

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE COCHISE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
WORK SESSION HELD ON  
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 16, 2025**

A work session of the Cochise County Board of Supervisors was held on Tuesday, December 16, 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  
Dylan Hendel, Civil Deputy County Attorney  
Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board

Attendees: Mark Dannels, Sheriff  
Ken Foster, Cochise County Sheriff Lieutenant  
Sean Gijanto, Cochise County Sheriff Lieutenant

Chairman Antenori called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

***ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION***

**Board of Supervisors**

1. Discussion and possible direction regarding current animal sheltering across Cochise County and the County Sheriff's proposal for a County-operated animal shelter.

Ms. Gilman presented this item. Ms. Gilman stated that Cochise County does not operate its own animal shelter and relies on agreements with nearby cities, leaving some residents without close access. She noted a United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) grant of \$1.1 million, combined with \$1.9 million from the county, could fund a new facility at 450 North Huachuca Boulevard. She stated the project would require purchasing the property, remodeling, establishing policies, and completing environmental clearances before operation.

Mark Dannels, Cochise County Sheriff, stated that finding a suitable location for a county-operated shelter has been challenging, but the proposed facility in Huachuca City offers strong potential and supportive city leadership. He emphasized the project would minimize personnel costs while improving animal services and county partnerships. He expressed full support for purchasing the building and moving forward with evaluations and development to benefit both the county and the animals.

Ms. Gilman stated that Huachuca City Police Department would supplement staffing for Cochise County Animal Control Officers (ACO) by providing support but not full staffing. Sheriff Dannels stated the city has two animal control officers with a manageable call load, allowing them to be housed at the facility when needed. Sheriff

Dannels stated the facility would have 24/7 access through city hall, enabling deputies and officers to assist residents in bringing in animals.

Supervisor Gomez stated that Douglas is too far from areas like Sierra Vista and Hereford for residents to access their dogs, and a recent visit to the Douglas shelter revealed poor conditions for county animals. She emphasized that standardized policies and coordination among shelters will improve management, and the building is a strong, timely option that benefits the community and animal welfare.

Ms. Gilman provided photos of Huachuca City property, noting it sits off Highway 90 and has a gravel parking lot requiring Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) improvements. She explained the office building has reception, break rooms, and additional spaces that could be converted into clinics, cat rooms, or adoption areas, while the detached shop building would need drainage and ventilation upgrades for kennels. She stated the proposal includes 30 standard kennels and 10 for sick or aggressive animals, with space for future additional structures on the vacant lot.

Ken Foster, Cochise County Sheriff Office Lieutenant, stated that he and Lieutenant Gijanto reviewed the Sierra Vista shelter and used its 2025 budget as a reference, estimating roughly half the costs for a smaller Cochise County facility. He stated the budget includes a shelter manager and an assistant, with additional support from Huachuca City police providing up to 40 hours of manpower per week and a vehicle. He stated the proposal also considers using Department of Corrections (DOC) inmate labor, with partnerships helping to reduce overall staffing costs.

In response to the Board, Mr. Foster stated that the City of Sierra Vista highlighted the need to closely supervise employees and inmates to prevent fraternization. He explained fraternization refers to inappropriate interactions, such as sharing food with inmates, rather than socializing freely. Huachuca City police are aware of these rules and will monitor inmate labor accordingly.

The Board and staff discussed using both volunteer and inmate labor at the facility. Sheriff Dannels stated any inmate labor would come through Huachuca City's existing contract with the Department of Corrections. Sheriff Dannels noted that volunteers and local nonprofit groups are expected to help offset costs and assist with duties, supporting the limited staff.

The Board and staff discussed that the shelter manager and assistant would be full-time county employees, responsible for maintaining a database of impounded animals, administering medications, and coordinating volunteers. The Board stated that establishing a shelter would also allow enforcement of licensing, tags, and impound fees, improving animal control and public safety.

The Board and staff discussed that the county's portion of the grant counts toward the expenditure limit, while the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) portion does not. Ms. Gilman stated the \$3 million, including the county match, can be used for property acquisition, design, planning, construction, and remodel, but not for ongoing salaries or operational costs. She noted the equipment and construction would be contracted and funded from the grant, while staffing and other operational expenses would be built into the sheriff's budget as a new activity.

The Board and staff discussed concerns about the shelter's potential to grow in size and cost over time. Lt. Foster emphasized that establishing clear policies, procedures, and operational rules early to prevent future directors or staff from expanding services beyond the plan.

The Board and staff discussed seeking direction on whether to pursue placing an offer on the Huachuca City property. The Board emphasized the need for a formal vote to move forward with any purchase. Lt. Gijanto's sense of urgency was noted due to limited current capacity and increasing animal control challenges.

The Board and staff discussed tracking and recovering costs for animals brought to the shelter using Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) chips. The Board explored whether fines or fees for impounded animals could offset operating costs, similar to jail fees, but acknowledged administrative costs may limit revenue. Staff agreed to research statewide practices to identify a balanced approach for cost recovery without impeding owners' ability to reclaim pets.

The Board and staff discussed potential liability issues for operating the animal shelter. Chairman Antenori stated liability concerns include wrongful euthanasia, animal bites, or volunteer incidents, depending on the situation. Supervisor Gomez stated measures like waivers for volunteers and risk analysis can help manage exposure and inform operational decisions.

Supervisor Gomez discussed concerns about continuing to fund outside shelters through Intergovernmental Agreements (IGAs) while conditions decline and county oversight remains limited. She stated consolidating animal services under one county-run shelter was viewed as a way to establish consistent policies, shared software, and better cost control.

Ms. Gilman discussed incorporating spay and neuter services as part of shelter operations to address long-term animal population control. She stated veterinary services would be provided through contracted professional services, with a veterinarian of record included in the budget.

Sheriff Dannels stated the proposed shelter would include a basic holding area for abused, livestock, or exotic animals when immediate placement is not possible. He stated a county facility would allow animals to be held safely overnight and transferred during regular business hours.

The Board and staff discussed next steps that include contacting the real estate agent, identifying limited revenue offsets, and establishing strict Standards of Procedures (SOPs) to prevent cost and scope expansion. The Board noted coordination with volunteers, existing shelters, and use of a centralized animal database was emphasized to improve accountability and public access. The Board reflected a cautious, traditional approach focused on structure, discipline, and long-term sustainability rather than revenue generation.

Sheriff Dannels stated that addressing animal shelter needs has been a long-standing issue discussed for decades. He emphasized the importance of the county owning its reputation and taking responsibility through a county-operated facility. He expressed appreciation to staff and partners for the extensive work already completed. He affirmed a commitment to careful stewardship and making the effort successful for the county.

Chairman Antenori stated that additional work is required by the County Attorney to establish ordinances and lawful revenue sources. He emphasized revisiting a previously redrafted ordinance, including RFID pet chipping, as a practical step toward accountability and owner identification.

Chairman Antenori adjourned the meeting at 3:00 p.m.

APPROVED:

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Frank Antenori, Chairman

ATTEST:

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Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board