



**OFFICE OF THE  
COCONINO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

**SPECIAL SESSION AND EXECUTIVE SESSION MINUTES**

**August 31, 2021**

**1:00 p.m.**

**Present:** Chair Matt Ryan, Vice Chair Lena Fowler, Supervisor Patrice Horstman, Supervisor Jeronimo Vasquez and Supervisor Judy Begay were present virtually via Zoom meeting technology.

**Also Present:** County Manager Steve Peru, Deputy County Manager/Public Works Director Lucinda Andreani, Deputy County Manager Sue Brown, Deputy County Attorney Rose Winkeler, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors Lindsay Daley and Deputy Clerk of the Board Valerie Webber were present virtually via Zoom meeting technology.

Chair Ryan called the Special Session meeting to order at 1:03 p.m.

**Discussion Items:**

1. Discussion with and possible direction to staff and Nexxus Consulting on federal legislative and administrative issues and policy and the County's advocacy efforts.

**County Manager**

County Manager Steve Peru provided an introduction of the item, outlining legislative advocacy issues and policy to be addressed: Forest Restoration, Rural Economic Development, Broadband Infrastructure, Museum Flooding and American Rescue Plan Funding.

**Forest Restoration:**

Supervisor Horstman noted the last she heard on the issue was that unfortunately there was some controversy with 4FRI Stakeholders and the proposal is not going to be awarded as planned as they are now talking about the end of September or later.

Forest Restoration Director Jay Smith said they just found out about turnover in the chief executive position in the Stakeholders group. He spoke about various issues with frustrations between the stakeholders and the Forest Service.

Nexxus Consultant Bob Holmes said he was hopeful Senator Sinema's infrastructure bill will critically help with forest health. He added that Senator's Sinema and Kelly have put in some very large earmarks for Flagstaff Watershed Protection.

Consultant Ana Ma stated they will keep the Board updated as to where the bill is and any new numbers that may or may not come out.

Forest Restoration Director Smith further said he spoke to Flagstaff District Ranger Matt McGrath who said they have about 200 acres that still need completed in the Museum Fire area that has an estimated cost of about \$2.5 million dollars to do the work, however the road to the area keeps getting washed out with flood events. Their engineer estimates another \$2 to 5 million dollars to get the road into shape to get crews up there safely.

Bob Holmes spoke about discretionary funds being proposed for forest health.

Deputy County Manager Lucinda Andreani described several forest restoration projects and priorities related to same. She answered questions asked by individual Board members regarding potential funding to support 4FRI (Four Forest Restoration Initiative).

Individual Board members expressed their positions related to advocacy on Forest Health. There was a discussion between the Board, Bob Holmes, Anna Ma, Director Smith and Deputy County Manager Andreani regarding the status of funding and delays in contractor award.

Upon inquiry from Vice Chair Lena Fowler, Mr. Holmes said the infrastructure bill has been referred to Committee; adding that Congressman O'Halleran has been pushing it. Vice Chair Fowler noted this Bill covers the whole country and we need to support it to see what we can get out of it, there is not enough funding for across the country. She spoke about the importance of remembering that 4FRI does not include all the forests in the County.

### **Rural Economic Development:**

County Manager Peru noted there are two items, supporting a New Promise Act legislation to fund rural economic development following the decommissioning of the Navajo Generating Station and, support funding and program prioritization to fully utilize the available 3,000 acres at Camp Navajo diverse economic development opportunities.

Upon inquiry from Vice Chair Fowler, Bob Holmes said the item has been referred to Committee but they haven't taken it up yet.

Vice Chair Fowler said this Bill is important to the whole County and the whole country. She said she still maintains that the Bureau of Reclamation funding should come back so we can transition into a new economy. When the federal government closes down these military bases

they reinvested in those communities, and they have a federal responsibility to the community; we were directly impacted.

Chair Ryan noted it is a broader piece with the Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) and they are working with other regional partners on identifying opportunities.

Ana Ma stated they would follow the Promise Act and follow up with the County Manager on other rural development opportunities and other agencies. There is very key legislation coming through on the Camp Navajo piece.

Individual Board members briefly spoke about their interest in possible economic development opportunities that may be funded as part of the infrastructure bill.

### **Broadband Infrastructure:**

Economic Development Manager Chris Pasterz spoke about the need for broadband and the challenges with right-of-ways and funding that hinder broadband infrastructure projects and advocacy.

Bob Holmes spoke about projects being supported by Senator Kyrsten Sinema. He said he would continue to work with her and her staff to advocate on these issues.

Individual Board members briefly spoke about the need for looser restrictions and need for partnerships on rural broadband.

### **Museum Flooding:**

County Manager Peru noted there is currently a variety of opportunities through funding from Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to support flood mitigation.

Deputy County Manager Andreani stated the number one priority for the County is to get the Emergency Watershed Protection Program refunded. Right now, Natural Channel Design is to design a conceptual level plan for both on and off forest mitigation and watershed restoration efforts. She spoke about the need to update the Emergency Watershed Protection Program (EWPP) waitlist figure on the Museum Fire to accurately reflect what we need. The funds will support forest restoration that needs to be done in the Museum Fire watershed. The other priority is support for forest restoration that needs to be completed in that watershed. Third is ensuring that in the infrastructure plan, there are significant funds for more traditional flood control, which the City of Flagstaff will need to be the one to pursue in order to potentially upsize their system to try accommodate greater flows. She also spoke about a recent engineering summit that was held to help create an engineering design to provide flood mitigation.

Individual Board members spoke about the importance of continued collaboration with the City of Flagstaff to address flood mitigation.

Supervisor Begay expressed her concerns for rural communities, on tribal lands, that need assistance with recent flooding issues. She further spoke about the reimbursements the County did not receive relative to the Museum Fire.

Upon inquiry from Vice Chair Fowler regarding ear marks for rural communities, Bob Holmes said during this year there isn't a way to ear mark for those issues however, moving forward they would try to figure out a program the County might qualify for with regards to ear marks.

Chair Ryan spoke about the potential to coordinate with tribal groups when it comes to the ability to advocate on their projects for federal legislation.

Deputy County Manager Andreani explained that staff is working on pursuing reimbursements that were not made after the Museum Fire and the County may be in a better position to get a better hearing now that there have been flooding events. She added that there is a significant amount of infrastructure funding going to Tribal transportation to help support moving forward with more projects. There needs to be advocacy by Tribal Nations and Supervisors to make sure projects are funded in the Western region. The Flood Control District does not statutorily have authority to do work on Tribal Nations.

Bob Holmes briefly spoke about relative bills they are working on with congressional representatives.

#### **American Rescue Plan:**

County Manager Peru thanked Mr. Holmes and Ms. Ma for their advocacy and noted staff will be providing an update on eligible projects to the Board on September 7<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Holmes said one of the first things they advocated for was increased flexibility in using the ARPA funding.

#### **American Jobs Plan:**

Vice Chair Fowler said she was told that Congressman O'Halleran was trying to put the Promise Act into this Bill.

Bob Holmes affirmed they were working with Congressman O'Halleran to find any avenue for this plan to be pushed into legislation.

#### **Wildland Fire Resources:**

County Manager Peru stated that during the Raphael Fire this summer, there was a situation where we were paying for air resources between two fires and there was frustration when we were hearing from Forest personnel that there were few air resources. There were letters written to the federal delegation and with the Forest Service on board, there may be new opportunities towards forest restoration.

Individual Board members spoke about the need to advocate for more resources during wildfire season to protect the County, thanking Bob Holmes and Ana Ma for their continued advocacy.

Bob Holmes spoke about Arizona's consistent, high number of wildfire acre burns every year; we are trying to take some of the resources and have them moved to region 3.

**Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program (REPI):**

Chair Ryan explained the REPI Challenge Grant provided potential ways to receive additional funds for forest restoration projects.

Upon Supervisor Horstman inquiring about the Grand Canyon Protection Act, Ana Ma affirmed they would follow up on the Bill.

Bob Holmes added that the Bill is in the Senate for review right now.

Vice Chair Fowler said there is a need to advocate for the reinstatement of federal agency law enforcement positions, they need to be hired locally. There needs to be a way to do away with or go around federal matching funding that is required for various grants when it comes to small towns.

Bob Holmes asked the Board to let them know of specific instances and they will advocate. He and Ana Ma thanked the Board for their continued support.

Vice Chair Fowler spoke about the need to clean up or restore abandoned Bureau of Indian Affairs' federal buildings on tribal lands.

Bob Holmes stated they will continue to press advocacy on the clean-up issue.

Upon inquiry from Chair Ryan, Deputy County Attorney Rose Winkeler recommended the Board enter executive session.

**Motion:** Enter executive session and adjourn the public portion session, **Action:** approve, **Moved by:** Supervisor Patrice Horstman, **Seconded by:** Supervisor Jeronimo Vasquez. The motion passed unanimously.

Chair Ryan stated for the record that the Board would convene in executive session at this time and would not be reconvening open session. He adjourned the public portion of the meeting at 2:30 p.m.

**Executive Session:**

2. Discussion of County Manager performance evaluation. Pursuant to A.R.S. 38-431.03 (A) (1), the Board of Supervisors may vote to enter executive session. **Board of Supervisors**

**Present:** Chair Matt Ryan, Supervisor Patrice Horstman, Supervisor Jeronimo Vasquez and Supervisor Judy Begay were in-person and Vice Chair Lena Fowler was present virtually via Teams.

**Also Present:** Deputy County Attorney Rose Winkeler and County Manager Steve Peru were in-person.

The Executive Session discussion began at 2:44 p.m.

County Manager Steve Peru joined the executive session at 3:01 p.m.

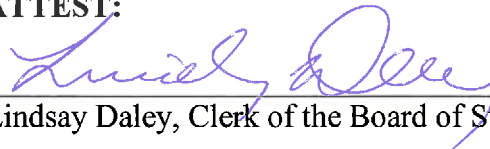
Chair Ryan adjourned the executive session and meeting at 4:25 p.m.

**COCONINO COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

(SEAL)

  
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Matt Ryan, Chair

**ATTEST:**

  
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Lindsay Daley, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

