

**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 1:00 p.m. in the Board of Supervisor's 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  
Bert Whitehead, Deputy Civil County Attorney  
Dylan Hendel, Deputy Civil County Attorney  
Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board

Attendees: David Lyons, Senior Consulting Manager, MSS, Business Transformation Advisory

Chairman Antenori called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m.

***ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION***

**Board of Supervisors**

1. Discussion and possible direction regarding the Public Records Request Process.

Mr. Whitehead explained the county's Public Records Request (PRR) process. He stated that records are maintained across three primary entities: the Clerk of the Superior Court, the Sheriff's Office, and the County Attorney's Office. He clarified that statutory language requires records to be provided promptly, though this term is not specifically defined, and response times depend largely on the complexity of each request.

Mr. Whitehead explained that when a request is received through NextRequest on the Cochise County Attorney web page, the request is referred to either the Sheriff's Office or the Clerk of the Superior Court, or any other office that might be the holder of that record. Mr. Hendel stated the only way the County Attorney's Office would ever gain access to the Sheriff's Office or Court's records is in connection to seeking legal advice.

Mr. Whitehead explained that the County Attorney's Office currently does not charge for non-commercial public records, although courts sometimes do, and a past proposal to introduce fees across multiple offices was previously rejected by a previous Board. He stated, however, there is now growing interest in implementing charges, which are legally allowed but must be narrowly based on actual copying time rather than tasks like redaction. He stated, because of the limitations, the County Attorney's Office is considering a per-document fee structure potentially around \$1.25 to \$1.50 per document, since handling digital files takes similar effort, regardless of length. He stated the goal is not necessarily to deter all requests but to encourage more focused and specific ones, as broad requests can generate thousands of records and require extensive staff time. He explained that the Civil Attorney's Office's current

turnaround time for record request responses is between 14 and 45 days. Mr. Whitehead said a formal proposal for the public records' pricing approach will be presented in a future work session.

Chairman Antenori emphasized that readily available records should not be delayed and suggested developing a searchable system on the county's website. Mr. Hendel described ongoing improvements, including the implementation of NextRequest software to better track and manage requests. Mr. Whitehead noted that records fall into categories requiring mandatory redaction and those where redaction is discretionary, with legal protections applying to items such as attorney-client communications and litigation strategy. Mr. Casey stated the idea of proactively publishing commonly requested documents was discussed as a way to reduce request volume, though concerns were raised about maintaining a clear and relevant website.

Mr. Whitehead stated that certain types of records must always be redacted by law, such as Social Security numbers, driver's licenses, state IDs, and passport numbers. He clarified that common contact details such as residential address, emails, and phone numbers are no longer automatically redacted because there is no clear statutory requirement for doing so. He stated if a redaction is questioned, the justification comes either from the mandatory statutory rules or, if no statute applies, from a case-by-case evaluation using the Carlton balancing test. Mr. Whitehead explained the Carlton balancing test is used to decide whether information may be redacted when it is not explicitly required by law, considering factors like potential harm from disclosure, whether partial redaction can protect interests, whether the matter is ongoing, and the level of public interest.

Mr. Whitehead discussed a new process for categorizing records as "publish" or "do not publish" which was developed to streamline public access. He stated that certain records can now be automatically published online after disclosure, making them searchable and reducing repeated requests. He stated that the Attorney's Office staff review each completed request, determine its category using a standardized table, and publish it through a system that posts it to the website, allowing future users to find the information directly or be given a link instead of submitting a new request.

Mr. Casey clarified in response to Ms. Gerrodette's inquiry, that the checkbox for email communications in a public records request is about whether those emails will be published online afterward, not whether they will be disclosed to the requester. He stated that emails are still subject to public records law and will be provided if requested, even if there are many of them.

Mr. Hendel explained the distinction between "disclosure" and "publication", where disclosure means providing records to the person who requested them, while publication refers to posting them on a public website for broader access. The Board and staff discussed that commonly requested documents, such as reports or plans, are more appropriate for publication, especially when multiple media outlets or individuals request the same information. Ms. Gilman stated if a request is of interest to one single person, it may not be published, since posting everything could clutter the website and make it difficult to use. She noted the overall goal is to keep the public records site relevant, accessible, and easy to navigate rather than overloaded with excessive or highly specific content.

2. Discussion and project update regarding the Data Governance Project, Information as an Asset (IAAA).

David Lyons from MSS, Business Transformation Advisory, Senior Consulting Manager, presented by PowerPoint. Mr. Lyons outlined a strategic approach that treats information as a county asset, emphasizing the importance of accessibility, informed decision-making, and public trust. He stated the county is exploring artificial intelligence tools that could function as a search mechanism for internal data or provide public-facing access through a chatbot interface, with safeguards to ensure systems rely only on county-controlled information. Mr. Casey reported that initial training on AI tools had been conducted and that there is potential to make such training materials publicly available to enhance transparency.

Mr. Lyons discussed the data governance structure being developed to support these initiatives, including a steering committee, a data governance working group, and designated AI champions and data stewards within departments. Mr. Lyons described ongoing efforts to inventory data, establish classification standards, and create consistent naming conventions and procedures. He stated that the work includes mapping how information is created, stored, and retrieved across departments, with the goal of improving efficiency and preparing for future AI integration.

The Board and staff discussed data classification and security, including the potential for digital tagging or marking of records to prevent inadvertent disclosure of sensitive or confidential information. Staff indicated that definitions and policies are being developed and will be brought forward for Board consideration. Mr. Lyons stated that the plan introduces building a centralized knowledge management hub as the "how and where" for organizing resources. He stated instead of replacing existing materials like policies on the website, the hub will link to them while also housing training, guidance, job aids, and other resources. He explained this would create a single place where employees can go with questions, ensuring consistent information across departments and even enabling interaction through chat for shared problem-solving.

Mr. Lyons continued to explain the broader structure of the initiative, the framework itself, followed by organization, and then two AI-focused components. He stated the two AI-focused components include AI policy literacy and training, along with selecting and implementing AI use cases. He stated the team has conducted a discovery session with a steering committee to identify and prioritize potential AI pilots, ranging from complex, department-specific applications to basic uses like learning how to use tools such as ChatGPT. He stated a literacy program is being developed, alongside additional prioritized opportunities to expand AI adoption.

Mr. Lyons stated organization support as the final component. He noted, rather than building a large new structure, the approach relies on leveraging existing staff by assigning roles and responsibilities. He mentioned one key role is the "AI Champion", made up of individuals who are already interested in or using AI. He stated the goal is for all employees to gain a baseline understanding of AI for personal productivity, after which some will naturally deepen their expertise, mentor others, and help raise overall capability. He stated that at the highest level, some individuals may represent the county externally, position it as a leader in AI and innovation.

Mr. Lyons stated the project timeline will be finalized at the end of November 2026. The Board acknowledged the complexity of the initiative and the importance of establishing strong policies and governance structures to ensure long-term success.

Ms. Gilman stated that this project was started approximately two years ago, and it was

funded through the remainder of The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds. She stated this project was to meet the criteria of one of the goals, which is to record on an electronic system, so if there were a government shutdown, the public would still be able to access records and information.

Chairman Antenori adjourned the meeting at 1:54 p.m.

APPROVED:

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Frank Antenori, Chairman

ATTEST:

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Lara Loewenheim, Clerk of the Board