

The Board met in a Regular Meeting at the Santa Cruz County Complex, 2150 N. Congress Drive, Room #120, Nogales, AZ. Present: Rudy Molera, Chairman; John Fanning, Vice-Chairman; Luis Carlos Davis, Member; Jesus Valdez, County Manager; Mauricio Chavez, Deputy County Manager; Chris Young, Deputy County Manager; Maria I. Martinez, Assistant Finance Director; Jon M. Paladini, Attorney – Pierce Coleman PLLC; Nicoelette Brenner, Deputy Clerk of the Board.

CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Molera called the meeting to order, and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited, led by James Ward

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Supervisor Davis made a motion to adopt the Agenda, with the following changes: removal of the Department Reports and Activities Items F.3.a and F.3.b; removal of Consent Agenda Item J.3 and placement of that item under Action Items; and authorization to deviate from the agenda sequence as necessary; seconded by Vice-Chairman Fanning; motion carried unanimously. (Ayes: Davis, Fanning, Molera)

CALL TO THE PUBLIC:

Pam Lemke, a resident of Tubac, thanked the board for approving early actions related to emergency preparedness. Requested independent water and soil assessments following the release of the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), citing concerns about antimony contamination and public health risks. Ms. Lemke also asked that major items discussed in study sessions be placed on future meeting agendas rather than consent agendas to allow the public time to review and respond.

Chris Werkhoven, a resident of Sonoita, spoke against the South32 investment plan, arguing it does not adequately protect community health or livelihoods. Raised concerns about increased lead emissions, potential neurotoxic health risks, and possible water contamination (antimony and selenium) from mine operations. Requested enforcement of the 2003 ADOT corridor management plan for the Patagonia–Sonoita Scenic Road to reduce truck traffic and protect the local tourism economy.

Ernie Edwards, a resident of Lake Patagonia, criticized the perceived coordination of simultaneous meetings among government entities to approve agreements without adequate public review. Expressed concerns about water depletion, health impacts, and long-term environmental harm associated with the mine. Urged officials to review the newly released Forest Service EIS and prioritize public welfare before negotiating benefits.

Darla Selander, a resident of Lake Patagonia, voiced concern over the environmental track record of South32 and potential impacts to water levels, water quality, and public health. Emphasized the need for independent scientific studies before entering into community benefit agreements and urged officials to prioritize protection of residents and the environment.

Wendy Islas, a resident of Rio Rico, raised concerns about the simultaneous voting by multiple government bodies on the community investment funding agreement, stating it creates poor public transparency. Requested independent water and air testing, greater public review of project statements of work, regular public updates on funded projects, and clear financial accountability measures. Also asked for updates related to a previously reported county financial issue.

Susan Faubion, a resident of Rio Rico, described an ongoing property dispute in which a neighbor allegedly built on her property, resulting in plumbing and septic issues. She stated she incurred

approximately \$10,500 in expenses and has struggled to obtain reimbursement or assistance from the county. She expressed frustration with the claims process and lack of guidance from county offices, stating the cost of litigation outweighs potential recovery. She requested fairness and justice in resolving the matter.

Jay Thompson, a resident of Rio Rico, commented on the Early Actions Community Investment Agreement with South32, stating that while funding and studies may benefit government entities, community protections are not yet addressed. He expressed concerns about: lack of enhanced monitoring of Harshaw Creek discharges, potential groundwater impacts including drawdown or spring depletion, absence of binding remediation measures for contamination, limited independent oversight for well impacts. He also referenced the final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and raised concerns about proposed infrastructure such as a new access road, tailings facility, and power lines, citing potential impacts to tourism, traffic safety, scenic areas, and regional water systems. He urged stronger protections and community input before agreements proceed.

Karen Riggs, a resident of Elgin, spoke on behalf of the Patagonia Regional Aquatics Center, a nonprofit that operates the Patagonia public pool, the only public pool serving eastern Santa Cruz County communities including Patagonia, Sonoita, and Elgin. She requested that the facility be considered for support under the recreation and nature-based economy portion of the community infrastructure funding agreement, noting the nonprofit raises about \$100,000 annually to operate the pool from April through November and provides free access for children under 12.

CURRENT EVENTS

1. BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

SUPERVISOR DAVIS: Reported attending the NACo Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C., along with fellow supervisors and county staff. During the trip, he visited the Spanish Embassy with Mr. Chavez to discuss potential future partnerships and projects between Spain and Santa Cruz County. He noted the meeting was productive and expressed hope to provide updates once discussions become more concrete. Supervisor Davis also participated in local school activities during Read Across America / Love of Reading Week. He read to a third-grade class at Mountain View and visited Lincoln Elementary School, where he spoke with multiple classes about careers. He shared that engaging with students and education continues to be an important passion for him and that he looks forward to participating in future school events.

VICE-CHAIRMAN FANNING: Reported that he also attended the NACo Legislative Conference in Washington, D.C., including meetings with the congressional delegation and federal agencies. He stated he felt cautiously optimistic that several county requests discussed during those meetings may come to fruition. Supervisor Fanning also held a community check-in meeting in Sonoita with approximately 10–15 residents, where discussions focused on issues affecting the eastern portion of the county as well as updates from the Washington, D.C. trip. In addition, he participated in Read Across America by reading *Oh, the Places You'll Go* by Dr. Seuss to students at Patagonia schools. He thanked the county's Human Resources team for organizing Vector Solutions training opportunities for officials and staff. He also congratulated Rio Rico High School student Jess Octavio Kajjo on becoming a state wrestling champion and closed his remarks by noting his upcoming 32nd wedding anniversary.

CHAIRMAN MOLERA: addressed comments raised during call to the public regarding alleged meeting coordination, stating the board strives to maintain transparency. He also wished the County Recorder a speedy recovery following a recent fall. Chairman Molera reported on the board's trip to Washington, D.C., noting that similar visits over the past three years have helped secure approximately

\$15–20 million in federal funding for the county. He highlighted discussions with federal partners regarding repairs to the Nogales Wash flood control panels, improvements to Interstate 19 Exit 12 and Exit 17, infrastructure coordination with the International Boundary and Water Commission, concerns about a permanent border checkpoint near Tubac, and long-term needs at the DeConcini Port of Entry. He also participated in Read Across America Week by reading to local elementary school classes.

2. MANAGER

JESUS VALDEZ, COUNTY MANAGER, reported on outcomes from the recent Washington, D.C. trip, noting that the county submitted several project requests for direct federal appropriations funding through meetings with congressional representatives. He also reported that the county is in the process of submitting a BUILD grant application requesting approximately \$25 million for the Interstate 19 Rio Rico frontage road project, adding that the county is in a favorable position due to having roughly a quarter of the project funding already secured and a strong benefit–cost ratio. Additionally, the Nogales Wash project was placed on the Wastewater Infrastructure Project list, positioning it for approximately \$30 million in potential funding, although the funding has not yet been finalized.

Chairman Rudy Molera provided an additional update, noting that he and staff member Shannon Hall have been working on organizing upcoming community fishing events. He announced a county staff fishing competition scheduled for March 21, inviting county departments to participate in a friendly contest to see which team catches the largest fish. He also shared that the U.S. Forest Service, Arizona Game and Fish, and Santa Cruz County are collaborating on a family outdoor recreation event at Peña Blanca Lake on April 25. The event is expected to include activities such as hiking, biking, motocross, and fishing. Chairman Molera noted that event details and a flyer will be posted on the county website once available.

Vice-Chairman Fanning made a motion to recess the Regular Meeting to convene the Flood Control District Board seconded by Supervisor Davis; the motion carried unanimously. (Ayes: Davis, Fanning, Molera)

FLOOD CONTROL

1. DIRECTOR'S/PROJECT REPORT

Allan Sanchez, Floodplain Coordinator, presented the February flood control report, highlighting that rainfall in the Nogales area totaled 0.12 inches, which is below the normal monthly average of 0.92 inches. Despite the lower rainfall, drought conditions have improved, with eastern Santa Cruz County no longer classified as being in drought and western Santa Cruz County currently categorized as abnormally dry. During the reporting period, the office processed 219 flood hazard information requests, most of which were in unincorporated Santa Cruz County, and issued seven floodplain use permits. A few drainage complaints were also received.

Mr. Sanchez also provided project updates, noting that the Ephraim project is currently in the 30% design phase, with the county working with the Department of Environmental Emergency Management to extend the project schedule. The Potrero Creek Letter of Map Revision has been approved by FEMA and is currently within the 90-day appeal period. For the Monte Carlo drainage area, consultants completed an existing conditions analysis and are evaluating the performance of existing flood control structures, including the Monte Carlo Basin, Challenger Basin, and Chihuahua Basin, as well as the box culvert under Baffert Drive, to identify potential improvements to reduce flooding in the subdivision. Mr. Sanchez noted that no monthly reports were submitted by the Town of Patagonia or the City of Nogales for this reporting period.

2. MONTHLY REPORT FROM CITY OF NOGALES

No report.

3. MONTHLY REPORT FROM THE TOWN OF PATAGONIA

No report.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

None

The Board adjourned as the Flood Control District and convened into the Regular Meeting (Motion: Supervisor Davis; second: Vice-Chairman Fanning; motion carried unanimously) (Ayes: Davis, Fanning, Molera)

DEPARTMENT REPORTS AND ACTIVITIES

1. FINANCE: CASH & INVESTMENTS, EXPENDITURES & REVENUE REPORTS

Maria I. Martinez, Assistant Finance Director, reported \$24,397,172.32 in the General Fund, of which \$16,720,105.00 is invested; \$5,590,934.28 in the Road Fund, of which \$5,171,588.87 is invested; \$3,283,221.61 in the Flood Control District Fund, of which \$311,677.68 is invested; \$7,847,438.17 in the Jail District Fund, of which \$4,442,192.70 is invested; \$65,286,978.88 total for all funds, of which \$28,786,805.85 is invested; \$10,693,827.36 estimated end of month balance, compared to \$12,929,596.30 cash at March 2025, a difference of \$2,235,768.94.

2. DEPARTMENT(S) UPDATE

Karina Guerrero, Program Manager and Art Basurto, WIOA: Karina Guerrero, Program Manager with Title I WIOA, provided an update on behalf of Director Zaida Bustamante. She reported that the department is collaborating with the Nogales Unified School District and the SER program on a contract currently on the agenda to support the Automotive CTE program at Nogales Unified School District. Through this partnership, the program aims to provide training opportunities and support for approximately 10 students interested in pursuing careers in automotive technology.

Art Basurto, Internship Coordinator for Career and Technical Education with the Nogales Unified School District, provided an overview of the district's workforce development efforts. He highlighted the success of the automotive technology pathway, noting that several Nogales students are participating in the Ford ASSET program at Pima Community College, which allows students to earn an associate degree and advanced technician certification while receiving support from industry partners. He emphasized the importance of career and technical education in preparing students for skilled trades and noted that the district currently supports internships and career pathways in areas such as automotive technology, culinary arts, building trades, and fire service.

Ms. Guerrero also reported on a recent job fair hosted by the program, where approximately 20 community members were hired, with another hiring event scheduled for March 19–20 to provide additional employment opportunities for local residents.

Alejandro Paz, County Treasurer: provided an update on the recent tax lien auction sold 698 parcels, generating \$1,205,524 in back taxes, up about \$150,000 from last year, with 420 registered participants and 2,700 bids placed. He also attended meetings in Washington, D.C., with NALEO regarding census changes that could impact county funding and plans to stay engaged on the issue. Treasurer Paz recommended expanding outreach to longtime Santa Cruz County residents to ensure their input is considered on local decisions affecting growth and development.

Jose Arreola, Deputy Director, Health and Human Services: provided an update on the food handler certification course has been restarted after a pandemic-related pause. The program, which includes an exam to ensure participants are properly trained, has been well attended, with about 20 participants per class. The goal is to ensure food safety compliance across county establishments. Mr. Arreola also noted the possibility of offering a manager certification course in the future, depending on demand.

Colin Bishop, Director, Community Development: provided an update on the department's activities, highlighting the county's comprehensive plan as the primary focus for the year. The plan aims to engage the community in setting long-term goals for Santa Cruz County, including housing, water, transportation, infrastructure, and wildlife corridors. The department is finalizing the hiring of a public engagement facilitator and will hold countywide rollout meetings, followed by technical advisory committees to refine plan goals. Afterward, another round of public engagement will occur to ensure community input informs updates to zoning and development codes, which have not been revised in over a decade. Director Bishop also noted involvement in the recompile grant related to wildlife corridors and other ongoing initiatives.

Kerri Muñoz, Chief Deputy, School Superintendent's Office: provided an update on recent and upcoming events and initiatives. She highlighted the successful Family Resource Night at Nogales High School, which hosted over 100 students and families, featured more than 50 community resources, and included four scholarships and multiple door prizes. An upcoming Family Resource Night is scheduled at Rio Rico High School. She recognized participation in Read Across America, coordinated by Paloma Barraza, and noted ongoing literacy efforts, including the literacy bus at the Road to 250 event, with transportation support for Boys and Girls Club members from Superintendent Maya Donnelly. Additionally, Chief Deputy Muñoz mentioned pursuing a grant for the internship program and upcoming Gear Up funding for 2026 to support student programs and initiatives.

3. AWARDS, RECOGNITIONS & ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

A RECOGNITION OF ISABELLA FELIX, A EIGHTH-GRADE STUDENT FROM PATAGONIA MIDDLE SCHOOL, FOR HER EXEMPLARY ACHIEVEMENT AS THE CHAMPION OF THE 2026 SANTA CRUZ COUNTY SPELLING BEE, EARNING THE HONOR BY CORRECTLY SPELLING THE CHAMPIONSHIP WORD "SUPPLICATE" IN THE 10TH ROUND OF COMPETITION (REQ: CHAIRMAN MOLERA)

Item was removed from the agenda.

B RECOGNITION OF SHULAMITHY BATTU, A SEVENTH-GRADE STUDENT FROM COATIMUNDI MIDDLE SCHOOL, FOR HER EXCEPTIONAL PERFORMANCE AS THE RUNNER-UP OF THE 2026 SANTA CRUZ COUNTY SPELLING BEE (REQ: CHAIRMAN MOLERA)

Item was removed from the agenda.

C RECOGNITION OF EDGARDO MUÑOZ FOR HIS EXEMPLARY DEDICATION, LEADERSHIP, AND SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE COMMUNITY THROUGH HIS "I LOVE NOGALES" INITIATIVE, INCLUDING COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS, AND THE PROMOTION OF CIVIC PRIDE (REQ: CHAIRMAN MOLERA)

Mr. Muñoz was not present. Therefore, the item was postponed.

STUDY SESSION

1. EARLY ACTIONS COMMUNITY INVESTMENT AGREEMENT WITH THE CITY OF NOGALES, TOWN OF PATAGONIA, AND SOUTH32 PRESENTED BY CHRIS YOUNG, DEPUTY COUNTY MANAGER (REQ: COUNTY MANAGER)

Presented by Chris Young, Deputy County Manager.

2. FROM INSIGHT TO INFRASTRUCTURE SANTA CRUZ COUNTY'S HEALTH PRIORITIES & MEASURABLE PATH FORWARD 2025–2030 BY JOANN ANDREWS, CEO OF ASCENDANT HEALTHCARE PARTNERS (REQ: HEALTH DEPARTMENT)

The presenters were not present, and the presentation has been postponed to a later date to be

determined.

3. GOVERNMENT 101:

A ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PUBLIC FIDUCIARY DEPARTMENT BY CECILIA MEJIA AND STAFF

Cecilia Mejia, Public Fiduciary, presented an overview of the Public Fiduciary's key functions statutory authority, and operating procedures.

Vice-Chairman Fanning made a motion to recess the Regular Meeting to convene the Jail District, seconded by Supervisor Davis; the motion carried unanimously. (Ayes: Davis, Fanning, Molera)

JAIL DISTRICT

1. DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION FOR AUTHORIZATION TO FILL TWO (2) VACANT DETENTION OFFICER POSITIONS (REQ: SHERIFF)

Supervisor Davis made a motion to approve, seconded by Vice-Chairman Fanning; the motion carried unanimously. (Ayes: Davis, Fanning, Molera)

The Board adjourned as the Jail District and convened into the Regular Meeting (Motion: Supervisor Davis; second: Vice-Chairman Fanning; motion carried unanimously) (Ayes: Davis, Fanning, Molera)

ACTION ITEMS

1. DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION TO APPROVE EARLY ACTIONS COMMUNITY INVESTMENT AGREEMENT WITH CITY OF NOGALES, TOWN OF PATAGONIA AND SOUTH32 FOR COMMUNITY PROJECTS AND PLANNING AND AUTHORIZE THE COUNTY MANAGER TO SIGN THE AGREEMENT (REQ: DEPUTY COUNTY MANAGER)

Supervisor Davis made a motion to approve, seconded by Vice-Chairman Fanning; the motion carried unanimously. (Ayes: Davis, Fanning, Molera)

2. DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION TO APPROVE PROCLAMATION DECLARING MARCH 2026 AS SANTA CRUZ COUNTY GOVERNMENT EMPLOYEE APPRECIATION MONTH (REQ: COUNTY MANAGER)

Supervisor Davis made a motion to approve, seconded by Vice-Chairman Fanning; the motion carried unanimously. (Ayes: Davis, Fanning, Molera)

CONSENT AGENDA

Supervisor Davis made a motion to approve, seconded by Vice-Chairman Fanning; the motion carried unanimously. (Ayes: Davis, Fanning, Molera)

1. DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION FOR AUTHORIZATION TO FILL VACANT: (REQ: SHERIFF)

A THREE (3) DEPUTY SHERIFF POSITIONS

B DEPUTY CORPORAL POSITION

2. DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION TO APPROVE A PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT WITH THE SONORAN INSTITUTE TO DEVELOP THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT RECOMPETE INITIATIVE THROUGH CORRIDORS AND PATHWAYS, EFFECTIVE THROUGH JUNE 30, 2026, FOR AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$90,000 (REQ: DEPUTY COUNTY MANAGER)

3. DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION TO APPROVE PROFESSIONAL SERVICE AGREEMENT WITH SER-JOBS FOR PROGRESS OF SOUTHERN ARIZONA, INC. TO PROVIDE WORK-EXPERIENCE SERVICES FROM MARCH 5, 2026 THROUGH MAY 29, 2026 FOR A TOTAL PROGRAM COST OF \$49,499.82, OR A COST PER PARTICIPANT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$4,949.98 (REQ: WIOA)

The item was removed from consent agenda and placed under action items.

Supervisor Davis made a motion to approve, seconded by Vice-Chairman Fanning; the motion carried unanimously. (Ayes: Davis, Fanning, Molera)

4. DISCUSSION/POSSIBLE ACTION TO APPROVE APPLICATION FOR FIREWORKS DISPLAY AT THE TUBAC GOLF RESORT ON APRIL 3, 2026 (REQ: CLERK)

5. APPROVAL OF TAX VALUATION ADJUSTMENTS: (REQ: ASSESSOR)

A 101-45-071 - MOVING FORWARD PROPERTIES LLC, RESOLUTION NO. 57369

B 101-45-071 - MOVING FORWARD PROPERTIES LLC, RESOLUTION NO. 57370

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: 02/18/2026

7. APPROVAL OF DEMANDS

were approved in the total amount of \$804,803.46, of which \$452,792.90 is from the General Fund. Details of these expenditures are available for inspection during working hours and are to be considered as part of these minutes.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 7:34 p.m. (motion: Supervisor Davis; second: Vice-Chairman Fanning; motion carried unanimously) (Ayes: Davis, Fanning, Molera)