

# RECALL

COMMISSIONER

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# JOHN WEST

On Friday, August 2, 2024, organizers of the Committee to Recall John West, led by chief petitioner Lily Morgan, filed a recall petition against Josephine County Commissioner John West. This was not by any means a spur of the moment action or decision. Recall Committee organizers had been closely watching Commissioner West's costly decision making for the 18 months he had been in office. Decision after decision that has cost the County millions of hard dollars plus a loss in trust from so many different community groups forced us to come together and take this action. **Josephine County cannot afford two more years of Commissioner John West.**

While the original recall organizers are almost all Republicans, some of which are Republican PCPs, as we reached out to various community groups this effort became about as diverse as a political action can be. Our large group of volunteers and community leaders now covers all major political parties and nonaffiliated voters.

We spent a month carefully crafting this petition language to be factual and to reflect the primary concerns Josephine County voters have with Commissioner West's costly decisions. Since the petition only allows 200 words, the petition only reflects a summary of key local concerns.

**Please read on for the detail behind Commissioner John West's actions that have already cost the County and Community groups over \$6,424,000 (estimated), created a loss of trust in County government, and why we cannot afford the 2 more years Commissioner John West has remaining in his term of County Commissioner.**

The Josephine County Clerk approved this recall petition for signature gathering on Monday, August 5<sup>th</sup>, and in the Clerk's approval letter stated that 6,445 valid signatures must be gathered from Josephine County voters by October 31, 2024, in order to bring a recall vote before Josephine County voters. Due to widespread disappointment in Commissioner John West's performance and the support this Recall Committee has seen since filing the petition, we

anticipate being successful in signature gathering and anticipate a special election recall vote in December 2024. Should voters act to recall John West, the other two County Commissioners and/or elected officials of Josephine County would appoint a replacement commissioner to act until voters elect a replacement.

Just two days after Recall Petition signature gathering approval by the County Clerk, without even contacting our group to ask why we filed the petition, on Wednesday August 7<sup>th</sup> Commissioner John West released a factually inaccurate rebuttal to the petition points. This is yet further evidence that John West does not care to represent the voters of Josephine County.

**What follows is the original 200-word recall petition followed by the factual details behind the petition points and why John West's rebuttal was inaccurate. What follows also includes factual details behind why John West's first 19 months in office has already cost us an estimated \$6,424,000.**

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## **Petition language:**

This Petition requests the recall of Commissioner John West for ignoring the will of the people and for actions that have:

- Affected the health and safety of the community;
- Lost revenue, increased costs, or haphazardly cut valued services;
- Failed to follow the law.

The following actions demonstrate a failure to consider the best interests of the people he was elected to serve:

1) Bad faith negotiations in the Pipe Fork property sale, leading to lost revenue and jeopardizing a Williams community water source.

2) Ignored the will of the voters by eliminating funding for community programs, including OSU extension, Law Enforcement, and Public Health.

3) West has shown a pattern of violating state laws, including campaign finance regulations and public meeting laws, and is currently facing several pending ethics and labor law violations.

4) Unlawfully approved a Library District withdrawal leading to costly litigation.

5) West has shown a pattern of threatening community safety by reducing the Firewise program, reducing the Emergency Management program, and eliminating property development fire standards.

6) Hired unqualified political allies for key County employee and contract positions.

These actions demonstrate a pattern of unethical and illegal behavior, severely damaging public trust and warranting immediate recall.

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## **Details behind petition points:**

**1) Bad faith negotiations in the Pipe Fork property sale, leading to lost revenue and jeopardizing a Williams community water source.**

- **Lost \$2.3 million in County Property Sale Revenues in 2024 that could have been used to grow the County's timber land holdings plus lost the potential for additional timber harvesting revenues in the future (extra timber harvesting revenues support the Josephine County Law Enforcement and Justice systems)**
- **Lost community trust.**
- **Commissioner John West was one of the tie-breaking votes in this 2/1 vote by the three County Commissioners in July 2024. The property transaction would have gone through as previously agreed if John West voted differently.**

The negotiations on the sale of this property to a Williams-area community group that organized a BLM purchase of the property started approximately 4 years ago when Williams-area residents objected to the County's plan to harvest the timber on this 320-acre property south of Williams. Williams area and other County residents came out in large numbers to encourage

the County property sale so the land and its resource as a hiking spot complete with waterfalls and an important component of the area watershed could be preserved by a prearranged sale to the BLM.

The County's forestry director first stated informally years ago that he thought the value of the property was approximately \$1.6 million. An official federal government appraisal proved a value of approximately \$2.0 million and funding was secured by federal appropriations to purchase the property. John West comes on the scene January 2023 and now suddenly, the County claims the property has a market value of \$2.7 million, without publicly releasing the assumptions behind the County's newest internal property appraisal.

Negotiations continue and the County suggests a deal is still possible if they meet in the middle. So the Williams community group did just that and raised another approximately \$300k and now offered to purchase the property for close to \$2.3 million. Commissioner West then at the last minute demanded a new deed restriction that he knew the BLM would never agree to and voted no on the revised sale agreement.

While the fair market value of timber properties can vary greatly based on the type and amount of timber on the property, a quick online search will show you that the average timber market for sale throughout Oregon today is priced at between \$2,900 and \$4,000 per acre. John West voted no on this property sale that would have yielded over \$7,100 per acre and claimed in his rebuttal to this petition that the community group was trying to buy it for less than fair market value. The community group's most recent offer was significantly **above** fair market value.

Not only did this result in the loss of trust for breaking a previously agreed deal, but this was also a very bad business decision by Commissioner John West. The timber market is currently low, and the County could have sold high and bought low. The County could have started with this 320-acre property and by selling it for such a high price could have potentially reinvested the \$2.3 million in sales proceeds in much more than 320 acres of new Josephine County owned timber land. So not only did John West's actions result in the loss of \$2.3 million, but the County also lost the ability to generate even more timber harvesting revenues in the long-term. As County Forestry revenues above operational costs are dedicated to the justice system, some amount of future revenues to County Law Enforcement and Justice systems has also been lost.

**Commissioner John West claimed in his public rebuttal to this recall petition that "The environmentalist group involved in negotiations with the county for the sale of the Pipe Fork land changed the terms...." While that is not true, his name calling of an "environmentalist group" also shows that West's decision was politically motivated, and he put the best interests of Josephine County aside to simply win an idealistic political battle. This is just one of several examples where John West has put his political party and political allies first, and the best interests of Josephine County last.**

John West also claimed in his rebuttal to this petition that Pipe Fork Creek is not a domestic water source for Williams. While this statement is true, our recall petition did NOT even claim that this creek is a "domestic" water source for Williams.

In addition, during the recent negotiation process members of the public accused John West of potentially having a conflict of interest in this whole negotiation process because of owning an adjacent property. Mr. West also admitted in a recent media interview that a Williams area resident filed an ethics complaint on this topic, and we confirmed that an ethics complaint is pending. While Mr. West stated in a public meeting he sold that adjacent property years ago, County records show that a [261-acre property](#) immediately adjacent to the Pipe Fork property was purchased from a John West owned company in [2010 by Cascade Land Holdings, Inc.](#) However, Oregon Secretary of State business filings show that the last time Cascade Land

Holdings filed an annual report in 2015, John West was also listed as the President of [Cascade Land Holdings, Inc.](#)

To our knowledge, John West has never publicly explained this discrepancy nor explained why he is listed as the president of a corporation that owns property next to Pipe Fork and has not explained why he is 8 years delinquent on filing state annual reports and paying state annual corporation fees. However, County and State records show that John West was the President of the Cascade Land Holdings in 2015, five years after John West's company Silver Creek Timber Co. Inc. sold it to John West's other company Cascade Land Holdings, Inc. Public accusations of a potential conflict of interest here do in fact seem warranted.

In a very recent media interview West claims he traded his entire property interest in the large parcel adjacent to Pipe Fork about 4-5 years ago. That will be proven or not by the ongoing ethics investigation, but is Commissioner West friends with the newest property owner? Did his failure to negotiate in good faith on this Pipe Fork property sale have anything to do with previously owning this adjacent property, and did he take this action to benefit a friend that now owns the property? It is possible that by increasing the value of the Pipe Fork property by nearly \$700,000 above the official federal government appraisal amount without releasing the assumptions behind the new higher internal County appraisal, West was potentially attempting to increase the value of the adjacent property for the benefit of either himself or his friend, depending on who owns this property.

Many valid conflict of interest questions remain. On the conflict-of-interest investigation, West is innocent until proven guilty. On the bad faith negotiations and ignoring the wishes of the Williams area community members and many other citizens in Josephine County, West is clearly guilty in the court of public opinion.

And for both corporate entities that used to own this large parcel adjacent to Pipe Fork, SILVER CR. TIMBER CO., INC. and Cascade Land Holdings, Inc., both entities were administratively dissolved by the State about 8-9 years ago and John West was listed as the president of both entities. This often means a failure to file the state annual report and pay the state annual report fees. Does John West have close to 8 years of past due state fees and penalties due for these companies? Why did he swap ownership between two corporate entities where he is listed as president of both?

As a Commissioner, John West is now an agent of the state, responsible for overseeing tax and fee collection among many other things. West owes the public an explanation as to whether he is friends with the neighboring Pipe Fork property owner and whether he has outstanding taxes, fees, or penalties due to the County or State of Oregon.

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## **2) Ignored the will of the voters by eliminating funding for community programs, including OSU extension, Law Enforcement, and Public Health.**

- **Lost \$852,000 in Revenues by defunding the local Josephine Co. 4H/Extension Service District in Fiscal 2024 and Fiscal 2025.**
- **Lost community trust by going against the will of the voters that recently approved the Law Enforcement Services District and the longstanding voter-approved Extension Service District.**

- **Haphazardly agreed to vote for an unnecessary reduction to General Fund dollars provided to the Public Health department budget without considering the impacts to the Public Health budget.**
- **Commissioner John West was either alone in his budget cut votes or was one of the tie-breaking votes in the 2/1 budget vote by the three County Commissioners in June 2024.**

A number of valued public services and in some cases voter-approved funding sources have been cut by budget votes of Commissioner John West resulting in both the loss of County revenues and negative impacts to the health and safety of Josephine County residents. Budget decisions contrary to voter-approved services and tax rates has also resulted in a significant loss of trust in County government.

John West voted to defund the Josephine Co. 4H/Extension Service District in the budget process for both Fiscal 2024 and Fiscal 2025 (most recent vote June 2024). This resulted in a loss of revenues of about \$426,000 each year (totaling \$852,000) that could have continued to support various youth farming and agriculture programs as well as several very popular programs such as the Master Gardener program. An unusually large number of Josephine County residents attended the commissioners' budget meetings in June 2024 to speak to the importance of retaining this voter-approved funding and these various popular programs, yet Commissioner West once again put his personal political agenda first and defunded the service district for two years in a row.

Josephine County voters approved a new Law Enforcement Services District in November of 2023. The district tax rate supplies funding of well over \$5 million per year to the Sheriff's office for approximately 20 staff members in the Sheriff's office. **In recent budget meetings in June 2024 for the first year of the new Law Enforcement Service District, Commissioner John West was the only commissioner or budget committee member to vote no on the Sheriff's modest request for 10 additional staff members. Once again, John West votes against the will of Josephine County voters. Budget meeting videos show that John West was advocating for fewer new Sheriff deputies in this first year of the new voter-approved Law Enforcement Services District.**

Josephine County in the last decade has been through some hard times where the County lost a significant amount of federal revenues that used to support County Law Enforcement programs. Many calls for service had to go unanswered and at a time unincorporated Josephine County had less law enforcement on patrol than most third world countries. "Defunding the Police" doesn't work in any jurisdiction that has been subject to it, and Commissioner West has begun to advocate for just that. John West and one other commissioner were responsible for cutting the amount of General Fund dollars allocated to the Sheriff's office in the Fiscal 2025 budget (see budget meetings June 2024) and Commissioner John West was the sole vote against the Sheriff's modest budget request. And in the Sheriff's presentation to the Budget Committee in early June 2024, he was clearly very concerned about the reduction in General Fund dollars given to his budgets this year.

One Josephine County resident attended the Commissioners' budget meetings this year and provided an analysis that showed how the County could easily meet all recent General Fund budget requests and the Sheriff's budget request without cutting General Fund budget allocations to any County Department that uses General Fund dollars. Two of the three commissioners, Commissioner John West and Commissioner Herman Baertschiger ignored that



advice and randomly cut money out of the Public Health budget to grant part of the Sheriff's current year budget request. The impact on Public Health was not even studied or taken into consideration during the budget meeting, and two months later the County is still scrambling to figure out the impact and what the potential loss of grant funding will result from this action.

The Josephine County government financial crisis was the most severe between the years of 2012 and 2017. Including these actions and John West's attacks on the Josephine Community Library District (partially described later), it's clear that Commissioner John West's main agenda is to tear down or roll back all the progress that Josephine County has made since the heart of the last local government financial crisis. We cannot afford to go back to the time where there was limited law enforcement and justice programs and criminals were not held accountable for their crimes. Commissioner John West, Josephine County voters do NOT want to defund the local police. In contrast, Josephine County voters just approved a new Law Enforcement Services District in November 2023.

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### **3) West has shown a pattern of violating state laws, including campaign finance regulations and public meeting laws, and is currently facing several pending ethics and labor law violations.**

- **Cost of loss of trust in County government from numerous examples of breaking state law and County code: Unable to estimate but the loss of trust is one of the costliest events that a local government can experience.**
- **Potential liability to Josephine County from repeated ethics and labor law violations: potentially in the millions of \$s over a longer period of time.**
- **Loss of County Law Enforcement revenues from failing to follow the County Code when acting on a County Mining Lease application: Estimated \$3,120,000 revenue loss.**
- **Violation of public meeting laws and several pending ethics and labor law violations confirmed by Josephine County's former HR Director and others.**

Josephine County has lost several department directors and key staff members since Commissioner West started his term as County Commissioner in January of 2023. When an employee voluntarily separates from their employment, often the reason is they are not happy with their bosses or supervisors. And employee turnover is very costly, especially when it's turnover in key management positions or staff members with significant institutional knowledge.

CIS (Citycounty Insurance Services) is an insurance agency that serves many cities and counties throughout Oregon. Insurance rate increases seen in the last 10 years and CIS's primary area of focus is on preventing losses from lawsuits related to the unlawful treatment of employees. This is the largest risk area for local governments and Commissioner John West's treatment of several department directors and other staff members leaves Josephine County open to a significant amount of operational and financial risk.

In a statement made to this Recall Committee, Josephine County's former HR Director testified to witnessing several "illegal" Board of County Commissioner meetings that Commissioner John West participated in and confirmed the existence of several pending ethics and labor law complaints against Commissioner West. One only needs to watch recent YouTube recordings of County Commissioner meetings to see Josephine County Commissioner John West act very disrespectfully towards department heads such as Mike Weber, Public Health Director, or Mark Stevenson, Community Development Director.

State law says the governing body of local government agencies in Oregon cannot meet as a “quorum” without publicly noticing the meeting 24 hours in advance and allowing public to view the meeting. In Josephine County, since the Board is only a 3-member board, 2 commissioners cannot meet to discuss County business or deliberate on County matters without making it a public meeting and noticing the meeting at least 24 hours in advance. According to Josephine County’s former HR Director who witnessed illegal meetings, Commissioner West engaged in several illegal private meetings with one other county commissioner.

One other state law violated by Josephine County Commissioner John West is the state campaign finance law. Between January 2024 and May 2024 there were several full-page ads in local publications such as the Sneak Preview and Oregon Eagle in opposition of the Josephine County Charter Change measure that appeared on the May 2024 primary ballot. On the bottom of many of these full-page ads was a statement that said, “Paid for by John West.” Commissioner West didn’t report a penny of this ballot measure opposition advertising spending to the ORESTAR campaign finance reporting and filing system.

On page 12 of the [Oregon Campaign Finance Manual](#) you will see that any spending in excess of \$250 to support or oppose any measure or candidate needs to be reported to ORESTAR when you are an “Independent Expenditure Filer” such as John West. Based on the typical price of full-page ads, Commissioner John West likely spent at least \$5,000 in personal campaign expenditures in opposition to the County Charter Change measure and did not report any of those campaign expenditures. This willful disregard or lack of awareness of state campaign finance law is completely unacceptable for an elected county commissioner.

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Search Criteria : Measure Year=2024, Measure Number=13884, Approved Filings  
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And finally, information was supplied to this Recall Committee that shows that Commissioner John West (along with other County Commissioners) have also violated the County Code (the County Law) in their administration of a mining exploration permit and a mining lease application on County-owned timber land. This was especially revealing and surprising to the local mining company applicant given that their goal was to simply build a successful project and help the County earn more revenues for County Law Enforcement programs and given Commissioner West owns and operates local mining companies. The local mining company applicant expected support and understanding from a commissioner that owns and operates a company in this industry. Except what they told us they found was an enemy in John West that wouldn’t



even respond to emails regarding the status of the application and has shut down this local mining company's request to extend their mining exploration permit and mining lease request.

Problems the local mining company had with Commissioner West began around April 2023 (a mere 4 months after West took office) when the company tried to renew its exploration permit with the County. West and other commissioners attempted to add an unauthorized permit fee to the company's permit which was a convoluted variable fee schedule made up on the spot in a commissioner meeting. The County could have theoretically charged a \$1000 permit fee one quarter and a \$50,000 permit fee the next quarter. This is why the County and other local government agencies maintain an approved fee schedule, so the setting of permit fees is applied consistently and legally from one applicant to another.

The County knew for about 18 months that the local mining company intended to renew its exploration permit, yet took no action to adjust the fees for mineral exploration permits during that 18-month period. Emails to the commissioners and county legal counsel went unanswered when the local mining company proposed an alternate voluntary permit fee schedule that would have covered all County costs to administer this exploration permit. In fact, the local mining company states that they've sent about a dozen emails to Commissioner West (often including the other two commissioners) during his 19 months in office and Commissioner West has never responded to a single email. Most of these emails related to official business the company had with the County or policy recommendations related to protecting the billions of dollars of mineral wealth the company estimates is in Josephine County (largely on public land in Josephine County).

John West and his business partner in one of West's personally owned mining companies recently brought a lawsuit against the State of Oregon for \$4 million for slowing a personal mining project. See the lawsuit filed by Brimstone Natural Resources, Co. against the Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) and multiple state officials and employees. West recently lost this case on appeal, but in his official duties as County Commissioner and as the recent County Commissioner Liaison to the Josephine County Mining Advisory Committee, the local mining company has alleged that West and other commissioners have blocked their permit and lease request in a similar way. The local mining company was shocked that a commissioner with mining experience did not lend a sympathetic ear for the mutual benefit of both Josephine County and private industry.

Not only was West not helpful to this local mining company, but the local mining company also alleges that West (and other commissioners along with County legal counsel) completely disregarded County code 5.15 which is the part of local County law that governs the process of mining exploration permits and mining leases on County owned land. This County code says a company that had a mineral exploration permit that turns in a valid notice of mineral discovery shall be granted a lease. The company turned in over 200 pages of geology information with its lease application in May 2023 and the Mining Advisory Committee and the County's contract geologist all agree there is a significant mineral resource on this property (there is a valid notice of mineral discovery). According to the company, Commissioner John West, the other Commissioners, and Legal Counsel refuse to answer the emails sent to them on this topic.

Is this potentially another case of conflict of interest for Commissioner John West? In West's \$4 million lawsuit against the State of Oregon, it was stated West, and his partner feel targeted "due to their political and governmental beliefs and speech." Now West is doing the same thing to the local company who applied with the County...why? West owes the company and the public an explanation.

To make matters even worse, in the longer-term Josephine County could have made close to an estimated \$260,000 per year in royalty revenues from this mining lease that the company said

they wanted to go directly to support the Sheriff's office. We reviewed a presentation this local company made to the commissioners in 2023 and the company claimed that after spending a few years engineering a new drift into the mineral ore reserve, their estimated production levels and estimated mine life of at least 12 years would have yielded an estimated annual royalty revenues to County Law Enforcement of a total of at least \$3,120,000 in net royalty revenues to the County from the mining lease, several new jobs, and over \$60 million in local economic activity during the life of the mine. This estimated \$260,000 per year in royalties during the life of the mine is revenue that could have helped the county without coming out of taxpayers' pockets.

After turning in over 200 pages of geology information in May 2023 to Josephine County (some of which was marked private/proprietary information for only the County's viewing) showing the significant mineral reserve contained on this Josephine County timber property and the potential for the County to earn significant royalty revenues, one would think that the County Commissioners would be excited to explore this further. The local mining company also claims they've worked with previous County officials over the years and determined there are several other County-owned properties that have significant mineral development potential. County Commissioner John West, self-described as experienced and knowledgeable in this industry, along with other county commissioners reached out to the local mining company exactly zero times to ask clarifying questions after the 2023 presentation on this topic. The local mining company made a statement to the Recall Committee that they "feel targeted due to their political and governmental beliefs and speech."

In summary on the point of adherence to local county code, Commissioner John West and other county commissioners allegedly disregarded County Code 5.15 in the administration of mineral exploration permits and mining lease applications (which means they allegedly broke the County law) and in April 2023 attempted to impose unauthorized permit fees. This can be seen in BCC meeting videos from April 2023. Lost County royalty revenues are estimated to be at least \$3,120,000 which could have helped support County Law Enforcement without coming out of taxpayers' pockets. Commissioner West, as the 2024 Board chair and BCC liaison to the County Mining Advisory Committee during his entire term in office, is the key County official responsible for this estimated loss, according to the local mining company.

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#### **4) Unlawfully approved a Library District withdrawal leading to costly litigation.**

- **Cost of loss of trust in County government from attacking the Library District: Unable to estimate but the loss of trust is one of the costliest events that a local government can experience.**
- **Legal costs: An estimated \$12,000 in unnecessary legal costs for the Josephine Community Library District plus an unknown amount of legal time and money spent by Josephine County to defend and settle this lawsuit.**
- **Commissioner John West was one of the tie-breaking votes in the 2/1 vote by the three County Commissioners to illegally allow a district withdrawal.**

Commissioner West and documented political allies attempted to financially attack the Josephine Community Library District beginning in late 2023. They attempted to use a state law that governs the process of withdrawing from a district, and hastily approved a library district withdrawal request by West's political ally Mike Pelfrey without considering the legal ramifications of this action. Making matters even worse, right after the first withdrawal decision the County Commissioners quickly added other Library District withdrawals to the BCC agenda for even more political allies. The Library District knew this state law was not being legally interpreted correctly by the County Commissioners and after attempting to show legal reason to

the County Commissioners, was forced to bring a lawsuit against Josephine County to reverse this illegal district withdrawal approval and stop other pending withdrawals.

It didn't take long before Josephine County Commissioners realized they were in the wrong and settled the lawsuit in favor of the Library District. This cost the Library District approximately \$12,000 in unnecessary legal fees plus untold legal costs for Josephine County. It's clear Commissioner West's goal was to financially harm the Library District.

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**5) West has shown a pattern of threatening community safety by reducing the Firewise program, reducing the Emergency Management program, and eliminating property development fire standards.**

- **Unnecessary cut (budget reduction) to Firewise services to Josephine County residents by \$140,000 per year by abruptly cancelling City Firewise contract.**
- **Further deteriorated working relationship between City and County government.**
- **Eliminated part of FTE staffing in the County Emergency Management program.**
- **Commissioners' attempt to eliminate property development fire standards ruled illegal by state agency (untold staffing and legal costs that could have been avoided).**

During the County's budget process in April and May of 2024, Commissioner West and other County Commissioners hastily cancelled the \$140,000 annual Firewise contract with the City of Grants Pass without even notifying the City more than 1 day in advance to prepare for this discussion. This federally funded program shares some resources with Search and Rescue, and Commissioners deliberations in public meetings did not even include Search and Rescue representatives. In this Recall Committee's opinion, a close inspection of the budget showed that there were sufficient carryover resources and annual revenues to continue this City-County Firewise contract partnership for many years in the future while maintaining the appropriate level of financial support for Search and Rescue. Commissioner West and other commissioners were in such a hurry to cancel this City contract that they didn't even provide any notice to either the City or County Search and Rescue that this discussion was going to take place.

Emergency management used to have a full-time dedicated Director overseeing emergency management operations. Commissioner West was part of the 2/1 tiebreaking vote to combine the IT Director and Emergency Management Director into one position so they could appoint a political ally to the job (see #6 below). Therefore, the emergency management program has been significantly reduced. Also as shown in #6 below, the person appointed to the combined Emergency Management and IT Director position has no experience in emergency management, potentially further deteriorating level of services in County Emergency Management.

Commissioner West and other commissioners also recently approved a code change related to lowering and nearly eliminating property development fire protection standards. Despite advice to the Commissioners by ODF and several code experts that warned the Commissioners this code change would not be legally allowed, West and other commissioners pushed forward a code change that would have allowed ODF to serve as the fire protection agency for certain property developments. ODF even testified directly to the Commissioners that they don't provide structural fire protection and implied they would not likely meet the legal requirements behind this proposed code change. Commissioner West and other commissioners incurred unnecessary costs and wasted a significant amount of staff time as a state agency ruled this code change illegal and improper.

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## 6) Hired unqualified political allies for key County employee and contract positions.

- **Cost of loss of trust in County government from hiring political allies rather than hiring the most qualified job applicants: Unable to estimate but the loss of trust is one of the costliest events that a local government can experience.**

It has been well covered by local news reports that Commissioner John West tried to hire friend and political ally Simon Hare (former County Commissioner) for a major consulting contract for a broadband grant for about \$80,000 in total without getting the contract approved by full Board of County Commissioners. Former Commissioner Dan DeYoung can also attest to this and public records requests by local media proved that there was no signed contract. Commissioner West admitted in a public meeting he was in charge of this project. Simon Hare even received a couple preliminary contract payments without having a signed contract. Many will testify that John West and Simon Hare have been friends and coordinated political activities for years. John West stated in his Recall rebuttal that “one commissioner can NEVER act alone.” And yet, West did just that in this case...or at least tried until he was caught.

Commissioner West and Commissioner Baertschiger also arranged to hire political ally Michael Sellers - former chief of staff for Baertschiger in the Senate - for Director of both County IT and Emergency Management – behind closed doors in an illegal meeting and without coordinating with Commissioner Dan DeYoung on this key department director hiring process (according to testimony received from the former Josephine County HR Director).

Josephine County’s former HR Director was also present during the hiring and interviewing process for the former Emergency Management Director position and provided information on how Commissioner West and Commissioner Baertschiger ignored a candidate that was well qualified and had significant experience in emergency management, and met illegally and decided to hire political ally Michael Sellers instead. Per the County’s former HR Director, Michael Sellers had no experience in emergency management before being appointed to the newly created position of “Technology / Emergency Services Director.”

Josephine County’s former HR Director testified that towards the end of the interviewing process for the Emergency Management Director position (previously this position was a full time director position dedicated to emergency management), despite having a well-qualified and well-experienced candidate, a phone call was made between Commissioner West and Commissioner Baertschiger and they agreed to combine the positions of IT Director and Emergency Management Director into one position so they could bump up the salary range and appoint their friend and political ally Michael Sellers. Coincidentally our Recall Committee members recently met the well-qualified Emergency Management Director candidate that was passed up because of the desire to appoint a John West political ally. This director candidate confirmed the former HR Director’s testimony.

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**Bottom line:** During Commissioner John West's first 19 months in office, he has cost the County at least an estimated **\$6,424,000** in lost revenues, increased costs, and reductions in voter-approved and valued County programs.

The special elections recall vote cost which would be in December 2024 is justified to prevent two more years of millions in increased costs and lost opportunities under Commissioner John West.

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**[Sign the recall petition here](#)**

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**RECALL**

**COMMISSIONER**

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**JOHN WEST**