

**APPROVED MINUTES OF
THE EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING
9:00 AM, THURSDAY, MAY 22, 2026
HYBRID MEETING**

OFFICERS PRESENT: Arnold Lopez, Chair, Safford
Jorge Maldonado, 2nd Vice-Chair, Nogales (Phone)
David Gomez, Secretary, Greenlee County

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chad Brown, Clifton
Alex Blake, Duncan
Gary Hancock, Willcox (Virtual)
Ken Budge, Bisbee (Virtual)
Jose Grijalva, Douglas (Virtual)
Paul David, Graham County
Heather Floyd, Cochise County PSR
Marina Morales, Greenlee County PSR
Brent Morris, Graham County PSR

STAFF PRESENT: Chris Vertrees, Executive Director/Transport Prog Manager
John Merideth, IT Manager
Will Osborne, CDBG Manager
Celeste Vasquez, AAA Program Director
Maria Valles, Community Coordinator
Heather Glenn, Administrative Assistant

I. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE / INTRODUCTIONS

A quorum was confirmed, Chair Lopez called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. and asked members to introduce themselves, as well as mentioning critical issues they are dealing with in their jurisdictions.

II. MEMBER ENTITIES' DISCUSSION

Mayor Jose Grijalva, Douglas, attended the nation's largest retail convention in Las Vegas, described marketing efforts, new business interest and emphasized the need to correct external misconceptions about Cochise County's location and safety. He encouraged other local officials attend similar conventions to attract business visits and improve perceptions of border communities. **Graham County Supervisor Paul David** shared that he attended the National Association of Counties where there was discussion about SMRs covering their capacity, compact 5-acre footprints, liquid sodium cooling, condenser units that reclaim water, and low operational water use. He noted construction costs, potential co-location

with data centers or mines due to transmission constraints and that one SMR is under construction in Virginia, prompting discussion and legislative resistance to state preemption. Attendees raised concerns about water consumption and sought further information. There was discussion about the proximity of potential proponents and the importance of evaluating proposals rather than reflexively opposing them.

III. CALL TO THE PUBLIC

No one from the public was present.

IV. ACTION ITEMS

1. Consent Agenda

a. Approval of February 20, 2026, Meeting Minutes

MOTION: Heather Floyd

SECOND: Arnold Lopez

ACTION: Unanimous

2. Election of Officers

Chris Vertrees provided an overview about the election process and presented three options (retain current slate, elevate the next officer, or elect a new slate), and noted a routine rotation practice. Several members expressed willingness and constraints of potential officers. Supervisor Kathleen Gomez indicated she preferred not to be elevated to the Chair position at this time. Mayor Maldonado joined and expressed interest to run for Chair, and procedural contingencies for members up for election were clarified. Greenlee County Supervisor David Gomez made a motion to approve Option 2 with the following slate of nominees:

Chair	Jorge Maldonado, Nogales, representing Santa Cruz County
1 st Vice Chair	David Gomez, Greenlee County, representing Greenlee County
2 nd Vice Chair	Kathleen Gomez, Cochise County, representing Cochise County
Treasurer	Arnold Lopez, Safford, representing Graham County

MOTION: David Gomez

SECOND: Paul David

ACTION: Unanimous

3. SEAGO Member Assessments

Chris Vertrees presented required dues adjustments following the mid-decade 2025 population estimates and explained the resulting changes to the member assessment schedule, noting Graham County experienced the largest increase while most changes were

limited. He also explained how RTAC assessment changes affect member agency obligations and how SEAGO will subsidize a portion through transportation planning funds. The Board discussed the per capita increase and transit funding impacts from San Tan becoming a city.

David Gomez recommended approval of the Fiscal Year 2027 Assessment Schedule.

MOTION: David Gomez

SECOND: Alex Blake

ACTION: Unanimous

4. FY27 Sustainability of Fund Balance

Chris Vertrees provided background on the SEAGO budget reserves showing a year-end balance slightly over \$2.4 million, operating expenditures from the prior year of a little over \$2.5 million, and a potential usable fund balance around \$1.144 million. He noted they did not expect to use reserves this year and highlighted pending grant awards that could change the budget. Supervisor David asked about the risk assessment and other liabilities. Mr. Vertrees confirmed no recent out-of-court settlements and credited staff stability for avoiding unplanned expenses.

5. FY27 SEAGO Budget

Chris Vertrees provided information on reserves showing a year-end balance slightly over \$2.4 million, operating expenditures from the prior year of a little over \$2.5 million, and a potential usable fund balance around \$1.144 million; staff noted they did not expect to use reserves this year and highlighted pending grant awards that could change the budget. Mr. Vertrees shared that SEAGO is working on a shoestring budget and still awaiting word on the Brownfields and CHODO (Community Housing Development) grants. Supervisor David shared that there is a movement to do away with CDBG and that members need to fight to keep them.

Supervisor David then recommended approval of the Fiscal Year 2027 SEAGO Budget.

MOTION: Paul David

SECOND: David Gomez

ACTION: Unanimous

6. Classification Plan Update

Chris Vertrees recommended consolidating the standalone economic development program into a combined Community and Economic Development Program Manager role to

improve efficiency, reduce duplication, strengthen grant competitiveness, and better align project timing. This requires eliminating the current economic development program manager position, adjusting salary grade, and is expected to yield salary and benefit savings.

David Gomez moved to recommend approval of the proposed classification plan update.

MOTION: David Gomez

SECOND: Brent Morris

ACTION: Unanimous

7. Approval of IGA with Santa Cruz County

Chris Vertrees described the regional pavement assessment contract with Vaisala and explained Santa Cruz County's request to collect additional local miles under the existing contract; the proposed IGA covers 400 miles for \$9,200 for 12 months, shifts only driving cost to the county, adds no extra cost to SEGO under the vendor contract, and has been reviewed by both attorneys.

Alex Blake made a motion to recommend approval of the intergovernmental agreement between SEAGO and Santa Cruz County.

MOTION: Alex Blake

SECOND: David Gomez

ACTION: Unanimous

8. Discussion and possible action to recommend approval of the proposed representatives for appointment to fill Advisory Council on Aging vacancies

Carrie Vaughn reported two interested nominees, Betty "Ann" Peschka from Nogales and Jorge Maldonado, Santa Cruz County Unincorporated, for Advisory Council on Aging vacancies and the committee voted to recommend their appointments.

Supervisor David moved to approve Betty "Ann" Peschka for appointment to the vacant City of Nogales seat and Jorge Maldonado for appointment as the Santa Cruz County Unincorporated representative on the Advisory Council on Aging.

MOTION: Paul David

SECOND: Brent Morris

ACTION: Unanimous

V. INFORMATION ITEMS

A. Future Meeting Dates

Chris Vertrees announced the next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 27, 2026.

B. Quarterly Finance Report

Chris Vertrees gave an update on the quarterly finance report and answered questions.

C. IT Updates

John Merideth provided an update on IT and answered questions.

D. AAA Area Plan on Aging

E. AAA Program Updates

Carrie Vaughn gave an update on AAA programs and legislation and answered questions.

F. CDBG Updates

William Osborne gave an update on community development block grant projects answered questions.

G. Community Development Report

William Osborne gave an update on community development and answered questions.

H. SEAGO Economic Development District Report

Chris Vertrees gave an update on economic development and answered questions.

J. Transportation Program Updates

Chris Vertrees gave an update on Transportation and answered questions.

VII. STAFF ANNOUNCEMENTS / CURRENT EVENTS

Chris Vertrees thanked out-going Chair Lopez for his service to the Board. AAA Program Director Celeste Vasquez provided feedback to the Executive Board regarding Mr. Vertrees' notable leadership during extreme circumstances, which was echoed by other staff and Board members.

VIII.FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Chris Vertrees reminded members that the Executive Director Performance Evaluation is due at the next meeting and that Heather Glenn would be collecting and disseminating the feedback from Board members prior to the meeting. He reminded members that this will require an Executive Session before the regular meeting, so the next meeting will begin at 9:00 a.m. There may also be presentations by John Merideth and another presentation about the weatherization program being managed by AAA.

IX. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Volker adjourned the meeting at 12:20 p.m.