

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE COCHISE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
WORK SESSION HELD ON
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 5, 2026**

A work session of the Cochise County Board of Supervisors was held on Thursday, February 5, 2026, 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: Sharon Gilman, County Administrator
Joe Casey, Deputy County Administrator
Dylan Hendel, Deputy Civil County Attorney
Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board

Chairman Antenori called the meeting to order at 10:04 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 February 9, 2026.

Ms. Gilman presented this item. Ms. Gilman stated that next week's regular meetings will start at 1:00 p.m. instead of 10:00 a.m. due to morning events with the governor's visit. She also reviewed routine agenda items, including library district minutes, demands, budget amendments, and a flood control district action to increase the Bella Vista detention basin contingency budget by \$551,000, bringing it to \$827,000.

Bradley Simmons, Interim Engineering Director, presented this item. Mr. Simmons stated that the project is now expected to overrun to \$5,987,542.64, up from the original bid plus 5% of \$5,794,797.75, reflecting an 8–9% contingency. He explained that the overrun is due to material costs during construction, including riprap and Reinforced Concrete Pipe (RCP).

Joaquin Solis, Assistant Director of Highway and Flood, stated that some change orders were needed due to the RCP installation. He stated the usual method of placing pipes in concrete couldn't be used with the lower compacted, powder-like concrete, so voids had to be left and pipes anchored to prevent floating during placement.

Ms. Gilman stated the Jail District meeting does not have any action items but will have demands and minutes.

The Board and staff provided an update on the Jail District, noting progress with Geo Technical and environmental reviews and coordinating the project scope. Ms. Gilman stated a public blog has been created on the website for transparency, a Request for Quote (RFQ) for a criteria architect will be issued, and a work session is planned to give

a more detailed update.

Ms. Gilman stated the Regular Board meeting is scheduled for 1:00 p.m. and a summary of current events will be placed at the beginning of the agenda for the convenience of the public.

The Board and staff discussed creating a “points of personal privilege” segment at the start of meetings, allowing each member three minutes to speak on any topic, even if it’s not on the agenda. The Board’s discussion focused on clarifying rules, so members could pontificate without back-and-forth debate, ensuring proper guidance from the deputy county attorney and integrating it into existing meeting procedures.

Ms. Gilman stated that, due to the school superintendent’s need to return to Sierra Vista by 2:00, the Board’s approval is requested to move her action items before the call to the public and consent agenda.

Jacqui Clay, County Schools Superintendent, stated that Governor Hobbs will be briefed by the student advisory council in a meeting at her office, where superintendents will also share their perspectives.

Cynthia Meyers, Outreach Manager, presented Action item 1. Ms. Meyers explained that this is the second year of the federal Department of Education school-based mental health grant and provided a brief overview.

Lorena Telesa, Project Coordinator, explained that Tuesday’s presentation will include a brief grant report and a needs assessment using the School Health Assessment and Performance Evaluation (S.H.A.P.E.) platform to collect data from schools across the county. She stated the goal is to increase school mental health professionals, reduce turnover, and provide personalized support for students, with current efforts including hiring a student counselor, gathering school mental health profiles, tracking staffing and services, and expanding Tier 2 and Tier 3 supports through contracts and supervision.

In response to the Board, Ms. Meyers explained that the target is one mental health provider per school district to improve support for students. She stated that currently, outside the three largest districts, the ratio is about 840 students per counselor or therapist, far above the desired level. She stated the grant helps build a countywide consortium, hire providers, and ensure trained staff can respond quickly instead of schools relying on untrained judgment. Tier-three clinical support is the highest need, as students often must travel to Tucson for services, which disrupts school and increases costs for the districts.

In response to the Board, Dr. Clay discussed Action Item 2 and stated the strategy focuses on preventing issues before they start. She stated efforts include teaching students, families, teachers, and the wider community. Dr. Clay explained the first strategy focuses on prevention through education, teaching students, families, teachers, and the community before behavioral issues develop. Ms. Meyers stated the program includes identifying at-risk students and connecting them to appropriate services while collecting data on effectiveness. Ms. Meyers stated a separate pilot program in Cochise County uses an app-based, interactive curriculum to educate 8th–12th graders about fentanyl, providing real-world examples and adaptive learning to increase awareness and reduce exposure.

Chairman Antenori explained the agenda order would be adjusted to accommodate Dr. Clay’s schedule and the Call to the Public would occur before the Consent Agenda.

The Board and staff discussed Action Item 6, to increase a proposed fund transfer from \$20,000 to \$30,000 from the general fund contingency. The Board's discussion focused on budget monitoring, noting that expenditure limits are ultimately confirmed after the fiscal year through the certified financial report. The Board discussed that the funding increase was tied to making the Chief Civil Deputy County Attorney position more competitive in a tight legal market and potentially reducing reliance on costly outside counsel.

Melissa Avant, Elections Director, discussed Action Items 7 and 8. Ms. Avant explained that two similar Intergovernmental Agreements (IGA's) were presented for the cities of Benson and Douglas. She stated each agreement mirrors the Congressional District 7 (CD7) election structure and includes three vote centers. She stated the election-related costs were estimated at about \$50,000, with additional expenses incurred by the Recorder's Office.

In response to the Board, Ms. Avant clarified that election costs for the cities of Benson and Douglas would be well below the previously mentioned \$50,000. She stated Douglas would pay approximately \$6,400 based on about 8,490 registered voters at a rate of roughly 75 cents per voter, and Benson would incur less than \$3,000 due to having about 3,835 registered voters.

In response to the Board, Ms. Avant noted that the county's per-registered-voter rate is among the lowest nationally at about \$0.75, compared to a national range of \$0.75 to \$2.80. She stated the intergovernmental agreement rates have not been increased for several years.

In response to the Board, Mr. Hendel explained that Arizona law expects counties to conduct elections through intergovernmental agreements. He noted there is limited legal guidance if a county declines to run an election. He stated smaller rural cities would face serious operational challenges running elections without county infrastructure.

The Board and staff discussed the complexity of the issue and the need for additional time to review the matter, noting tight statutory deadlines and staffing limitations. The Board raised concerns that delays beyond a short window could disrupt ballot programming, vendor schedules, and legally required election timelines. Mr. Hendel emphasized that most Arizona cities lack the infrastructure to run elections independently, which is why longstanding law and practice place that responsibility with counties.

Darrel Crowley, Facilities Director, discussed Agenda Item 9 and stated that the project would remove all existing asphalt and concrete from the site. He noted the plan calls for a complete redesign rather than incremental repairs. Mr. Crowley stated the parking lot will be completely redesigned, with funding coming from capital contingency rather than the general fund, so it won't immediately impact the expenditure limit.

Ms. Gilman stated that legislative matters will be saved for Tuesday. She stated the week includes a special executive session with the county attorney and Arizona's insurance pools for a litigation update. She noted there will also be a joint work session with Planning and Zoning to review solar and data center regulations.

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

Vice-Chairman Crosby proposed several future agenda items, to include public records requests, the sheriff's ability to sue, a financial review of the sheriff's department regarding border-related grants, and parliamentary rules. He stated additional items involve rewriting a past Department of Justice (DOJ) letter, considering joint suits with other counties about compliance with election laws, and reviewing a memo from Tulsi Gabbard regarding election integrity. He indicated the memo would be distributed and included in the meeting minutes.

The Board and staff discussed recent appellate court rulings allowing certain elected officials, like the sheriff, to potentially hire their own attorneys for lawsuits, though questions remain about funding and authority. The Board also reviewed drafting a revised letter to Tulsi Gabbard regarding election matters and ensuring county voting lists are accessible. Additionally, the Board focused on public records management, noting the county's searchable system is online, but a future work session is needed to clarify legal responsibilities, jurisdiction, and procedures for efficiently handling requests.

Mr. Hendel interjected and stated the Board was getting off-topic.

Chairman Antenori proposed a future agenda item focused on public records requests, including the process, what information can be released or redacted, and the county's practices for making information publicly available. He stated the discussion aims to address public concerns about delays and clarify procedures for handling requests efficiently.

Supervisor Gomez requested a work session regarding a Port Authority, and a work session to review proposals for economic development, and a work session regarding the Tourism Board.

Chairman Antenori adjourned the meeting at 11:30 a.m.

APPROVED:

Frank Antenori, Chairman

ATTEST:

Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board