

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE COCHISE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
WORK SESSION HELD ON
TUESDAY, MARCH 10, 2026**

A work session of the Cochise County Board of Supervisors was held on Tuesday, March 10, 2026, at 1:00 p.m. in the Board of Supervisors' Executive Conference 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
Danny Restrepo, Deputy Civil County Attorney
Bert Whitehead, Deputy Civil County Attorney
Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board

Attendees: Barb Lang, Director of Health and Social Services

Chairman Antenori called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Board of Supervisors

1. Discussion and possible direction regarding the Health Department Quarterly Update.

Barb Lang, Director of Health and Social Services, presented this item using a PowerPoint presentation. Ms. Lang provided updates from the Health Department, highlighting that Cochise County was selected as one of 30 locations nationwide to host a Rural Assembly Everywhere event focused on agriculture, local food, and its connection to community health. She also introduced a new grant-funded website, Here's Health, which helps residents find local healthcare providers and has already received nearly 15,000 visits in its first month. She stated the site allows users to locate hospitals, visit specialists, and schedule appointments within the county, encouraging residents to receive care locally.

Ms. Lang stated the department launched new initiatives, including becoming Arizona's first certified Age-friendly Public Health Organization and expanding programs like the Cochise Mobile Market to provide women's, infants, and Children (WIC) families with affordable, locally grown produce. Ms. Lang reported that a grant from the University of Arizona is funding pop-up produce markets where residents can access fresh fruits and vegetables, and staff have created a healthy cookbook to distribute at these events.

Ms. Lang discussed the Justice and Care Collective events held in Bisbee and Sierra Vista, with the next scheduled for May 13 in Douglas, which connect residents with support services, medical care, and treatment resources.

Ms. Lang explained that the Health Department provides physical exams for school-aged children, including sports physicals. She stated the department has also expanded services to include adolescent well-check appointments. The exams are

conducted by the department's nurse practitioner, which has been well received by families.

Ms. Lang shared that the Health Department's prevention team is developing a sun safety course that will include mole checks and education about protecting skin from Arizona's intense sun. She noted that the department also offers free community classes across the county on topics such as hypertension and dementia prevention. These classes focus on promoting healthy habits like maintaining healthy blood pressure and improving diet to reduce health risks. She stated residents can schedule these classes by contacting the Health Department.

Ms. Lang reported that Environmental Health staff are participating in a voluntary program to become National Retail Food Regulatory Program Standards experts. She stated the program helps ensure consistent enforcement of food safety regulations and strengthens the county's eligibility for grant funding.

Ms. Gilman explained that Arizona entered into the One Arizona opioid settlement with pharmaceutical companies, resulting in settlement funds being distributed to counties, cities, and towns, including those in Cochise County. She noted that Cochise County has received about \$3 million so far, but the funds have not yet been distributed because an intergovernmental agreement with the cities and direction on how to allocate the funds is still being discussed.

Ms. Gilman reported the current opioid settlement fund amounts for Cochise County cities and towns.

- **Tombstone:** \$36,000
- **Willcox:** \$74,000 (requested funds be distributed directly to the city)
- **Douglas:** \$261,000
- **Bisbee:** \$107,000
- **Benson:** \$109,000
- **Sierra Vista:** \$515,000

She explained that most cities prefer to pool their funds with the county, so the county can manage reporting and program use, while the county itself currently holds about \$1.9 million from the settlement.

The Board and staff discussed that the county holds the majority of the opioid settlement funds and could act as the regional lead for managing them. Ms. Gilman stated that county funds distributed directly to cities, would not count toward the county's expenditure limit. She stated potential uses included drug diversion programs and overdose prevention initiatives, with funds expected to be distributed over many years through periodic payments from pharmaceutical companies.

The Board and staff discussed the distribution of Narcan in Cochise County to help prevent opioid overdose deaths. Ms. Lang stated that the Health Department provides free nasal Narcan to any resident who requests it and also distributes it through community presentations and local libraries. She stated that Narcan kits are portable, have a two-year shelf life, and are stocked in multiple locations throughout the county.

Ms. Gilman explained that once each city approves its pooled intergovernmental agreement (IGA), the agreements will be brought before the Board for approval. She noted that while the county must monitor the expenditure limit, the plan is to spend only a few hundred thousand dollars per year from the roughly \$3 million in opioid settlement funds. Chairman Antenori emphasized the importance of maintaining room within the expenditure limit to continue making significant payments toward the county pension

plan.

Mr. Restrepo explained that the proposed intergovernmental agreement (IGA) follows the broader state settlement structure for managing and distributing opioid settlement funds. He stated each participating city and town would nominate a representative to serve on a board that meets periodically and makes funding recommendations, which the Board of Supervisors ultimately reviews and approves at its discretion.

The Board and staff discussed that if the City of Willcox manages its opioid settlement funds independently, it will also be responsible for completing its own financial reporting and compliance requirements. Mr. Restrepo explained that the settlement agreement strictly defines allowable uses for the funds, primarily related to treatment, prevention, and other health-related initiatives addressing opioid issues. He stated the county must submit reports to the state documenting how the funds are used, and if a city uses funds for an unapproved purpose, the county can reclaim the funds to ensure compliance with state requirements.

In response to the Board, Ms. Lang explained that decisions on how to use the opioid settlement funds will not be made by her alone but by a committee that includes representatives from participating cities. She stated the committee will make recommendations, and the final financial approval will be made by the Board of Supervisors.

Ms. Lang discussed potential uses for the opioid settlement funds, including a diversion program proposed by the County Attorney to help individuals struggling with opioid and substance abuse receive treatment instead of entering the criminal justice system. She also suggested creating a response team within the Health Department to follow up with individuals after an overdose to encourage treatment and provide transportation if needed. She noted that while the county currently helps transport individuals to treatment after release from jail, it does not yet provide this support following overdose incidents in the community.

Ms. Lang reported that fentanyl use in Cochise County is declining overall based on available data. However, she noted that the highest concentration of fentanyl cases in the county is currently occurring in Huachuca City.

Supervisor Gomez raised a concern that some restaurants in Douglas refuse to provide tap water unless customers purchase bottled water. Ms. Lang explained that there is no state law requiring restaurants to provide free water to customers, though employers must provide drinking water to employees under workplace safety regulations.

Chairman Antenori adjourned the meeting at 1:34 p.m.

APPROVED:

Frank Antenori, Chairman

ATTEST:

Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board

