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## Cannabis sales add \$195,293 to county coffers

By Shar Porier [shar.porier@myheraldreview.com](mailto:shar.porier@myheraldreview.com)

Feb 23, 2022

BISBEE — Tax from cannabis sales last year resulted in a \$195,293 boost to the county budget, which will be split between Cochise Health and Social Services and the Cochise County Sheriff's Office.

During the Feb. 22 supervisors meeting, county Budget Manager Daniel Duchon said \$132,248 would go to the sheriff's office and \$63,045 to the health department if Supervisors Ann English, Peggy Judd and Tom Crosby approved the award.

The Cochise County Sheriff's Office portion will be spent on personnel costs such as salary, wages, overtime, employee-related expenses and police academy charges, he said.

"The Cochise County Health and Social Services portion will be spent in a proposed justice reinvestment fund for the Cochise Harm Reduction program which mitigates the barriers to health care faced by those impacted by substance abuse," said Alicia Thompson, director of CHSS. "Our mission is to minimize the spread of infectious disease and the occurrence of overdose fatalities in our community. Cochise Harm Reduction provides direct services, education, outreach and advocacy to Cochise County residents experiencing inequity in their health care needs.

"The revenue has been received, but the budget amendment will allow the county to expend the funds per statute."

The reduction program provides for syringe exchanges to reduce the use of dirty needles capable of spreading other diseases, such as hepatitis C, she said.

A \$4,500 CCSO grant from the Arizona Department of Homeland Security in support of regional specialized weapons and tactics rescue equipment was unanimously approved.

Tammi Jo Wilkins, deputy director of emergency management, explained it will address gaps in local preparedness and response to terrorism related events.

“The Cochise County Sheriff’s Office SWAT team is the primary tactical response team for Cochise County,” said Wilkins. “When fully staffed, there are 17 operators, a commander and three medics. The SWAT team provides primary tactical response capabilities to Bisbee, Tombstone, Huachuca City, Benson and Willcox. Douglas and Sierra Vista have their own tactical teams, however their teams are six to eight officers who ask for assistance when they need additional personnel. The next closest tactical team is out of Tucson with an optimistic response time of three to five hours.”

The grant will cover the cost of a rescue saw like those owned by fire departments to cut through metal in rescue efforts and improves the CCSO self-sufficiency, she said.

“It will also pay for explosive breaching supplies so that the team can begin to train on this capability with the goal of being fully capable by the end of 2022,” Wilkins added. “No other team in the county has this capability, so the team will be able to respond with and support law enforcement agencies throughout the county.”

The supervisors approved a CHSS grant of \$470,720 from the Arizona Department of Health for the Prescription Drug Overdose Prevention Program.

“The original contract with ADHS was approved November 2017,” said Thompson. “This grant amendment will continue to support expanded prevention-based strategies and enhance linkages to care.”

It includes expanded overdose fatality reviews, data collection, analysis and reporting for localized trends in opioid use disorders aligned with public health best practices.

English, the county liaison to the County Supervisors Association’s legislative committee, said a number of new election laws have been proposed. She recommended the supervisors and the community read the proposed bills and contact their representatives.

“Hold onto your hats,” she said. “It’s important for us to be heard.”

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Shar Poirier

Bisbee/County Reporter

