining flexibility for future Boards while protecting taxpayers from unexpected fees.

Ms. Gilman stated public hearing agenda item number 6 is a liquor license application for Mustang Mall and if anyone opposes the application, they can come and speak to the

Board.

Ms. Gilman discussed the Community Enhancement Fund expenditure for District 2 and determined that solid waste could handle the cleanup internally. She stated Public Works Director Jason Faccio confirmed that the department has the resources and funding to complete the project without using Community Enhancement funds. Supervisor Gomez was pleased with the resolution and confirmed that the cleanup would still take place as planned. Ms. Gilman stated the project would proceed without needing additional approval through this funding mechanism.

The Board and staff discussed the Stonegarden Grant, with Vice-Chairman Crosby raising concerns about unfunded pension liabilities and the future administration of the grant. It was noted that the grant, which originates from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), has been a recurring funding source but may face uncertainties in the future. There was also discussion about shifting the grant's financial administration to the county finance department, a topic previously considered in 2021. Additionally, the conversation touched on broader financial oversight of the Sheriff's budget and jail operations.

Ms. Gilman discussed a zoning violation appeal under Agenda Item 10, with Development Services reviewing a decision made by the hearing officer. She stated the issue involved a resident whose property obstructs the sightline of a stop sign, raising safety concerns.

The Board and staff discussed agenda item 11, an interfund transfer of \$15,000 from the Emergency Management General Fund to the grant fund for the Community Wildfire Protection Plan. Emergency Management Director Daniel Duchon explained that this 10-year plan assesses wildfire risks across the county in coordination with various Land Management agencies. The plan itself does not initiate projects but provides a framework for agencies to direct their mitigation efforts. The funding originates from a USDA grant passed through state fire agencies, and there was clarification that this funding is unrelated to Bureau of Land Management (BLM) land concerns in the county.

The Board discussed Agenda Item 12 regarding the lease grant for the University of Arizona. Supervisor Gomez expressed concerns about the usage of the leased space, stating that she had not seen staff present when visiting the office. Staff clarified that three people work from the office, though they are not stationed there full-time. Supervisor Gomez requested that staff make an effort to connect with her when they are present, and it was agreed that this request would be communicated to them.

The Board and staff discussed Agenda Item 13, which pertains to grant funding salaries and benefits for staff working on the Family Self-Sufficiency Program. Ms. Baca stated the program helps individuals in rental subsidy programs, such as Section 8, and Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (VASH), work towards financial independence through personalized roadmaps. Supervisor Gomez inquired about the distribution of funds and was informed that the grant strictly covers staff salaries rather than being allocated to specific areas. Ms. Baca stated the program primarily funds one full-time coordinator, with a small portion supporting supervisory staff involved in case management efforts.

Chairman Antenori discussed federal and state legislation, focusing on a resolution regarding early ballot returns. He stated the proposed legislation would require mail-in ballots to be sent by the Friday before Election Day, reducing the need for last-minute signature verification and expediting election results. He stated the Governor vetoed the bill, so the legislature plans to put it on the ballot, with the Board considering a resolution

in support. Chairman Antenori also mentioned ongoing concerns about a water bill that could remove the county's zoning authority, significantly impacting local governance.

2. Discussion and possible direction to staff on proposed meetings, scheduling, and agenda items for future meetings and work sessions.

Chairman Antenori and staff discussed the possibility of holding board meetings in different local areas every other month to improve accessibility for residents. The idea includes rotating locations such as Sierra Vista, Tombstone, Douglas, Benson, and Willcox, with meetings potentially scheduled in the evening to accommodate working individuals. Staff stated logistical considerations, such as electronic setup and proper public notification, would need to be addressed. Chairman Antenori stated the discussion stemmed from community feedback requesting in-person participation options and evening meeting times.

Vice-Chairman Crosby discussed the ongoing issue of pension funding and its impact on taxpayers and the economy. Vice-Chairman Crosby presented this item by a PowerPoint presentation. He expressed concerns about the underfunded pension system, which affects long-term retirement benefits and increases taxpayer liabilities. Chairman Antenori stressed the possibility of seeking legislative intervention to address the pension liability raised, with the suggestion that they redirect funds from economic development efforts to pay down the pension debt. Chairman Antenori highlighted the balance between economic growth and managing pension obligations, stressing the importance of ensuring that funds are properly invested to avoid future financial strain.

Supervisor Gomez inquired about a session regarding the Douglas Port of Entry. Ms. Gilman mentioned she's working to gather stakeholders and requested a clearer breakdown of the funding sources from ADOT. Supervisor Gomez also shared that Southeastern Arizona Governments Organization (SEAGO) might be involved in the transportation aspect and offered to provide contact for further collaboration.

The Board and staff discussed the Southeastern Arizona Communications (SEACOM) loan employee agreement received from the city. Ms. Gilman stated the director and attorneys are reviewing the details to clarify the situation before bringing it to the Board for a work session. Supervisor Gomez asked about the reimbursement process, confirming that the county reimburses the city for the employees through SEACOM. The discussion also highlighted that the original plan for the employee transfer did not go as expected, and there are still many questions to resolve.

Supervisor Gomez mentioned that she and the mayor of Douglas, Jose Grijalva, will be heading to the state legislature next Wednesday to meet with Senator Gowan and Representative Diaz, along with other potential participants, to discuss the port of entry.

Chairman Antenori adjourned the meeting at 11:12 a.m.

APPROVED:

Frank Antenori, Chairman

ATTEST:

Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board

