

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE COCHISE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
WORK SESSION HELD ON
THURSDAY, MARCH 20, 2025**

A work session of the Cochise County Board of Supervisors was held on Thursday, March 20, 2025, at 1:00 p.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

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

Attendees: Anita Baca, Housing Director

Chairman Antenori called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m.

ANY ITEM ON THIS AGENDA IS OPEN FOR DISCUSSION

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Board of Supervisors

1. Discussion and Possible Direction Regarding the 5-Year Plan for the Housing Authority of Cochise County.

Anita Baca presented this item using a PowerPoint presentation. Ms. Baca stated that the housing agency's five-year plan requirements from the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), emphasizing compliance and efficiency in managing Section 8 programs. She stated the Housing department conducts thorough inspections to ensure safe housing conditions and promotes fair housing practices regardless of background. The Housing department aims to enhance self-sufficiency through programs like Family Self-Sufficiency and expand housing options by applying for additional HUD vouchers when available. Ms. Baca stated housing funds largely rely on HUD allocations rather than competitive grants, ensuring continuity in their services.

The Board and staff discussed concerns over potential federal funding reductions, though no official announcements had been made. The Board and staff discussion touched on income limits set by HUD, which vary by region and are based on household size. Ms. Baca stated preferences for applicants, such as residency, disability, or domestic violence status, can affect how quickly they move up the waiting list, though income is not a factor in preferences. She stated the current waiting list, which is closed to new applicants, has about 800 people, and once it is nearly exhausted, a new list will be opened.

The Board and staff discussed the concept of "rent reasonableness," which ensures that government-assisted rents are comparable to non-subsidized rents. Ms. Baca stated HUD requires verification that rents are not inflated due to federal subsidies, with a

focus on factors like property amenities. The Board and staff discussed how subsidies are calculated, explaining that they are income-based, with larger families qualifying for bigger units and deductions available for things like medical expenses. Ms. Baca stated that preferences affect an applicant's position on the waiting list, but family size does not influence the services or rent calculation, which is strictly based on income and other qualifying factors.

Ms. Baca stated the team met the first goal of maintaining high performance with the Section 8 Management Assessment Program. She stated the Authority expanded the HUD-VASH program for veterans, growing from 25 to 98 vouchers, and also explored new emergency housing programs for individuals facing domestic violence or chronic homelessness. She stated the Authority continues to collaborate with local agencies and offer fair housing seminars.

Ms. Baca shared updates on the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) policies, highlighting the preference provided and the collaboration with domestic violence shelters and law enforcement. She stated the Authority ensures that information about vulnerable populations is disseminated at briefings and entered into the Enterprise Income Verification system. She also discussed the limited number of emergency shelters in the county, with only four available for domestic violence victims. Ms. Baca explained recent changes in the administrative plan, requiring rental increase justifications from landlords, limiting requests to one per tenant annually, and capping increases at 10%, driven by the issue of significant rent hikes in multifamily complexes purchased by for-profit companies.

The Board and staff discussed the limitations landlords face when increasing rents for tenants on a lease. Ms. Baca explained that after the lease ends, tenants go month-to-month with the same terms unless a new lease is signed. However, they acknowledged cases where rental increases were excessive. Ms. Baca clarified that Section 8 landlords don't receive tax breaks for accepting vouchers, but they benefit from guaranteed rent payments through a three-way contract. Ms. Baca stated the Authority has implemented stricter fraud prevention measures, including verifying tenants' housing status through the Enterprise Income Verification system, ensuring no double leasing occurs.

Ms. Baca highlighted the efforts to comply with fair housing laws, emphasizing that the Housing Authority ensures no discrimination occurs based on protected classes. She stated that the office does not offer legal advice, it assists individuals with potential housing discrimination cases by referring them to the appropriate authorities. She stated the Authority also participates in homelessness outreach through the Continuum of Care, helping to fill service gaps and assisting in homeless counts that determine funding for the community.

Ms. Baca explained that the Housing Authority pays the county over \$3,800 per month for overhead, which covers staff benefits and other administrative costs. She stated the payment is necessary because, while the Housing Authority is grant-funded, the county manages the payroll and sends an invoice for reimbursement. Ms. Gilman stated that despite being federally funded, the Housing Authority operates as a quasi-county entity, relying on federal funds to sustain its operations.

Chairman Antenori adjourned the meeting at 2:01 p.m.

APPROVED:

Frank Antenori, Chairman

ATTEST:

Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board