

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE COCHISE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
WORK SESSION HELD ON  
TUESDAY, APRIL 30, 2025**

A work session of the Cochise County Board of Supervisors was held on Wednesday, April 30, 2025, at 9:00 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: Barbara Lang, Health Director  
Rafael Melendez, Deputy Finance Director  
Stacy Fenhaus, Budget Manager

Chairman Antenori called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

***ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION***

**Board of Supervisors**

1. Budget Work Session - Discussion of the County Budget for Fiscal Year 2025-2026, specifically: Public Health

Barbara Lang, Health Director, presented this item using a PowerPoint presentation. Ms. Lang explained that 48% of public health funding comes from grants, with 52% from the general fund. She noted that the medical examiner's costs are significant, as Cochise County contracts with Tucson for these services, paying a fixed rate regardless of the number of cases. She stated the Health department revenues and expenses have decreased this year, partly due to reduced Title 36 funding compared to previous years.

Ms. Lang clarified that the public fiduciary is appointed through the court for individuals who are wards of the court, often due to mental health or medical issues. The fiduciary advocates for these individuals, managing their finances and ensuring appropriate placement in institutions if needed. In response to the Board, she explained that when assessing someone's mental competency, a court evaluation is required, and the process involves sending someone to assess the situation, not necessarily requiring a dedicated mental health facility. Ms. Lang outlined the funding requests for the health department. She stated a significant portion of the department's funds comes from environmental health, which provides technical assistance and health inspections for new businesses, including restaurants and septic systems. She noted that due to a large backlog, the department is requesting an additional environmental health specialist to help with inspections. Ms. Lang is requesting an administrative aid position for the public fiduciary's office to assist with the extensive paperwork and intergovernmental communication required for cases involving incapacitated adults.

She stated there is a statutory requirement for annual restaurant inspections, and while the department is able to inspect once per year, staffing limitations have made it difficult to keep up with all inspections and complaints.

The Board and staff discussed the \$105,000 budgeted under professional services, with \$42,000 allocated to the Health Department's required medical director. Ms. Lang stated the department calls on him frequently for medical guidance, especially for incidents like needle injuries and potential rabies exposure. She stated it's difficult to secure a doctor for such a limited-scope, on-call role at that rate, and previous recruitment efforts had also been challenging.

The Board and staff discussed the county's role in well inspections, clarifying that environmental health handles new well construction by reviewing plans rather than performing physical inspections. Ms. Lang stated this includes checking distances from septic systems to ensure compliance before issuing permits. Ms. Lang confirmed that inspections are fee-based and often coordinated with drilling companies or builders during new construction.

Ms. Lang stated Vital Records staff handle birth and death certificates, as well as indigent burials, with increased demand tied to new federal ID and voting requirements. She stated that local access to these records was emphasized as more convenient and cost-effective than dealing directly with the state. She stated nursing and community services were confirmed to include five clinics countywide, with nurses and a part-time nurse practitioner serving both the jail and the health department.

Ms. Lang explained that the suicide and fatality grants support the county's mortality review program, which tracks all local deaths, including those from overdose, illness, or natural causes. This data helps identify leading causes of death and guide public health interventions.

Ms. Lang explained that since the jail's nurse practitioner is not specialized in psychiatry, the county contracts with an outside provider to perform mental health evaluations via telehealth. She stated this helps reduce the need to transport inmates to costly out-of-county facilities in Tucson or Phoenix. She stated the \$226,098 reflects the general fund transfer to the jail district for these correctional health services. She stated although short-term inpatient psychiatric care is available at Canyon Vista in Sierra Vista, longer-term or court-ordered care remains limited and expensive. She stated title 36 placements, which govern such inpatient treatment, have also declined in recent years.

The Board and staff reviewed the Public Health Emergency Preparedness program, which focuses on planning for health crises or disasters such as disease outbreaks, floods, or fires. Ms. Lang stated it's mostly funded through state grants, with the program receiving around \$250,000 annually, and it coordinates closely with the county's emergency management team.

Mr. Melendrez clarified that overlapping jail medical and mental health services are budgeted through general fund allocations that are then transferred to the jail district to prevent supplanting. Ms. Lang noted that substance abuse prevention programs funded by grants include Narcan distribution and community outreach, which has coincided with a gradual drop in overdose incidents.

Ms. Fenhaus explained that interfund transfers are not included in warrants and demands but are handled separately through formal documentation and Board approval. She stated transfers must be clearly stated, showing both the source and

destination funds, and are typically rolled into the overall budget process. Ms. Gilman stated most transfers are approved during the tentative and adopted budget stages, with any additional ones brought forward as individual agenda items.

The Board discussed breastfeeding counseling. Supervisor Gomez clarified that counseling is a state requirement under the WIC program and emphasized its importance, especially in communities with fractured family support systems.

In response to the Board, Ms. Lang explained that Smokefree Arizona is a program focused on promoting tobacco cessation and ensuring businesses comply with state smoking regulations. She stated the program involves educating businesses about the legal requirements, such as proper placement of ashtrays and maintaining a designated smoking area away from buildings.

Chairman Antenori stated that while the grants do come before the board for approval, he plans to start disapproving many of them. He emphasized his desire to encourage individual responsibility within the county, urging people to become more accountable for their actions and productive members of society, rather than relying on government and taxpayers.

Ms. Lang stated that the department provides many essential services, most of which are grant-funded, benefiting communities that can't access private practices for similar care. She stated the Health Department focuses heavily on education and prevention to reduce hospital visits, ultimately saving taxpayer dollars. She emphasized that the department operates efficiently with a lean budget, relying on grant funding, and requested consideration for the approval of two additional positions.

Chairman Antenori adjourned the meeting at 10:02 a.m.

APPROVED:

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Frank Antenori, Chairman

ATTEST:

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Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board