

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE COCHISE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
WORK SESSION HELD ON
TUESDAY, JULY 1, 2025**

A work session of the Cochise County Board of Supervisors was held on Tuesday, July 1, 2025, at 2:00 p.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, County Administrator
Joe Casey, Deputy County Administrator
Paul Correa, Chief Civil Deputy County Attorney
Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board

Attendees: Phil Bourdon, Project Manager

Chairman Antenori called the meeting to order at 2:02 p.m.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Board of Supervisors

1. Discussion and possible direction regarding the site for construction of the new Cochise County Jail.

Phil Bourdon, Project Manager, presented this item using a PowerPoint presentation. Mr. Bourdon presented a jail site evaluation to the Board, aiming to gather input on preferred direction. He stated the May 2025 planning study reviewed six potential locations, with Sierra Vista removed due to a conservation easement, leaving Bisbee and Melody Lane as the top-ranked options. Mr. Bourdon emphasized the benefits of the existing Bisbee site, including established utilities, potential reuse of buildings, and no land acquisition requirements, though a new water tank would be needed for fire flow. He also clarified that the diagrams shown were conceptual and that a future design team would refine the layout and optimize land use.

Mr. Bourdon reviewed the Melody Lane site, noting its proximity to the county complex, access to utilities, and available infrastructure. He explained that the main 63-acre parcel provides sufficient space for the jail, with additional nearby parcels identified but likely unnecessary for acquisition.

Mr. Bourdon discussed the Tombstone site at State Route 80 and Davis Road, highlighting its lack of utilities and the need for significant infrastructure development, including a sewer plant and water system, which would increase construction costs. He also pointed out, that to make the Tombstone site more feasible, it would need to be closer to utilities and adjacent to highways to lower costs. Mr. Bourdon concluded by emphasizing the need to reduce facility square footage and manage land acquisitions to help reduce project costs.

The Board held a wide-ranging discussion on the practicality and cost implications of building a new jail in Tombstone. Supervisor Gomez raised concerns about the site's

remote location, lack of infrastructure, and the burden it would place on municipalities like Sierra Vista, Benson, and Willcox in terms of transportation and accessibility. Supervisor Gomez emphasized the high cost of developing roads, utilities, and support services in Tombstone, arguing that Bisbee or nearby areas would be more cost-effective and accessible.

Kenneth Bradshaw, Jail Commander, reminded the Board that two jail substations are currently in use, located in Willcox and Sierra Vista. He stated the facilities handle initial booking, and individuals are transferred to the main jail in Bisbee if they remain in custody after their initial appearance. He noted that these substations are available for continued use once the new facility is built.

Supervisor Gomez expressed urgency over selecting a jail site, emphasizing that the facility should have already been built and stressing the need to avoid escalating costs. Chairman Antenori highlighted the future growth potential in Douglas and Benson, while also noting the importance of maintaining Cochise County's independence from neighboring Pima County. Chairman Antenori raised concerns about infrastructure demands and travel time for law enforcement, with some members supporting a more centralized location to improve efficiency and reduce transport delays.

Mr. Bourdon clarified that selecting a site requiring major roadway and utility infrastructure could significantly delay the project due to time-consuming property acquisitions. He also confirmed a point raised by Commander Bradshaw, emphasizing that the existing substations in Sierra Vista and Willcox help reduce transport burdens on local police departments.

Supervisor Gomez referenced a Sheriff's memo highlighting survey results that ranked officer and inmate safety, mental health, and community quality of life as top priorities, with strong support for keeping the jail at its current location. She noted that nearly half the jail staff live in Douglas and already commute to Bisbee, so relocating the jail farther away would significantly disrupt the existing trained workforce.

Vice-Chairman Crosby emphasized that if the jail tax measure fails in November, the current jail site would clearly be the most cost-effective option. He noted the available funding could drop from nearly \$200 million to about \$120 million, making cost efficiency critical.

The Board emphasized that if the jail tax fails, funding would be limited and the current site may be the only viable option. Supervisor Gomez expressed concern that starting from scratch elsewhere would significantly delay construction, increase costs, and strain existing budgets. Chairman Antenori argued that the county should plan for future growth, especially in areas like Douglas, Benson, and Sierra Vista to balance long-term regional development goals with immediate financial and logistical realities.

Chairman Antenori requested a meeting with Mr. Bourdon and a few engineers or an architect to discuss the project in more detail. He wants to define the jail's requirements and conduct a cost-benefit analysis. The focus would be on comparing infrastructure costs per square foot for each potential site. He indicated this analysis is necessary before making any final decisions about the jail's location.

Mr. Bourdon clarified the significant difference in utility costs between the Bisbee and Tombstone sites, with Tombstone estimated at \$14-\$15 million compared to Bisbee's \$2 million. He also discussed the potential delays in property acquisition, particularly when private property is involved, due to appraisal processes and possible eminent domain issues. He emphasized that delays in property acquisition could further extend

the timeline for the project.

The Board raised concerns about whether Tombstone's infrastructure could handle the added load of a new jail, especially considering the limited capacity of their sewer and services. Supervisor Gomez pointed out that the town of Tombstone has not been consulted, and there could be opposition from residents and local leaders, especially regarding the potential impact on tourism. Supervisor Gomez stated the Bisbee community, however, is more supportive of keeping the jail in its current location, and the Sheriff's Department also prefers it to remain there.

Mr. Bourdon clarified that DLR Group was involved in the planning study to provide estimates for site development, including landscaping, excavation, and utility access. He stated there is no current contract with DLR for further work, and additional work would likely require a new professional or a design architect.

The Board discussed scheduling a meeting to bring the owner's representative on the contract, which is set for July 23rd, 2025. Supervisor Gomez suggested that they add an agenda item to approve the current jail site for the new facility during that meeting.

Chairman Antenori discussed the idea of waiting to get a buyer's agent on contract before proceeding with site planning and conducting a cost-benefit analysis (CBA) based on those plans.

The Board discussed the idea of holding a vote on the jail location and hearing public input on the matter.

In response to the Board, Mr. Bourdon stated that there was a clear desire from jail personnel and management to keep the jail at its current location in Bisbee.

In response to the Board, Commander Bradshaw mentioned that before considering the idea of a jail district, the County hired a company to conduct a survey to understand voter support for a new facility. He stated the survey identified the top priorities of voters at the time regarding the reasons for building a new jail.

Commander Bradshaw clarified that a scientific survey was conducted before considering the jail district, which included a phone survey across the county to gauge voter support for a new facility. He stated the survey focused on priorities like safety, mental health, and quality of life, but did not specifically ask about the jail's location.

Chairman Antenori suggested holding a special meeting to gather public input on the jail location. He stated the meeting would take place in the next week or two, likely between 5 and 7 p.m., allowing for public discussion. The Board agreed to move forward with scheduling the special meeting for this purpose.

Chairman Antenori adjourned the meeting at 3:04 p.m.

APPROVED:

Frank Antenori, Chairman

ATTEST:

Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board

