

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE COCHISE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
WORK SESSION HELD ON
TUESDAY, APRIL 29, 2025**

A work session of the Cochise County Board of Supervisors was held on Tuesday, April 29, 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

Attendees: Marisol Renteria, Interim Elections Director
Stacy Fenhaus, Budget Manager

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

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Board of Supervisors

1. Budget Work Session - Discussion of County Budget for Fiscal Year 2025-2026 specifically: Elections

Sharon Gilman, Interim County Administrator, stated Joe Casey, Interim Deputy County Administrator, presented the elections budget with a focus on labor and upcoming election costs. She stated the funding plan will cover needs through July 2026, including special elections. She stated that recruitment for the Elections Director position is underway, with final interviews scheduled. She stated the salary rate for the role was posted between \$90,000 to \$110,000.

Mr. Casey explained that the main adjustment is to match last year's amended budget, since the initial amount hadn't fully covered all employee salaries. He stated no other major changes were proposed, and the overall budget request remains flat, aside from wage increases. He stated the current funding should support three upcoming elections.

The Board and staff discussed potential mail-only elections, especially in smaller areas, unless another election allows for vote centers. Board members expressed their dislike of all-mail formats, and noted that active voter outreach or postcards would depend on coordination with the Recorder's Office. Ms. Renteria stated the choice between mail or in-person voting ultimately lies with each special district's board, and participating in the county's election services is handled through an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA). Ms. Gilman stated for reimbursements, the standard rate billed to districts is 75 cents per registered voter, a rate approved by the Board previously.

The Board discussed whether the current fees collected from IGAs for local elections could be increased to better reflect actual costs. The Board raised concerns about

smaller districts being unable to absorb higher fees due to limited budgets. The Board and staff discussed that mail-only elections are less expensive; in-person options help voters who don't receive ballots or prefer not to vote by mail. Chairman Antenori recommended using school facilities as polling places to offset the costs.

In response to the Board, Mr. Casey clarified that there are requirements and certain specifications for a vault. He stated the structure needs to be enclosed, and a vault installation must be designed specifically for securing ballots.

The Board and staff reviewed the amount allocated to regular contractual services, which includes ballot printing, programming, and maintenance. The Board and staff discussed the use of state-approved vendors, with the current ones being Election Systems and Software (ES&S) for programming and Runbeck for printing, noting good performance despite some limitations. Chairman Antenori the challenge of small precincts, including legal constraints on vote anonymity when precincts have very few voters. The Board agreed that the Elections Department is small but essential, and should not be underfunded despite budget constraints.

Chairman Antenori adjourned the meeting at 10:25 a.m.

APPROVED:

Frank Antenori, Chairman

ATTEST:

Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board