

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE COCHISE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
WORK SESSION HELD ON
THURSDAY, MAY 1, 2025**

A work session of the Cochise County Board of Supervisors was held on Thursday, May 1, 2025, at 1:00 p.m. in the Board of Supervisors' Hearing Room, 1415 Melody Lane, Building G, Bisbee, Arizona.

Present: Tom Crosby, Vice-Chairman; Kathleen L. Gomez, Supervisor

Absent: Frank Antenori, Chairman

Staff Present: Sharon Gilman, Interim County Administrator
Joe Casey, Interim Deputy County Administrator
Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board
Jennifer Graeme, Human Resources Director

Attendees: Tammi-Jo Wilkins, SEACOM Director
Chuck Potucek, Sierra Vista City Manager
Chris Hiser, Chief of Police, City of Sierra Vista
Steve Pauken, Bisbee City Manager
Stacy Fenhaus, Budget Manager

Chairman Antenori called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Board of Supervisors

1. Budget Work Session - Discussion of County Budget for Fiscal Year 2025-2026 specifically: Southeastern Arizona Communications (SEACOM) and Public Safety.

Tammi-Jo Wilkins, SEACOM Director, presented this item using a PowerPoint presentation. Ms. Wilkins presented updates on SEACOM's operations, call volume, staffing, and budget planning. She stated the emergency and administrative calls have increased compared to last year, and numbers are on track to surpass prior totals. She stated SEACOM is in talks to bring Fort Huachuca on board as a part-time subscriber, potentially adding \$120,000 in revenue. She stated staffing efforts have improved, with new hires in the pipeline and a target of 19 full-time dispatchers by July. She stated a simplified and more transparent fee structure based on actual call volume will launch next fiscal year and SEACOM added new dispatch consoles, expanded crisis negotiation training, and enhanced internal standards across partner agencies. She noted the state 911 grant will help fund system upgrades, including equipment for SEACOM, Douglas, and Benson. She noted the overall budget has increased by about \$165,000, mostly due to training, supplies, and equipment maintenance needs.

Mr. Potucek explained that SEACOM was founded by Cochise County and the City of Sierra Vista. He stated when there are budget shortfalls, the County and City split the difference to keep operations going. He stated that as new agencies like Fort

Huachuca and Graham County come on board, subscriber fees help stabilize funding and may reduce the County and City's financial burden.

Mr. Pauken shared that before joining SEACOM, the City of Bisbee Police dispatch center budget exceeded \$200,000 due to having its own console, staff, and facility, but since joining, those costs have been significantly reduced by sharing resources. He stated it no longer makes financial or operational sense for each small community to maintain its own dispatch center and the shared model improves efficiency and coordination.

In response to the Board, Ms. Wilkins explained that the call volume for the City of Douglas Police center has remained high, largely due to 911 calls coming from across the border. She stated the center's bilingual capabilities make it a key resource, as it also serves as SEACOM's language line.

In response to the Board, Ms. Wilkins shared that after transitioning to the Cochise County HR department, the recruitment process has significantly improved. Ms. Graeme noted that there had been no issues in supporting SEACOM and praised the collaboration with Ms. Wilkins and Melissa Clark. She mentioned that it was initially a bit more work due to granting additional access, but things are now running smoothly.

Chief Hiser expressed strong support for the progress of SEACOM and his department is satisfied with the service, particularly as staffing improves and supports better delivery.

In response to the Board, Ms. Wilkins shared that the transition toward a new funding model is underway but won't take effect until the next fiscal year. She stated work is being done to create SEACOM specific subscriber agreements and to establish stable fees for full functionality. She stated becoming a separate legal entity is a long-term goal, which will require a stronger fund balance.

Ms. Wilkins submitted a funding request to support the ongoing transition from city to county fiscal services. She asked for an administrative assistant to help with finances and recruitment, along with five future dispatcher positions to prepare for potential expansion, such as Graham County joining. She stated the total request was \$361,000, though those positions are currently listed in the budget without allocated funding.

Chairman Antenori adjourned the meeting at 1:34 p.m.

APPROVED:

Frank Antenori, Chairman

ATTEST:

Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board