

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE COCHISE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
WORK SESSION HELD ON
THURSDAY, APRIL 10, 2025**

A work session of the Cochise County Board of Supervisors was held on Thursday, April 10, 2025, at 11:00 a.m. in the Board of Supervisors' Executive Conference Room, 1415 Melody Lane, Building G, Bisbee, Arizona.

Present: Frank Antenori, Chairman; Tom Crosby, Vice-Chairman, telephonic; 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
Melissa Wright, Deputy Clerk of the Board

Attendees: Jackie Watkins, Engineering and Natural Resources Director
Christine McLachlan, Interim Development Services Director

Chairman Antenori called the meeting to order at 11:02 a.m.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Board of Supervisors

1. Update from Staff and Possible Direction Regarding Tres Alamos Community Alliance (TACA) Concerns.

Chairman Antenori reviewed concerns raised during a previous meeting with TACA representatives. He stated the issues included potential road damage from oversized or overweight vehicles, a growing biomass pile on the hill, and water concerns related to nearby properties. Chairman Antenori noted that staff had recently visited the site and requested an update on their findings.

Mr. Casey presented this item by using a PowerPoint presentation. He stated the agenda was organized into six key areas to ensure all concerns—ranging from zoning to weight limits and biomass. He noted that a site visit occurred the week after the initial work session, where staff met with property owners. He stated the owners granted access to their properties and a drone survey was conducted along with an in-person walk-through.

Ms. McLachlan began the presentation with land use concerns, explaining that the original zoning request for a recycling center was withdrawn, and that such use is not currently permitted under the site's rural zoning. She confirmed the county does not issue business licenses and that no active development permits exist for the property. Ms. McLachlan stated she visited the site and the operation appears to resemble a borrow pit rather than a regulated sand and gravel mine, which places it outside county zoning authority. Ms. McLachlan stated the two are similar; only sand and gravel operations are officially considered mining. She shared definitions and clarified that the key difference lies in how the material is used, with borrow pits being more limited in

scope. She also noted that sand and gravel operations are state-regulated, while borrow pits are typically unregulated and not addressed in local zoning regulations.

Ms. Watkins shared insights about mulch, emphasizing its common use for land restoration, such as on roads and by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) uses it for mine reclamation. She clarified that concerns about fire risk were more relevant to compost, not mulch, as mulch does not require moisture for combustion. She personally inspected the site and noted that the mulch in question had been there for several months. She discussed concerns about water flow from the Sierra Mining property, referencing a 2010 satellite image to show that the landscape hasn't changed significantly since then, with no further land clearing occurring.

Ms. Watkins explained the contour lines created by the United States Geological Survey in 2020 are publicly accessible through the county's GIS website. She highlighted the location of ravines near Mr. Durham's property includes two ravines that traverse his land and the Sierra Mining property. She pointed out that all the surrounding areas need to drain towards the San Pedro River, and that ravine flows, combined with disturbances from mining operations, could potentially impact the landscape and water flow.

Ms. Watkins provided a detailed explanation of the Sierra Mining property, using drone images and satellite data to illustrate the land's contours and water flow. She described how stormwater naturally flows across the property and the role of the berm placed by Sierra Mining. Ms. Watkins clarified that, while the berm does impact water flow in the immediate area, the surrounding drainage patterns are largely unchanged, and the water must flow towards designated outlets, regardless of the mining activity.

In response to the Board, Ms. Watkins clarified that the excavation of the area had been ongoing for the past 20 years to produce gravel. The material, consisting of sand and gravel, was either hauled off-site or stockpiled for later use, with some stockpiles still being actively used.

In response to the Board, Ms. McLachlan explained that the site, based on her understanding, appears to function either as a sand and gravel mine or a borrow pit, both of which do not fall under the current zoning regulations. She noted that if the site were to operate as a recycling center, such as processing landscaping materials into mulch, it would be subject to zoning regulations and require a special use permit. She further clarified that the original application had indicated the intent to use the site for recycling, specifically for aggregates, biomass, and electronic waste for construction materials, this request was eventually withdrawn.

In response to the Board, Ms. Watkins clarified that Sierra Vista handles green waste by grinding it up and mixing it with solids from the wastewater plant to create Class A compost. She compared this process to the material found on Ocotillo Road, stating that while the material on Ocotillo Road may resemble tree pruning, it seems quite different from the mulch produced in Sierra Vista. She explained the material on Ocotillo Road has gone through a chipper and is made up of larger chunks.

Chairman Antenori suggested installing a culvert to channel water more effectively. Ms. Watkins stated the road would have to be raised by several feet and to install perk tubes to allow water to be absorbed into the ground. She acknowledged that those solutions could be costly requiring a significant investment.

In response to the Board, Ms. Watkins explained that stormwater from the area flows westward to a wash near Mr. Durham's house. She further clarified that there is a

20-foot elevation difference between Ocotillo Road and Desert Rose, which creates a natural flow path for the water, and that the county requires pre- and post-development hydrology studies to ensure proper stormwater management for new developments.

Chairman Antenori adjourned the meeting at 12:09 p.m.

APPROVED:

Frank Antenori, Chairman

ATTEST:

Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board