

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE COCHISE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
WORK SESSION HELD ON
THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2026**

A work session of the Cochise County Board of Supervisors was held on Thursday, February 19, 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

Absent: Kathleen L. Gomez, Supervisor

Staff Present: Sharon Gilman, County Administrator
Joe Casey, Deputy County Administrator
Dylan Hendel, Deputy Civil County Attorney
Melissa Wright, Deputy Clerk of the Board

Chairman Antenori called the meeting to order at 10:03 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 23, 2026.

Ms. Gilman reported that on Tuesday, February 24, 2026, the agendas are routine Consent items for the Library District, Flood District and Jail District. She stated the Regular Board meeting would begin with the current events.

The Board and staff discussed the scope of "current events" and points of personal privilege under the open meeting law.

Dylan Hendel, Civil Deputy County Attorney, stated that the matter should not turn into a discussion or dialogue with supervisors regarding county business. He stated if comments concern county business, the item should be properly placed on the agenda in keeping with standard procedure.

Ms. Gilman noted that invocation is assigned to District 1. She stated the agenda then proceeds to the call to the public followed by a scheduled presentation by the County Attorney's Office.

Mr. Hendel explained that the Civil Division traditionally provides an annual presentation, which was not held last February due to scheduling constraints. He noted that particular attention be given to public records matters, including distractions between county responsibilities and those of the Sheriff's Office.

The Board and staff discussed positive feedback regarding online access to records, while noting ongoing concerns about searchability and ease of use. The

Board emphasized maintaining information online when appropriate to reduce repetitive public records requests and staff workload, with plans to formalize a method identifying which records should be routinely posted versus requested. The Board raised questions about redactions, including authority, applicable statutes, and distinctions involving personal information, personnel files, police reports, and victims' rights protections under Arizona law and administrative code. Mr. Hendel explained that mug shots are no longer routinely posted due to a ruling by the United States Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, and that public records determinations, including booking information, are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. Ms. Gilman stated there is a future work session planned for more discussion.

The Board and staff discussed the status of the court call center, noting that it is newly operational and that performance metrics, efficiencies, and cost impacts should be reviewed during the upcoming budget meetings.

The Board and staff discussed disparities in Justice Court caseloads, potential impacts on compensation, and whether a more balanced distribution system could be implemented, including comparison with Superior Court assignments. Mr. Hendel stated these matters, along with public records determinations requiring individual legal review, would be appropriate for future work sessions.

Ms. Gilman moved the discussion to consent item number 2. She clarified that the agreement concerns intergovernmental funds appropriated by the state legislature and passed through the Arizona Department of Public Safety (DPS). She noted other consent items regarding the roster of poll workers for May 19th, 2026, will be presented for Board approval, with the Elections Director allowed to make substitutions if needed. She also noted that precinct committee matters for the Democratic Party involve operating transfers.

Chairman Antenori discussed a bill in the legislature that would shift the authority to appoint precinct committeemen from county chairman to Legislative District (LD) chairs. He explained that the change could undermine county and Board authority, raised concerns about its applicability across counties with multiple LD's, and noted that the County Supervisors Association and likely Democrats oppose the proposal.

Mr. Hendel stated that the public hearing agenda item 6 is an electric services franchise agreement. He stated the agreement would allow Southline to construct power transmission lines using county rights-of-way.

Vice-Chairman Crosby requested item number 2 be removed from the Consent agenda to be briefed prior to making a decision.

Ms. Gilman stated that Item 7 involves the sale of two parcels from the November tax deed land auction. She stated the first bidder did not complete the purchase, so the parcels are now being offered to the second bidder and are brought to the Board for approval.

Matthew Taylor, Planning Division Manager, presented item 8. He explained that the property on Mescal Road and Acorn Lane, north of I-10, consists of about 75 undeveloped acres. He stated the seven owners have no plans to develop it as a subdivision and are requesting that the property be formally abandoned, with neighboring residents in agreement.

Ms. Gilman stated that Item 9 is for a resolution to approve the vote center locations for the primary and general elections this year. She stated there were no changes to those

locations.

Chairman Antenori discussed legislation proposed by Hoffman requiring schools that serve as vote centers to give students the day off, provide teacher in-service training, and allow full public access, noting significant opposition from school districts.

Ms. Gilman stated that Item 10 concerns approval of the benefit premium and rate structure for medical, dental, and vision coverage for the next fiscal year. She noted that final details are still being finalized, but a premium rate increase is expected for both the county and employees across all tiers. She explained that open enrollment will occur in April, earlier than the federal schedule, to align with the county's July 1, 2026, budget start. She stated a few benefit changes are planned, including new vendors and some shifts in coverage, with primary focus on rate changes; overall, rates are expected to increase by 8%.

Chairman Antenori expressed concern about local funding challenges, noting that school programs are being cut due to limited resources and that county employees are at risk of leaving for higher-paying positions elsewhere. He emphasized the county's tight budget, reliance on grants, mandated expenditures, and the difficulty of retaining qualified staff such as deputies and lawyers without overspending or risking legal challenges.

The Board and staff discussed that medical claims, especially costly prescription drugs, largely drive the county's health plan costs, and wellness programs aim to reduce these expenses through early detection. The Board noted the shift toward higher deductible plans is beneficial, with Health Savings Accounts providing employees a tool to manage costs and even pass funds to heirs.

Anita Baca, Housing Authority Director, presented item 11. Ms. Baca explained that the Family Self-Sufficiency program is a long-running, renewable grant designed to help participants on housing or general assistance, gradually increase their income, and achieve self-sufficiency. She stated participants' income grows, their housing subsidy decreases, and the offset funds are placed in an escrow account, which graduates, after five years, can use for things like home down payments, education, or starting a business.

In response to the Board, Ms. Baca clarified, that the grant covers the employee's base salary plus related expenses like health insurance, retirement, and workers' compensation, but does not reimburse for county overhead. Chairman Antenori noted that the legislature is in a hectic crossover period with over 2,000 bills introduced this year, setting a state record.

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

The Board requested a Parliamentary Rules work session to review, revive, and potentially discuss rules with legal advice, including the possibility of an executive session. The Board would like a second work session to discuss Court Oversight to explore authority over caseloads, Pro Tem positions, and to get legal research on what oversight is permitted under Title 11.

Chairman Antenori adjourned the meeting at 11:06 a.m.

APPROVED:

Frank Antenori, Chairman

ATTEST:

Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board