

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE COCHISE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
WORK SESSION HELD ON
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 2025**

A work session of the Cochise County Board of Supervisors was held on Wednesday, April 9, 2025, at 2:00 p.m. in the Board of Supervisors' Executive Conference Room, 1415 Melody Lane, Building G, Bisbee, Arizona.

Present: Frank Antenori, Chairman; Kathleen L. Gomez, Supervisor
Absent: Tom Crosby, Vice-Chairman
Staff Present: Sharon Gilman, Interim County Administrator
Joe Casey, Interim Deputy County Administrator
Melissa Wright, Deputy Clerk of the Board
Attendees: Christine McLachlan, Interim Development Services Director
Matthew Taylor, Planner II

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

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Board of Supervisors

1. Discussion and Overview of Planning & Zoning Commission Responsibilities.

Christine McLachlan, Interim Development Services Director, presented this item by using a PowerPoint presentation. Ms. McLachlan provided an overview of the Planning and Zoning Commission's role, highlighting its authority and its responsibilities in guiding land use development. She discussed the commission's structure, including staggered terms for members, and clarified that their decisions are advisory, based on existing laws and findings of facts. She stated staff play a key role in processing applications, ensuring compliance, and managing public hearings, while also keeping the commission informed on legislative changes. She covered special use processes, rezoning requests, appeals, and how meetings and elections are conducted, with decisions based on substantial evidence.

The Board and staff discussed in-person attendance by Planning and Zoning Commission members, specifically noting that one member had not physically attended any meetings in over a year. Supervisor Gomez emphasized the importance of being present to fully engage with community members and respect the process. Chairman Antenori suggested that the bylaws be amended to reflect expectations for physical attendance, with the board having the authority to review and adopt such changes.

In response to the Board, Ms. McLachlan stated the Board will receive the Planning and Zoning Commission's recommendation and determine whether to affirm, modify, or reverse it based on specific criteria. She stated the focus will be on whether the commission acted arbitrarily, followed proper procedure, and engaged in thorough deliberation—all of which can be reviewed through meeting minutes. She stated that appeals may also include new information, but the appellant must explain why it wasn't

shared earlier and how it impacts the decision.

The Board and staff discussed how appeals are currently handled and how the process might be improved. They raised concerns about applicants using the commission as a stepping stone, submitting minimal effort initially and saving stronger presentations for the Board of Supervisors. The Board suggested appeals with new information should be rerouted back to the Planning and Zoning Commission for reconsideration before reaching the Board. The Board also touched on clarifying who qualifies as an “affected property owner” and considering changes to the ordinance to allow nearby residents to appeal special use permits, especially when impacted by noise or other disturbances.

The Board and staff discussed implementing a more structured approach to tracking appeal evidence and the idea would be to label all materials presented to the commission as Exhibits 1 through X, so any new documents submitted on appeal would be clearly identifiable. The Board recommended that if new evidence surfaces, the Planning and Zoning Commission could conduct a “pre-appeal review” before the matter is forwarded to the Board of Supervisors.

The Board discussed growing concerns about Cochise County becoming a destination for "opt-out" communities, especially where individuals combine smaller residential lots to meet RU-4 zoning thresholds. Board members suggested a possible work session to explore designated areas for opt-out developments and agreed that clearer zoning rules or tighter restrictions might be needed to prevent backdoor conversions.

In response to the Board, Ms. McLachlan confirmed that any changes would be an amendment to the building code, and noted the existence of a Building Code Advisory Board composed of professionals in the construction field. Ms. McLachlan suggested a work session to further explore concerns related to the opt-out community.

Chairman Antenori emphasized the need to prioritize commercial and industrial zoning as part of the comprehensive plan. He pointed out that the county’s property tax burden is increasingly falling on a shrinking group of property owners. The Board discussed the future development in Douglas and the growing interest from warehouse developers and plans for a truck terminal and rail line, which could draw public pushback.

2. Discussion and possible direction regarding the Cochise County Comprehensive Plan Update.

Ms. McLachlan presented this item using a PowerPoint presentation. Ms. McLachlan gave an update on the comprehensive plan, covering progress, key sections, and next steps. She stated the plan emphasizes where growth should and shouldn’t occur and highlights the county’s solar potential, while acknowledging public concerns about wind energy and the emerging interest in nuclear power. The Board requested a more in-depth work session to review the draft of the Comprehensive plan.

The Board emphasized the importance of planning smart, sustainable growth in Cochise County, especially with housing, energy, environment, and industry. The Board raised a concern about unregulated development and the need to balance open space, agriculture, and tourism with commercial and industrial zoning.

The Board and staff agreed that a work session to discuss the comprehensive plan should occur in June to focus more on planning efforts. Supervisor Gomez emphasized the need for early involvement from key groups and gathering wide community feedback.

Chairman Antenori adjourned the meeting at 3:34 p.m.

APPROVED:

Frank Antenori, Chairman

ATTEST:

Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board