

**PROCEEDINGS OF THE COCHISE COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
WORK SESSION HELD ON
Tuesday, April 28, 2015**

A work session of the Cochise County Board of Supervisors was held on Tuesday, April 28, 2015 1:30 p.m. in the Board of Supervisors' Executive Conference Room, 1415 Melody Lane, Building G, Bisbee, Arizona.

Present: Patrick G. Call, Chairman; Ann English, Vice-Chairman; Richard R. Searle, Member (telephonically)

Staff Present: Michael J. Ortega, County Administrator
Jim Vlahovich, Deputy County Administrator
Britt W. Hanson, Chief Civil Deputy County Attorney
Arlethe G. Rios, Clerk of the Board
Katie Howard, Elections Director

Chairman Call called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

ANY ITEM ON THIS AGENDA IS OPEN FOR DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

THE ORDER OR DELETION OF ANY ITEM ON THIS AGENDA IS SUBJECT TO MODIFICATION AT THE MEETING

INTRODUCTIONS

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

Board of Supervisors

Discussion and possible direction regarding a process for obtaining a new election system.

Mr. Vlahovich gave the background and said staff would be going over the elections function in the County, show an interactive map that would assist voters find their voting station, and answer any questions. He noted that they would also discuss issues that came up during the elections in 2014.

Ms. Howard went over procedural issues identified and listed several resolutions.

Supervisor Searle joined the meeting at 1:41 p.m.

Ms. Howard said that elections staff was currently exploring new exploration of new systems, discovering different methods of voting and voting centers versus precincts.

Supervisor Searle asked if additional staff can be brought in if needed to accommodate number of voters.

Ms. Howard cited statutory requirements, but noted that more clerks could be provided for bigger vote centers in order to address number of voters. She added that staff has viewed demonstrations at other counties who currently operate under this model. She stated that after much research staff had decided to stay with the current system and only update certain portions.

Ms. Sylvia Gruhn, Deputy County Recorder, said that historically there have been an estimated 34,000 registered early voters, which will still use the mail in ballot procedure.

Ms. Howard said that Yavapai and Maricopa Counties have noticed an 85% increase in early voting and some cities have all mail jurisdictional elections and due to the number of early voters it makes sense to get the best high speed scanner. She added that there would be significant cost savings in programming/printing/poll workers from going to in-house systems and vote centers. She showed a spreadsheet with costs for printing and postage for the last four years.

Mr. Hanson asked if the costs presented included full time staff.

Ms. Howard said that these costs were for programming, printing, and poll workers, not the full time staff. She clarified that printing fewer ballots than in the past would also be a cost saver and estimated \$100,000 of annual savings with the proposed elections model. She explained that vote centers are authorized by A.R.S. 16-411.B.4 and said that they are more convenient than precincts because any registered voter can vote at any vote center countywide, which means less provisional ballots for showing up at the wrong precinct would be turned in and more votes would count.

Supervisor Searle asked what duties troubleshooters would have in this new model.

Ms. Howard said that one issue troubleshooters could resolve was printer problems for the tablets, which would be addressed by staff by ensuring connectivity at every vote center. She recommended that the Board reach out to other counties already using vote centers as the benefits impacted the voter experience overall.

Ms. Stacey Wooley, Information Technology Technician, said that staff had conducted wireless testing, which had a positive outcome at all sites being considered for vote center locations. She added that security was a priority and the system being used is highly recommended by other government entities that have top secret information. She was adamant that confidential data regarding voters would not be transmitted through the system.

Ms. Jodi McGrath, GIS Technician, went over the map of the vote centers and said that if approved we will have interactive maps ready.

Supervisor Searle asked what the total numbers of vote centers would be.

Ms. Howard said that after much research on locations and access 17 seemed like a good number to address the population of the County. She added that the software had many features that would assist in providing information about the status of voting throughout the day.

Vice-Chairman English asked about the availability of sample ballots.

Ms. Howard said she would research and noted that the County would have a backup plan prepared through an intergovernmental agreement with other government entities that use the same equipment. She also said that she would be asking for an additional \$30,000 for voter outreach to ensure all citizens are aware of the changes from precincts to vote centers and the new equipment.

Chairman Call asked what the final cost would be.

Ms. Howard said that if the Board approved the vote center module, the cost for equipment would be an estimated \$880,000.

Mr. Ortega recommended that the item be brought before the board soon and that Ms. Howard look at financing options due to the expenditure limit.

Supervisor Searle asked if the political parties had been involved.

Ms. Howard said that both parties have been invited to see the new system.

Vice-Chairman English noted that she was in full support of dedicating funds for training and voter outreach.

Chairman Call requested a demonstration once the equipment was available.

The Board thanked staff for their effort in bettering the voting experience in Cochise County.

Chairman Call adjourned the meeting at 3:25 p.m.

APPROVED:

Patrick G. Call, Chairman

ATTEST:

Arlathe G. Rios, Clerk of the Board