

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

A work session of the Cochise County Board of Supervisors was held on Thursday, March 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
Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board

Chairman Antenori called the meeting to order at 10:00 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 March 23, 2026.

Ms. Gilman reported that the Library District and Flood Control District have Consent Agenda items. She noted that the Jail District has one action item related to an educational experience agreement for a clinical practicum with Cochise College.

Megan Kennedy, Division Director Detention Health, explained that the Jail District Action Item No. 3 renews an existing agreement for allied health students, primarily nursing students, to complete clinical practicums through the Sheriff's Office. She noted the program provides hands-on experience for students while benefiting the County through recruitment, retention, and additional support for staff.

Ms. Gilman discussed the invocation for the regular meeting. Chairman Antenori explained that District 3 invited Dr. Lamont Garner of the Sierra Vista Seventh-Day Adventist Church to provide it. He expressed his appreciation for the church allowing county employees to use their parking lot during construction of the Foothills parking lot.

Melissa Avant, Elections Director, explained Consent item 2, and noted that, per the Democratic Party County Chair, precinct committeemen are being appointed ahead of the October 1, 2026, deadline to obtain certain voter registration rolls, but must still file for election by March 23, 2026, for the next term.

Anita Baca, Housing Authority Director, explained Consent item 4, and explained that there is a legal requirement tied to various grants, including Community Development Block Grants and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development funding, which mandates declaring April as Fair Housing Month. She noted this requirement dates back

to 1968 and is often included as a compliance condition within grant provisions.

Ms. Gilman introduced public hearing item 5, regarding a telecommunications franchise with Valley Telephone Cooperative, Inc. Mr. Hendel explained that the agreement follows a standard franchise renewal with no fees involved, and included a clause requiring voter approval if franchise fees are permitted in the future.

Ms. Gilman explained public hearing item 6 and stated that Planning and Zoning proposed an ordinance to amend the County's subdivision regulations to allow administrative approval of subdivision plats. She explained this change is in response to a recently passed state Senate bill permitting staff-level approval rather than requiring review by Planning and Zoning or the Board.

The Board and staff discussed whether allowing administrative approval of subdivision plats is optional or required. Matthew Taylor, Planning Division Manager, confirmed that the new state law is permissive and left to the Board's discretion. The Board raised concerns that removing review by the Planning and Zoning Commission and Board could reduce oversight, particularly regarding drainage and infrastructure issues, potentially leading to future problems for property owners and the County.

Ms. Gilman explained Public Hearing item 7, and stated a zoning ordinance to rezone a tax parcel as a down-zoning request.

Ms. Gilman explained action item 8 as a lease agreement involving the County on behalf of the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension. She noted the agreement is for leasing space at the University of Arizona South campus in Sierra Vista, where the foundation owns the building and the Cooperative Extension will occupy the space. Mr. Casey explained that the lease agreement is required under Arizona law, ARS § 3-124, which mandates that the County provide office space for the University of Arizona Cooperative Extension. Ms. Gilman clarified that the Cooperative Extension is not a private entity, but part of the University of Arizona.

Ms. Gilman explained action item 9 and stated that the Pearce Fire District has experienced three recent board resignations, leaving it without a quorum to conduct business. She explained that the resolution would declare the vacancies, so the Board of Supervisors can solicit letters of interest from qualified electors to fill the seats and restore a functioning board.

Chairman Antenori explained that the Sunsites Pearce Fire District board resignations were due to personal circumstances, including health and family issues, not internal conflict. He clarified that the Board of Supervisors will appoint one member to restore a quorum, after which the district board can fill the remaining vacancies under state law.

In response to the Board, Ms. Loewenheim stated that she has a Public Notice in the newspaper and the Cochise County website.

John Gjerde, Acting Commander of the Cochise County Sheriff's Department, stated that the Sheriff and staff will attend a community meeting in Sunsites and offered to announce that the Board is seeking volunteers for the fire district board and direct interested individuals to the public notice for more details.

Ms. Gilman discussed action item 10, and stated the County's toilet rebate program provides a \$100 rebate for installing low-flow toilets. She noted the proposed change would remove the prior exclusion of manufactured and modular homes, allowing those properties to qualify as well. Ms. Gilman confirmed with the Board to remove item 10

from the agenda.

Sean Gijanto, Lieutenant, discussed action item 11, and explained that Al Tomlinson provides animal mitigation services for the County, addressing nuisance and predatory wildlife issues that animal control cannot handle.

Mr. Gjerde discussed action item 12, and explained that the donation will help acquire software for redaction to improve efficiency in handling frequent public record requests. He noted the acquisition of Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) devices for the jails, automate chest compressions and can increase blood circulation more effectively than traditional CPR. Mr. Gjerde also discussed facility improvements, including projects at the Bisbee main office and the border substation for updated furniture and layout changes.

Mr. Hendel stated that there is no statutory requirement for the County to offer the toilet rebate program, though it has been in place for over a decade. He added that various municipalities and water utilities within the County also offer their own rebate programs depending on the service area.

Ms. Baca discussed action item 13, and stated the annual and administrative plans will take effect immediately, including a change to prioritize families in the Emergency Housing Voucher program. She explained that, with U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) approval and a waiver, the County can transition current participants into the Housing Choice Voucher program to prevent loss of housing assistance as the temporary funding is expected to end. Ms. Baca explained that HUD-VASH Program is specifically for veterans, who are first evaluated by the Veteran's Affairs (VA) for eligibility and need before being referred to the County for housing assistance.

Mr. Casey, discussed action item 14, and stated that the item is an AI policy being presented for Board approval, aimed at proactively addressing the growing use of artificial intelligence and ensuring the County is prepared moving forward.

The Board and staff discussed the proposed AI policy, particularly around definitions, accountability, and implementation. Vice-Chairman Crosby had concerns including the need to clearly define terms such as "approved AI systems," "tools and environment," "policy decisions," and "human in the loop," as well as ensuring consistency in language, especially regarding disclaimers and expectations of accuracy. The Board discussed the growing challenge of confirmation bias in the use of AI, noting that while AI significantly improves efficiency by rapidly compiling information, it can also amplify existing biases from multiple sources. Staff highlighted the limits of policy in addressing human behavior, with members acknowledging that bias cannot be fully controlled through written policy alone. Staff suggested that training and awareness will be essential to help staff properly evaluate AI-generated information and understand their responsibility in verifying its accuracy.

Ms. Gilman stated that the final three items relate to workforce development, specifically appointments to the local Workforce Investment Board.

Vickie Simmons, Deputy Director, Arizona@Work Southeastern Arizona, explained that the three Workforce Investment Board appointments were previously discussed and provided additional details on each candidate. She noted that Cullen Scarborough is affiliated with Cochise College and resides in Sierra Vista, Desiree Galaz represents the Arizona Department of Economic Security and serves Cochise, Graham, and Greenlee counties, and Elaine Rodriguez is the director of the Job Corps center in Tucson, which

is available to eligible residents from those same counties.

The Board and staff discussed the approval process for Workforce Investment Board appointments, clarifying that only Cochise County is responsible for approving them as the designated chief elected official within the regional consortium.

Chairman Antenori discussed a recent update to legislation affecting precinct committeemen (PCs), noting that changes were made after input from the County Supervisors Association of Arizona. He stated the amendment ensures that Legislative District (LD) chairs will no longer send PC appointments directly to the Board.

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

Chairman Antenori requested a future work session to examine the legal formation, authority, and potential expansion or dissolution of a regional water-related entity, expressing concerns about its influence on local water policy and development, particularly in the San Pedro Valley. He emphasized the need for a detailed legal review, citing concerns that the entity may be exerting undue influence in policy decisions and ongoing legal matters.

He expressed interest in pursuing a resolution to affirm residents' rights to discharge firearms on private property in unincorporated areas of Cochise County, provided it is done safely and responsibly.

Ms. Gilman outlined upcoming work sessions on Tuesday, March 24, 2026, including a discussion on the public records request process and a presentation on the County's data governance project. She also noted a session with the Elections Department to review and potentially update fee structures in agreements with municipalities such as Douglas and Benson, which have not been revised in years and may have shifted costs to county taxpayers.

Chairman Antenori adjourned the meeting at 11:31 a.m.

APPROVED:

Frank Antenori, Chairman

ATTEST:

Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board