

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE COCHISE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
WORK SESSION HELD ON
TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 2026**

A work session of the Cochise County Board of Supervisors was held on Tuesday, March 24, 2026, 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
Dylan Hendel, Deputy Civil County Attorney
Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board

Attendees: Billy Cloud, Cochise County Recorder
Melissa Avant, Cochise County Elections Director
Heather Lopez, Deputy Recorder
Shanna Herrera, Elections Assistant

Chairman Antenori called the meeting to order at 2:01 p.m.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Board of Supervisors

1. Discussion and Possible Direction Regarding Updating the Fee Structure and Intergovernmental Agreements (IGAs) for Election Services Provided by Cochise County to Municipalities.

Mr. Cloud stated that standalone municipal elections cost the County money, even though municipalities benefit from using County election services rather than administering elections themselves. He recommended standardizing Recorder and Elections Department fees to ensure the County recovers costs and avoids ongoing losses.

Mr. Cloud clarified that no immediate fee increase is being proposed for the Recorder. He emphasized that municipalities could avoid these costs by aligning with the regular election cycle, where no additional fees are charged, instead of holding costly off-cycle special elections.

Ms. Avant presented by using a PowerPoint presentation. Ms. Avant provided a brief overview of current election service contracts, explaining that municipalities are charged \$0.75 per registered voter with an \$800 minimum fee and a \$250 cancellation fee. She noted that this rate bundles extensive services, including poll worker staffing and training, equipment setup, ballot production, tabulation, and reporting.

Ms. Avant explained that while pricing could theoretically be based on the number of vote centers, staffing levels, and equipment, the County uses a simplified per-voter bundled rate to avoid complex and burdensome invoicing. Ms. Avant presented a

statewide comparison showing wide variation in election cost recovery—from about \$0.44 to \$5.75 per registered voter while noting national averages can reach \$8–\$12 per voter and up to \$15–\$20 for local elections. She recommended increasing the County’s rate from \$0.75 to \$3 per registered voter to improve cost recovery, highlighting key cost drivers such as ballot length, staffing, equipment, and optional services like Spanish-language ballots, all of which can significantly increase expenses and contribute to longer voting times and lines.

Vice-Chairman Crosby cited Arizona statute 11-251, Powers of Board, to emphasize that the Board of Supervisors has overarching authority to supervise county and district officers, manage election-related functions, and ensure proper handling of public funds. He clarified that although staff carry out tasks such as preparing election certificates and administering elections, those actions are ultimately performed under the Board’s authority.

The Board and staff discussed a proposed amendment to the City of Douglas charter to require canvassing election results within 20 days, aligning the city’s timeline with applicable legal standards. Vice-Chairman Crosby emphasized that, regardless of County involvement in administering elections, the city’s election officer remains legally responsible for conducting and certifying the election, and any charter provisions must still conform to Arizona state law.

The Board discussed implementing the new fee structure through an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) effective January 1, 2027, ensuring municipalities have sufficient time to incorporate the changes into their budgets following the November election cycle.

Chairman Antenori compared per-voter election costs across counties and noted that a proposed \$3 rate combined with the Recorder’s \$3.50 fee would total about \$6.50 per voter, prompting concern about how that compares statewide and whether it could appear excessive. He emphasized the policy rationale that standalone municipal elections should be fully paid by the requesting jurisdiction, not subsidized by county taxpayers.

Ms. Avant outlined poll worker compensation, noting inspectors are paid \$200 for election day plus \$35–\$60 for training depending on travel distance. She added that this rate is at the higher end statewide, though Yuma County pays up to \$300 while most other counties pay inspectors between \$100 and \$200 and clerks, judges, and marshals between \$100 and \$150.

The Board and staff discussed long poll worker shifts, typically 14 to 17 hours, and whether current compensation aligns with minimum wage expectations and workload.

Chairman Antenori recommended an adjustment be increased to about \$200 for clerks, judges, and marshals and \$250 for inspectors, along with setting training pay around \$15 per hour plus travel.

The Board and staff discussed whether to continue providing Spanish-language ballots, noting that Cochise County is not federally required to do so based on current population thresholds. Mr. Cloud emphasized equity, voter access, and fraud prevention concerns as reasons to continue offering bilingual ballots, while acknowledging the added costs of translation, printing, and equipment programming.

The Board and staff clarified that publicity pamphlets, and adding items to the ballot, are the responsibility of the individual jurisdiction, not the County Elections Department. Mr. Hendel stated the County may assist with ballot formatting and

proofing. He stated cities, districts, and other jurisdictions must prepare, translate, and distribute their own publicity materials in accordance with applicable statutes.

Chairman Antenori adjourned the meeting at 2:42 p.m.

APPROVED:

Frank Antenori, Chairman

ATTEST:

Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board