

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

A work session of the Cochise County Board of Supervisors was held on Thursday, July 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: Joe Casey, Deputy County Administrator
Dylan Hendel, Civil Deputy County Attorney
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 July 21, 2025.

Mr. Casey presented this item. Mr. Casey previewed the upcoming Library and Jail District meetings, all of which include only minutes and demands. He stated the Flood Control District has two consent agenda items and one action item to approve a purchase agreement related to the Bisbee Effluent Project.

The Board and staff discussed the Bisbee Effluent Project, which is currently 30% designed and supported by Water Infrastructure Finance Authority (WIFA) and flood control funds, with full construction estimated at \$14 million pending future grant funding. The Board stated that the City of Bisbee secured a \$1.95 million grant to build a pump station to move effluent to the river, supporting water recharge efforts. The Board raised concerns about the project's impact, federal involvement, and perceived redistribution between districts, while others highlighted the market demand for water and the military's interest in the offset credits.

Mr. Casey presented agenda items 1 and 2. Mr. Casey stated that there would be two presentations: one to recognize Rob Hollister for 32 years of service supporting the County's radio system particularly aiding the Sheriff's Office, although he is not retiring, he is just stepping back from volunteering. The second presentation will be from the Auditor General regarding the FY 2023-24 audit.

Chairman Antenori presented Consent Agenda items 1 and 2, which included meeting minutes and an item related to Public Safety Personnel Retirement System (PSPRS).

Phillip Leiendecker, County Assessor, presented Consent Agenda item 3. Mr. Leiendecker explained that his office annually processes personal and organizational exemptions, and late filers are allowed to petition the Board for approval under ARS 42-11153(B). He

stated approval of these late filings increases the county's exempt assessed value by about 0.4%, resulting in a negligible revenue impact.

Rita Shipley, Division Director of Superior Court Budget and Finance, presented Consent Agenda items 4 and 5. Ms. Shipley explained that two grants are up for approval: one funds a coordinator who helps reunite families and keep children out of foster care, and another supports an attorney exploring alternative guardianship options. She stated both programs aim to reduce court involvement and support family preservation. She stated the second grant is for court security improvements and is part of a multi-phase project.

The Board and staff discussed Consent Agenda item 6, which included approval of two new precinct committeemen, one Democrat and one Republican and Consent Agenda item 7 involved amendments for an operating transfer.

Mr. Casey noted there are several public hearings, including one for a liquor license, a franchise agreement with Midvale Telephone Company, and six items from Development Services.

Supervisor Gomez asked Matthew Taylor, Planner II, to meet within the next two weeks to review zoning around Douglas, especially near the port of entry and along Highway 191. She stated the goal is to better understand current designations—industrial, rural, agricultural, and potential free enterprise zones.

In response to the Board, Mr. Taylor explained that rural zoning is mainly for residential and small-scale service uses, while light industrial zoning allows for heavy commercial and industrial activities like truck stops, warehouses, and manufacturing.

Teresa McNab, Admin Finance Manager for Adult Probation, presented Agenda Action item 16. She shared that this year marks the 25th anniversary of the nationwide celebration recognizing first responders and community service workers.

Raymond McNeely, Deputy Sheriff, presented Agenda Action item 17. Mr. McNeely explained that the college increased its contribution toward Sergeant Hudson's salary, covering more of his overtime costs. He stated that as a result, the county's share of those costs dropped from about \$20,000 last year to roughly \$5,000 this year.

Mr. Casey reviewed Action Items 18, 19, and 20, which include two Intergovernmental Agreements (IGA) for administering the November election in Naco and Willcox and the final item is a resolution to establish vote center locations.

In response to the Board, Ms. Avant shared that out of roughly 17,800 registered voters, only about 15% participated in the recent election. The Board and staff discussed cost-sharing for upcoming school district elections while Willcox and Naco are both expected to contribute based on the number of active voters.

Suzanne Hagle, Prevention Services Director, presented Action Item 21. Ms. Hagle explained that the grant is being extended for three months while awaiting a decision on the competitive application. She clarified that Health Start is a countywide home visiting program focused on supporting young mothers and children up to age two and the services include education on nutrition, car seat safety, postpartum care, and breastfeeding.

Chairman Antenori shared that the federal rescission bill, which includes \$9.2 billion in cuts, passed the Senate and is now in the House. He raised concerns about potential impacts on Medicaid, SNAP, and rural hospitals, noting some offset funding was added

but may not fully cover revenue losses, especially in rural areas.

Mr. Casey explained that on Wednesday, July 23, 2025, the Jail District's Owner Representatives Services is scheduled to give a presentation during a work session and on Thursday, July 24, 2025, a special meeting to canvass the July 15, 2025, election will take place..

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

Vice-Chairman Crosby requested an informational session to review all grants and agreements containing references to San Pedro Riparian National Conservation Area (SPRNCA). He expressed concern that funding tied to this language may need to be returned or revised, and asked for a legal analysis to explore ways to separate the County from SPRNCA while possibly preserving other funding.

The Board had an in-depth discussion about the perceived overreach in the interpretation of Arizona's Open Meeting Law. Mr. Hendel clarified the distinction between Open Meeting Law and Public Records Law, and offered to prepare a memo outlining the law, its intent, and relevant exceptions. The Board agreed to schedule a work session to further examine potential legal remedies or clarification, including possibly seeking a declaratory judgment.

The Board discussed concerns regarding a \$1.9 million health department grant tied to federal COVID-19 guidance. Vice-Chairman Crosby raised objections about potential future mandates, vaccine ingredients, and the lack of long-term data, expressing opposition to federally driven public health initiatives. The Board directed staff to hold a future work session for further review.

Chairman Antenori adjourned the meeting at 11:12 a.m.

APPROVED:

Frank Antenori, Chairman

ATTEST:

Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board