

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE COCHISE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
WORK SESSION HELD ON
THURSDAY, APRIL 17, 2025**

A work session of the Cochise County Board of Supervisors was held on Thursday, April 17, 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

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

Chairman Antenori called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

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 April 20, 2025.

Ms. Gilman, presented this item. Ms. Gilman stated the Regular Board of Supervisors meeting with the Library District, Flood Control District, and the Jail District will include agendas, minutes, and operating transfers for the budget.

Amadee Ricketts, Director of Library District, presented this item. Ms. Ricketts stated that the request involves renewing an intergovernmental agreement for the branch library in Sunizona at Ash Creek School. She stated the library has operated at that location since 1979, with the agreement originally set to autorenew. She stated that in 2021, the school district requested a change to have the agreement expire every four years, which was then adopted, and the current agreement expires on June 30, 2025.

In response to the Board, Ms. Ricketts explained that the school district added a few clarifying changes to the agreement. She stated these included specifying that school employees would be covered under the school's workers' compensation and county employees under the county's. She stated the updated agreement also included clauses on E-Verify, funding availability each school year, and the school's ability to cancel based on funding or other reasons, and none of the additions affected library operations or raised concerns.

Ms. Gilman noted that one consent agenda item involves approving renewal of license plates for undercover or covert operations by the County Sheriff. She stated the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) requires Board approval for these plates, which are placed on vehicles without government decals and this helps maintain the anonymity of vehicles used in undercover work.

Niltza Flores, County Administrator, explained the annual requirement for Board approval

of justice of the peace and superior court pro tempore reappointments. She emphasized the importance of reappointing Judge Bannon, who has served in this role for over ten years and is also the juvenile presiding judge. Ms. Flores stated without Judge Bannon's reappointment, the court would face significant operational challenges, including case delays, increased workloads for other judges, and a need to restructure assignments. Ms. Flores stated that the reappointments being requested are for Justin Allred and Gary Raemaker. She stated Judge Allred serves part-time for Justice Court Precinct 5, handling civil hearings and traffic cases due to a high caseload and Judge Raemaker is a roving judge, and both he and Allred also assist with weekend and holiday initial appearances. She stated this ensures individuals arrested during off-hours are seen within the required 24-hour period.

Ms. Gilman briefly explained that liquor license applications begin locally, with the Board issuing public hearings before forwarding them to the state for final approval. Ms. Loewenheim confirmed that the process involves local approval first, followed by state review and she noted that a lottery system exists for certain types of liquor licenses, and all applications must go through the local approval process initially.

Ms. Gilman discussed a lease agreement with Development Services for the Board's consideration involving a film company planning to lease a 12,500 sq. ft. hangar at Bisbee Douglas International Airport. Christine McLachlan, Interim Development Services Director, stated the lease is for 20 years at \$15,000 annually, with the cost reflecting the hangar's condition and non-aeronautical use, and allowing rent deductions for documented improvements. She stated the agreement includes requirements for commercial liability insurance.

Mr. Casey discussed a request for \$585,000 from contingency funds to upgrade elections equipment and facilities. He stated the funds would purchase two DS950 tabulators, two updated letter openers, and fund remodeling to improve visibility, efficiency, and ballot storage.

The Board and staff discussed the chain of custody for ballots, clarifying that ballots are received by the Recorder for signature verification before moving to the Elections Director. The Board raised concerns about who legally owns and has custody of the ballots, especially once they are stored in the Treasurer's vault post-canvas. Vice-Chairman Crosby stated Statute A.R.S. §16-624 stating ballots must be deposited with the Treasurer for safekeeping and eventual destruction, leading to debate over whether this conflicts with the Board's responsibility. The Board considered separating the remodel and equipment purchase into two agenda items for clarity. The Board focused on keeping the existing DS850 machine for the upcoming election, particularly for tasks like the Logic and Accuracy (LNA) testing, as new machines may not be available in time. The Board noted that the special election wouldn't allow for any changes to the equipment, but they discussed the possibility of using new equipment for the election in November.

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

Ms. Gilman discussed the upcoming work session with the Eastern Arizona Counties Coalition regarding the gray wolf and endangered species issues. She stated the Work Session is set for early May and will focus on actions the Board can take that might impact the situation, especially in areas affected by the wolves, such as precinct 50. Ms. Gilman suggested a press release to notify the public, and Jane Montgomery, Cochise

County Public Information Officer, would handle the announcement. Ms. Gilman stated the County Supervisors Association (CSA) Legislative Policy Summit will be held in Yuma this year from October 28th to 30th. She stated it's an annual event where county supervisors, managers, and clerks gather to review and vote on legislative proposals submitted by counties.

Supervisor Gomez discussed efforts to secure funding for the Douglas connector road after a lost grant. She stated a transportation board member from ADOT expressed willingness to support reallocating funds and asked local leaders to advocate at an upcoming meeting. The Board expressed interest in creating a unified strategic plan to manage growth, address social needs, and guide future development with input from all stakeholders.

Chairman Antenori adjourned the meeting at 11:07 a.m.

APPROVED:

Frank Antenori, Chairman

ATTEST:

Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board