

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE COCHISE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
WORK SESSION HELD ON
MONDAY, AUGUST 18, 2025**

A work session of the Cochise County Board of Supervisors was held on Monday, August 18, 2025, at 11:00 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, County Administrator
Joe Casey, Deputy County Administrator
Denise Riden, Civil Deputy County Attorney
Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board

Attendees: Barbara Lang, Health Director
Kenneth Bradshaw, Jail Commander
Megan Kennedy, Detention Medical Services Manager

Chairman Antenori called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Board of Supervisors

1. Discussion and Possible Direction Regarding the Health and Detention Medical Director Position.

Ms. Gilman stated that Megan Kennedy, Director of Detention Health, and Barbara Lang, Health Director, were present to brief the Board on the statutory and regulatory duties of the County Medical Director. She stated the current contract with AB Med and Dr. McLaughlin will terminate September 1, 2025, and reported a new contract is out for bid, closing August 22, 2025, with staff to review and recommend a replacement.

Ms. Kennedy presented this item using a PowerPoint presentation. Ms. Kennedy explained that the County Medical Director is a statutorily required physician responsible for overseeing multiple health divisions, including detention health, clinical services, environmental health, public health emergency preparedness, and prevention programs. She noted the role includes providing 24/7 on-call support for the jail's onsite provider, making it a demanding position.

The Board and staff discussed that detention health staff operate under established medical protocols, using a nurse practitioner for daily care and contacting the provider or medical director for medication continuation or cases beyond protocol.

Ms. Lang stated that public health statutory requirements funded by the general fund include infrastructure, plans, budgets, boards, qualified staff, and environmental sanitation. She noted the medical director is involved in environmental health, vital

records, disease surveillance, immunizations, public health education, emergency preparedness, and substance harm reduction efforts.

Ms. Kennedy stated that under Title 11-411, the sheriff must manage the jail and ensure inmates receive healthcare comparable to community standards, including urgent and chronic care. She added that the facility operates under Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) licensing tied to the medical director, whose license carries liability, particularly for the opioid use disorder program, and emphasized the need for experienced medical direction in correctional healthcare.

The Board and staff discussed that methadone is provided by a community provider, while the jail uses Suboxone for opioid use disorder treatment. Ms. Kennedy noted Suboxone reduces opioid cravings but can still be misused, and alternative medications exist but are costly and not on the facility's formulary. The Board and staff discussed that the jail cannot prescribe methadone directly, so it partners with Community Medical Services (CMS) to continue treatment through virtual visits and onsite administration.

The Board and staff discussed that autopsies are handled through a contract with Pima County's coroner, not the medical director, though the medical director participates in mortality reviews and quarterly visits for chart audits. Ms. Kennedy noted the medical director provides guidance during emergencies, but the Board decides whether to declare one, with state-level emergencies determined by the governor and Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS). The Board and staff discussed that the governor can declare emergencies and act unilaterally for 30 days, after which legislative approval is required to extend any orders.

The Board and staff discussed that providing medical direction in a correctional facility requires specialized experience and additional malpractice insurance costing \$50,000–\$60,000 annually. Ms. Kennedy stated the expense contributes to higher contract rates for medical directors, and selecting a qualified, experienced individual is critical due to the litigious nature of both healthcare and detention environments.

In response to the Board, Ms. Gilman stated that the request for supplier qualifications is posted on the procurement site, notifications were sent to interested parties and local providers, and submissions close August 22, 2025. She stated that after review by the scoring team, including health staff and the nurse practitioner, a recommendation will be brought to the Board.

Chairman Antenori adjourned the meeting at 11:45 a.m.

APPROVED:

Frank Antenori, Chairman

ATTEST:

Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board