

CURRY COUNTY BEHIND CLOSED DOORS
8/8/22/lgs

REPORTER:

YOU'RE LISTENING TO KCIW ... 100 POINT SEVEN FM LP ... AND THIS IS A SPECIAL KCIW NEWS REPORT. I'M LORI GALLO STODDARD AND YOU MAY RECALL THAT EARLIER THIS YEAR CURRY COUNTY COMMISSIONER CHRISTOPHER PAASCH ASKED COMMISSIONER COURT BOICE ABOUT ACCUSATIONS OF CORRUPTION. IT HAPPENED DURING A BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING. PAASCH REVEALED HE HAD A COPY OF AN EMAIL DATED FEBRUARY SIXTH ... AND SENT BY MR. BOICE TO A CURRY COUNTY CITIZEN ... IN THAT EMAIL MR. BOICE CLAIMED THAT MR. PAASCH WAS CORRUPT ... NOT ONLY THAT ... THE EMAIL ALSO CLAIMED COMMISSIONER JOHN HERZOG WAS WEAK ... AND THAT TREASURER DAVID BARNES WAS ... IN BOICE'S WORDS ... FULLING RUNNING CURRY COUNTY. YOU CAN SEE A COPY OF THAT EMAIL ON THE KCIW WEBSITE ... AND ITS BOLD ACCUSATIONS PROMPTED KCIW TO TAKE A CLOSER LOOK AT WHAT REALLY IS GOING ON AT CURRY COUNTY'S GOVERNMENT OFFICES. IS THERE CORRUPTION IN CURRY COUNTY ... IS OUR TREASURER REALLY PULLING THE STRINGS OF ONE OF OUR COMMISSIONERS? KCIW SPENT MONTHS RESEARCHING ... AND WE'RE TOLD THERE ARE PROBLEMS AT THE COUNTY ... AND THAT THEY STEM FROM A HANDFUL OF ELECTED OFFICIALS. KCIW INTERVIEWED MORE THAN A DOZEN PEOPLE FOR THIS REPORT ... INCLUDING FORMER AND CURRENT ELECTED COUNTY OFFICIALS AND EMPLOYEES ... AS WELL AS CITIZEN VOLUNTEERS. THEY TELL US STORIES OF ELECTED OFFICIALS PADDING THEIR RETIREMENT ... POSSIBLE ELECTION FRAUD ... FAVORITISM ... NEPOTISM ... AND FEAR FOR THEIR JOBS. THERE ARE PEOPLE WHO WORK IN CURRY COUNTY GOVERNMENT WHO SAY THEY'RE SCARED OF SOME OF OUR ELECTED OFFICIALS ... AND THEY'RE SCARED TO TALK ABOUT IT ... BECAUSE THEY'RE SCARED OF LOSING THEIR JOBS. I'M LORI GALLO STODDARD IN THE KCIW NEWSROOM AND THIS IS A SPECIAL REPORT ... CURRY COUNTY ... BEHIND CLOSED DOORS.

((MUSIC))

REPORTER:

IT'S NO SECRET CURRY COUNTY HAS ITS SHARE OF PROBLEMS. IT'S POOR ... 15 OUT OF EVERY HUNDRED PEOPLE HERE LIVES IN POVERTY AND MORE THAN A THIRD OF ITS RESIDENTS ARE OVER 65 ... WHICH MEANS A LOT OF THE FOLKS WHO LIVE IN CURRY COUNTY DEPEND ON GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE. COMBINE THAT WITH A DYING SALMON POPULATION ... TIMBER JOBS DISAPPEARING ... PLUS COVID ... AND IT'S EASY TO SEE THAT IN CURRY COUNTY PEOPLE ARE HURTING. JOBS ARE HARD TO COME BY ... AND HOUSING HERE HAS REACHED A CRISIS POINT. SO EVEN IF YOU DO HAVE A JOB WAITING FOR YOU IN CURRY COUNTY ... YOU MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO FIND A PLACE TO LIVE. THAT'S WHY DOCTORS, NURSES TEACHERS AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS WHO WOULD LIKE TO LIVE HERE ... CAN'T. AND SOMETHING ELSE TO KNOW ... CURRY COUNTY IS RANKED NUMBER THREE IN THE STATE WHEN IT COMES TO GUN DEATHS ... THE SUICIDE RATE HERE IS EITHER THE HIGHEST OR AMONG THE HIGHEST IN THE STATE DEPENDING ON THE STUDY YOU LOOK AT. AND WHAT'S MORE ... THE COUNTY'S PRETTY MUCH BROKE ... FEDERAL MONEY CURRY COUNTY USED TO GET FROM TIMBER SALES IS DISAPPEARING ... SO EVERY PENNY MATTERS TO THE CURRY COUNTY COFFERS ... AND THERE ARE NO EXTRAS.

BARNES:

We are right now, the Departments of Curry County are I guess you would call it mandated minimum Services.

REPORTER:

THAT'S CURRY COUNTY TREASURER DAVID BARNES.

BARNES:

There's, there's a list of services required by the state that to be performed by the county. And none of the Departments are really operating above that. There's no luxury in the county. Okay, there's no people doing things because they think it would be a good idea. Everybody is operating a bare-bones minimum right now. Our biggest issue is that we do not since the loss of timber money we do not have enough Revenue to cover the expenses r

equipped to provide bare minimum services. That is the biggest issue.

REPORTER:

So, how do we, how does the county make more money? What should we do?

BARNES: That is the job of the Commissioners.

REPORTER:

AND THAT'S REALLY THE HEART OF THE ISSUE. BECAUSE THE CURRY COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS HAS A HARD TIME DOING ITS JOB. BOARD OF COMMISSIONER MEETINGS ARE LEGENDARY IN THE COUNTY NOT ONLY FOR THEIR LENGTH ... SOME LAST LITERALLY THE ENTIRE DAY ... BUT ALSO FOR THE PUBLIC PERSONAL ATTACKS AND SQUABBLING THAT ARE REGULARLY ON DISPLAY ... NOW ALL OF THIS IS NOT LOST ON THE FOLKS WHO PAY ATTENTION ... THE PEOPLE WHO VOLUNTEER FOR COMMITTEES ... THE ONES WHO SHOW UP AT JUST ABOUT EVERY SCHEDULED MEETING OR WORKSHOP OR BY THE EMPLOYEES AT THE COUNTY. THEY ALL SEE VERY CLEARLY THE ISSUES AT THE CURRY COUNTY GOVERNMENT OFFICES.

BREWER:

There's control issues, power issues, puppeteering issues bribing issues. Harassment issues, threatening issues.

REPORTER:

THAT'S FORMER COUNTY FACILITIES AND MAINTANCE DIRECTOR CHET BREWER.

BREWER:

It goes on and on and on and you know, the really sad part is we've lost a lot of good people just in the years I've been there because of this, the fear, the retaliation, the, you know job, just anything they can to control the situation. They want the county to run the way they wanted to run and how they think it should be ran by the people. They think it should be ran by.

REPORTER:

THE "THEY" BREWER IS TALKING ABOUT INVOLVES ELECTED OFFICIALS. AND IF THEY DON'T LIKE YOU ... WE'RE TOLD THEY CAN MAKE YOUR LIFE AS A CURRY COUNTY EMPLOYEE VERY DIFFICULT. IT'S CAUSED AN EXODUS OF WHAT MANY CALL GOOD PEOPLE ... SUPERVISORS AND MANAGERS WHO ARE LEAVING CURRY COUNTY GOVERNMENT. FINANCE DIRECTOR BRAD RUEKERT WAS IS THE LATEST TO LEAVE ... HE RESIGNED FROM HIS POSITION IN EARLY JUNE ... ALSO GONE ... COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR CLARK SCHROEDER ... DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS JULIE SCHMELZER. AND DIRECTOR OF COUNTY EMERGENCY OPERATIONS JEREMY DUMIRE. SCHMELZER RESIGNED BECAUSE OF WHAT SHE CALLED ETHICS ISSUES ... AND DUMIRE SAID IN HIS RESIGNATION LETTER THAT HE WAS LEAVING CURRY COUNTY GOVERNMENT BECAUSE OF ... IN HIS WORDS ... ITS TOXIC WORK ENVIRONMENT. BUT NONE OF THAT SURPRISES BRYAN GRUMMON.

GRUMMON:

When you have elected officials managing employees, it becomes a patronage system

REPORTER:

GRUMMON KNOWS WHAT HE'S TALKING ABOUT. HE SPENT MUCH OF HIS PROFESSIONAL LIFE TAKING STRUGGLING BUSINESSES AND HELPING THEM TO SUCCEED. AND HE'S SPENT A LOT OF TIME AT THE CURRY COUNTY GOVERNMENT OFFICES ... BOTH AS AN OBSERVER AND AS A VOLUNTEER ON MULTIPLE COMMITTEES ... SO HE'S SEEN FIRST HAND THE PROBLEMS THERE. AND GRUMMON SAYS THE PROBLEMS AT THE COUNTY ALL COME DOWN TO WHAT HE CALLS A PATRONAGE SYSTEM.

GRUMMON:

You basically end up with employees that keep their jobs by doing personal favors, or doing the bidding of the Commissioners in a political way rather than in a job-related way. In other words they pretty soon realized that they keep their jobs not by doing what's

expected of them. But by making sure they don't irritate the Commissioners.

REPORTER:

KCIW INTERVIEWED MORE THAN A DOZEN PEOPLE FOR THIS REPORT ... FORMER AND CURRENT ELECTED OFFICIALS ... AS WELL AS EMPLOYEES AND CITIZENS WHO SPOKE TO US BOTH ON THE RECORD AND AS BACKGROUND. AND WE HEARD A LOT ABOUT FAVORITISM ... NEPOTISM ... FEAR ... REPRISAL ... POWER AND CONTROL ... IT ALL ADDS UP TO WHAT BRYAN GRUMMON CALLS A PATRONAGE SYSTEM AT THE COUNTY. WE'RE TOLD CURRY IS RUN BY A SMALL GROUP OF PEOPLE ... SOME OF THEM ELECTED OFFICIALS ... ALL OF WHOM ARE DETERMINED TO KEEP THEIR JOBS AND THE STATUS QUO ... WITH CURRY COUNTY RUNNING EXACTLY THE WAY IT HAS BEEN FOR YEARS ... WITH THEM IN CONTROL.

CHET BREWER IS THE FORMER CURRY COUNTY FACILITIES AND MAINTANCE DIRECTOR. BREWER WAS ELECTROCUTED WHILE WORKING ON A COUNTY PROJECT ... HE SPENT TIME IN THE HOSPITAL ... ENDED UP HAVING MULTIPLE SURGERIES ... BUT WAS REFUSED WORKMAN'S COMPENSATION. HE HAS RETAINED AN ATTORNEY ... BREWER KNEW HE WAS GOING TO BE FIRED BY THE COUNTY AND ASKED THAT IT HAPPEN IN A PUBLIC MEETING. HE WANTED HIS STATEMENT TO THE COUNTY RECORDED ... AND NOTED THAT ON HIS LATEST EMPLOYEE EVALUATION ... HE EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS AND DID EXCEPTIONAL WORK. A WRITTEN COPY OF THAT EVALUATION AS WELL AS A COPY OF BREWER'S STATEMENT IS AVAILABLE ON THE KCIW WEBSITE BUT WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO FIND AN AUDIO OR VIDEO RECORDING OF IT. BUT IN THE WEEKS BEFORE HE LEFT HIS POSITION WITH CURRY COUNTY ... BREWER SPOKE TO KCIW AT LENGTH ABOUT HIS EXPERIENCES.

BREWER:

you do not cross Jim or Renee or your career is short-lived. Um, I was also told that stay away from Boice unless you need, you know, something done or taken care of, or you're going to be willing to do a favor for a favor, cuz that's how Court works.

REPORTER:

COURT BOICE IS A CURRY COUNTY COMMISSIONER .. AND CURRY COUNTY CLERK RENEE KOLEN IS MARRIED TO CURRY'S TAX ASSESSOR JIM KOLEN.

BREWER:

You know, like when I first got there, I was even told if the Kolens want anything, you do it. If they ask for anything, you do you drop stop and everything they want. If Court wants anything, even all the way down to using personal equipment of the county, you give it to him. If the county don't have it offer your own, if you have it. These are all verbal things, but that wage I was told by my supervisor and the other gentleman that I had worked with. When I first started started, my time there.

REPORTER:

CHET BREWER KEPT METICULOUS RECORDS AND HAS DOCUMENTATION OF HIS INTERACTIONS WITH THEM AND OTHERS. HE SAYS HE WAS HARASSED CONSTANTLY WHILE WORKING AT THE COUNTY ... BECAUSE HE WAS TRYING TO IMPLEMENT POLICIES AND PROCEEDURES. BREWER SAYS HE GOT PUSHBACK ... WAS UNDERMINED AND THREATENED ... AND CLAIMS THE PRESSURE HE WAS WORKING UNDER CAUSED HIM TO TAKE FOUR DIFFERENT STRESS-RELATED MEDICATIONS. HE SAYS THE PRESSURE WAS MULTI-PRONGED AND CONSTANT. BREWER SAYS HE WAS EVEN ACCUSED OF ELECTION FRAUD. REMEMBER ... CHET BREWER WAS AN EMPLOYEE AT THE COUNTY. HE LITERALLY WAS IN THE COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE WORKING ON PROJECTS AND KNEW THE EMPLOYEES AND THE CLERK PERSONALLY. BUT BOTH HE AND HIS WIFE RECEIVED NOTICES FROM THE STATE OF OREGON CLAIMING THE SIGNATURES ON THEIR BALLOTS DIDN'T MATCH. YOU CAN SEE COPIES OF THOSE NOTICES ON THE KCIW WEBSITE. BREWER SAYS THAT WAS JUST THE TIP OF THE HARASSMENT ICEBERG HE EXPERIENCED AT THE COUNTY. AND HE'S NOT ALONE.

WHEN FORMER DIRECTOR OF EMERGENCY SERVICES JEREMY DUMIRE CHOSE TO LEAVE HIS POSITION HE SAID IT WAS BECAUSE HE WAS TIRED OF BEING THREATENED. DUMIRE CLAIMED IN HIS RESIGNATION LETTER THAT HE QUIT BECAUSE HE WAS DONE BEING ... IN HIS WORDS ... HARASSED AND SHAMED IN HIS JOB ... BY COMMISSIONER COURT BOICE. A COPY OF DUMIRE'S RESIGNATION IS ON THE KCIW WEBSITE.

BOICE:

I can tell you that I have been subjected to malicious lies here, non-stop for five years and I'm just doing my job.

REPORTER:

THAT'S CURRY COUNTY COMMISSIONER COURT BOICE. HE'S A THIRD GENERATION PUBLIC SERVANT ... COURT'S GRANDFATHER WAS A JUDGE AND CURRY COUNTY COMMISSIONER ... AND HIS DAD WAS SHERIFF DURING THE 70'S HERE. COURT WAS ELECTED WITHOUT OPPOSITION TO A SECOND TERM ON THE BOARD IN 2020. BUT HIS TENURE AS A CURRY COUNTY COMMISSIONER HAS BEEN CONTROVERSIAL ... WHILE IN OFFICE HE'S BEEN THE TARGET OF AN ETHICS INVESTIGATION ... HAS BEEN CENSURED BY HIS FELLOW COMMISSIONERS ... SUED BY A PRIVATE CITIZEN AND BY THE COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS AND BY THE COUNTY TREASURER.

BOICE:

You know, the people want us to get along, okay? They want us to be productive. How do you get along with Commissioners when they sue you, when they censor you, when they investigate you? I've never I mean, the list goes on, and on and on, Lori. I have never done that to a commissioner here. I have dug down and done my job six days a week. Not bragging, not complaining, but I have never sued anyone here. I have never investigated anyone here. I have never censored anyone here.

REPORTER:

THAT'S TRUE. MR. BOICE HASN'T SUED OR CENSURED HIS FELLOW COMMISSIONERS. BUT WHEN AND WHERE THERE ARE CONFLICTS AT THE COUNTY ... MORE OFTEN THAN NOT ... COMMISSIONER BOICE IS INVOLVED.

REPORTER:

I'm not looking to dig up dirt Court. I genuinely am not, I have been told by 10 people cuz you're the eleventh person that I've talked to 10 people that there are really major issues at the county and it stems from three people, you Jim? And Renee Cohen. People talk about bullying, they talk about harassment and I'm just going to, I'm just going to ask you again. Are, are you a bully Court? Do you, harass people?

BOICE:

Thank you for that question. I was raised to respect people have already mentioned that, so my record of all the years that I was in a promotion business, all the years that I raised, my family, all the employees that I've had over the years, you're not going to find anybody that says he's mean he's disrespectful, he's a bully, you know, that's a tactic that they use when the bullies are the ones that are pointing the finger in that is so common here. And I, you know, I I'd love to see you talk to other people here and I'm not saying that you have 10, that's say that then I'm narcissus. I'm a bully that I've yelled. Okay, you said that twice now?

REPORTER:

Correct. Is that is that is not what I have said. That is what others have said.

REPORTER:

OTHERS LIKE FORMER CURRY COUNTY BUILDING INSPECTOR RICHARD STAUFFER.

STAUFFER:

So what is your experience with regard to Commissioner Boice and his position and he he works with department heads and employees at the county. He creates an extremely toxic environment. He in, in my experience with what I dealt with. I

dealt with him undermining, my department through negativity. He made it very difficult to do my job

REPORTER:

FORMER CURRY COUNTY COMMISSIONER SUE GOLD

GOLD:

Well, commissioner boys, spent quite a bit of time, harassing me. In fact, it was to the point where I confronted him and said I am going to be keeping a log.

REPORTER:

CURRY COUNTY TREASURER DAVID BARNES

REPORTER:

Well, what what's going on? If the county Dave what do I need to know that's going on. Where's the problem, who, who are, who are the folks that are causing the problems

BARNES:

to put it in a nutshell? Its own centers around commissioner boys. Okay, can you elaborate he is, you know, I I've said this before and I'll say it again, court, maybe have been a commissioner for five years now, but I don't think for even a minute that he has been a member of the Board of Commissioners. He is just he's very self-serving, very self-centered and it's it, it's he's not a team player. He's just all about court..

PAASCH:

I personally believe that the court Boice is a narcissist

REPORTER:

THAT'S CURRY COUNTY COMMISSIONER CHRIS PAASCH

PAASCH:

and he's a gaslighting narcissist in the worst way.

REPORTER:

MR. BOICE DENIES HE'S A NARCISSIST ... AND SAYS OTHERS ARE TO BLAME FOR THE ISSUES AT THE COUNTY. IN FACT ... MR. BOICE INSISTED WE INCLUDE HIS ALLEGATIONS OF PROFANITY INVOLVING CURRY COUNTY TREASURER DAVID BARNES AND COMMISSIONER CHRIS PAASCH. BOICE CLAIMS TREASURER BARNES USED PROFANITY WHILE SPEAKING TO A FEMALE COUNTY EMPLOYEE ... AND SAYS MR. PAASCH ALSO USED PROFANITY WHILE SPEAKING TO A FEMALE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION WORKER. TREASURER BARNES IS WELL KNOWN TO BE BOTH SALTY AND CANTANKEROUS IN PUBLIC MEETINGS ... BUT DENIES USING PROFANITY TO HIS EMPLOYEE... AND PAASCH HAS APOLOGIZED PUBLICLY FOR HIS RUDENESS. BUT WHAT'S HAPPENING IN CURRY COUNTY MAY ACTUALLY HAVE CROSSED THE LINE FROM RUDENESS INTO CORRUPTION. BECAUSE ACCORDING TO COMMISIONER CHRIS PAASCH THERE MAY HAVE BEEN ELECTION TAMPERING HERE.

PAASCH:

I actually believe that they tampered with with an election. And I talked to the Department of Justice about it, because what happened in that election, And I believe it was gosh, I got to be careful with my words here. I believe it was a coordinated effort between several people.

REPORTER:

YOU MAY RECALL IN 2020 THAT FORMER CURRY COUNTY COMMISSIONER TERRY HANSCAM WAS ELECTED TO THE POSITION OF TREASURER. HIS OPPONENT WAS ELIZABETH NEKETIN ... WHO RAN UNOPPOSED UNTIL LITERALLY THE LAST MOMENT. HANSCAM FILED HIS CANDIDACY PAPERS JUST THREE HOURS BEFORE THE MARCH 10 2020 DEADLINE AND WON THE ELECTION BY SIX PERCENTAGE POINTS ... BUT LATER REFUSED TO SHOW UP TO TRAIN FOR THE POSITION. AND THEN TERRY HANSCAM ACTUALLY QUIT BEFORE TAKING HIS OATH OF OFFICE. REMEMBER ... THIS WAS A FORMER COUNTY COMMISSIONER ... WHO FILED AT THE LAST MINUTE AND WAS ELECTED TO HIS SEAT ... BUT DIDN'T WANT THE JOB. HANSCAM'S OPPONENT ELIZABETH NEKETIN WAS FURIOUS AT THE TIME ... AND SHE TOLD

THE CURRY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS SHE THOUGHT THE ELECTION HAD BEEN RIGGED ... SHE NAMED JIM KOLEN AND COURT BOICE AS BEING PART OF THE SCHEME TO DENY HER THE POSITION OF TREASURER. AND IT'S IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT ELIZABETH NEKETIN ASKED FOR ...BUT WAS NOT APPOINTED TO THE JOB OF CURRY COUNTY TREASURER ... AFTER HANSCAM RESIGNED. THE POSITION WAS OFFERED TO TWO OTHER PEOPLE INSTEAD. AND EVENTUALLY DAVID BARNES TOOK THE JOB. BUT EVEN BARNES HAS QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW THE WHOLE THING PLAYED OUT.

BARNES:

Right. They, I believe that because of the way that Hanscom resigned. I'm not sure on this but I believe that waiting till the moment that he needs to resign. It precluded the job from automatically going to Nikitin. Okay, and I think this was all planned but then they decided that they were going to interview for the position for the treasurer's position and I went in and interviewed. And so did Elizabeth and Douglas Baker. They gave it to, and to, and George Rhodse, I think, and somebody else, and it turned out they gave the position to Baker. He lasted two days, and he quit because he realized it was a lot of work also.

REPORTER:

COMMISSIONER CHRIS PAASCH SAYS CURRY COUNTY'S ELECTED OFFICIALS HAVE A HISTORY OF GROOMING AND SUPPORTING CANDIDATES.

PAASCH:

I found it interesting because I got to see it full. Full circle. When I ran when I was thinking about running for office the second time, which is this, this current election that I got elected to, I got a phone call one day and it was from Renee. And she said, I need to come up your house and talk to you. Are you home? And I said, yes, and five minutes later she was at my house. And after that happened, and she was asking me to run. After that three or four phone calls, within the next few weeks, you sure you're going to run, you're going to run and then they came up, the she came up to the house another time and talked to me and then I met her at

her office, several times. And I met him a couple of times in his office. And this was all before I even filed to run, and they were just kind of starting to lay groundwork with me on. These are the problems the county and this is what needs to change. And oh my gosh, it's not saying you have to do this. If you're elected, if you want me to support you, you got to do that. It wasn't that. It was just so subtle. Those subtle a little way of saying, man. This is the problem and, and you're the guy to fix this kind of thing.

Chris doesn't it seem a little bit odd, or did it raise any red flags that the county clerk was the one, the person who is in charge of Elections was going out and recruiting candidates? Did that raise any red flags to you off? Well, it's, it's since now, that I now that I understand, I hate to say how things work around here. It raises a lot of red flags for me.

REPORTER:

POSSIBLE ELECTION FRAUD ISSUES HAVE ALSO CIRCULATED ABOUT MR. BOICE ... ONE IN PARTICULAR WAS THAT HE DIDN'T LIVE IN CURRY COUNTY WHEN HE WAS FIRST ELECTED AND THAT HIS WIFE WAS LIVING IN MEDFORD. MR. BOICE SAYS HE HAS AN EXPLANATION AND SENT KCIW A DOCUMENT DATED AND SIGNED MAY 6 OF 2022 BY SEVERAL MEMBERS OF THE SWEET FAMILY ... LISTING HIS RESIDENCE AS PART TIME IN AGNESS FROM 2005-2012 AND FULL TIME FROM 2012-2020. THE DOCUMENT SAYS MR. BOICE SERVED AS CARETAKER AND PROJECT IMPROVEMENT MANAGER FOR THEIR PROPERTY. A COPY OF THAT NOTE IS ON THE KCIW WEBSITE.

REPORTER:

You sent me a note that was dated in May of this year saying that you were you living at the sweet Ranch part-time from 2005 to 2012, and then full-time from 2012 to 2020, but you ran for Jackson County Commissioner in 2018. And so I'm just wondering if you were in Jackson County or if you were in Curry County?

BOICE:

The letter speaks for itself was constantly Laurie going back and forth. You know, I still spend a little time at my old Lodge on, on the Rogue River Wilderness, my good friends purchase that

Lodge. I was a resident of Jackson County for a short period of time. Those relationships that I built and running had some friends over there, good exposure cuz of my time on the river, my time at the lodge, a lot of friends in the Rogue Valley, they said why don't you run for commissioner, you know, I didn't do too bad. think I spent a total of \$600. I didn't intend to win, or didn't have any thoughts that I would win, but it was a very good experience. Now those relationships, a helping me governed, doing my part to properly govern govern Curry County, I'm telling you, again, I have never yelled at anyone. Okay? I've never raised my voice never used, profanity, never threatened, anyone's job

REPORTER:

BUT FORMER COMMISSIONER SUE GOLD SAYS THAT'S NOT TRUE. SHE SAYS BOICE THREATENED HER AND HER JOB. GOLD SAYS AFTER DECIDING TO RUN FOR RE-ELECTION ... SHE FOUND A NOTE FROM COMMISSIONER BOICE TAPED TO HER OFFICE DOOR.

GOLD:

The day after I filed, I got this note on my door from Boice. Just going on and on and on about all of these things that I had done or I had not done a lot of defamation type of things and he not only put it off my door, but he send it out to all kinds of people in the county.

REPORTER:

THAT NOTE FROM COMMISSIONER BOICE WHICH WAS TAPED TO COMMISSIONER GOLD'S DOOR ASKED HER TO IMMEDIATELY RESIGN ...CLAIMED SHE WORKED PART TIME ... USED WORDS LIKE DISGRACEFUL ... HORRIBLE ... FAILURE ... AND AWFUL ... ALONG WITH THREATS OF WHAT BOICE CALLED EXPOSURE OF GOLD'S RECORD BY TIMBER UNITY. A COPY OF THIS LETTER IS ON THE KCIW WEBSITE. AND IT'S SIMILAR TO OTHER LETTERS MR. BOICE HAS WRITTEN. ONE OF THOSE LETTERS WAS PUBLISHED IN THE CURRY PILOT NEWSPAPER AND TARGETED FORMER CURRY COUNTY BUILDING RICHARD STAUFFER ... STAUFFER HAD BEEN HIRED AS AN INSPECTOR OVER MR. BOICE'S OBJECTIONS. A COPY OF THAT LETTER IS ALSO ON THE KCIW WEBSITE.

STAUFFER:

My first day on the job. I was greeted by Commissioner Boice in front of the whole department building department, and he wanted to know, if I had read a letter that he wrote to the citizens of Curry County via the, the local newspaper. And I said I had heard about it and he laughed and said, welcome to Curry County. So that was my first day on the job. That's kind of seeing how things were going to be.

REPORTER:

What did the letter? What was the letter about? What did the letter say?

STAUFFER:

The letter was about the county hiring me off and the fact that I wasn't a qualified building official that I had no qualifications should never have been hired where I am a licensed building official have multiple trade licenses, multiple inspection certifications, and I've been in the trades for thirty-two years managing a multimillion-dollar budgets, so I have a lot of experience.

REPORTER:

COMMISSIONER BOICE SAYS HE HAS A DIFFERENT RECOLLECTION OF STAUFFER'S FIRST DAY.

BOICE: brought up the stauffer situation. He was incompetent, I'm not going to protect him. It is true. I was not biased in the beginning, but when I saw he couldn't do the job, the county was paying a fortune into keeping him afloat. No, I, I wanted him gone.

REPORTER:

Court, you were biased in the beginning before he even stepped foot in county offices off, my job is (cross talk), Let Me Wait, wait wait, you didn't give him a chance. You were outvoted, you wrote a letter, you you published it in the in the, in the Pilot saying that you thought he was not qualified and that you disagreed with the board's vote to to hire him through Schroeder. And when he got

there, he says that the first thing that you said to me, was that the first thing that you said to him was, did you see the paper? Welcome to Curry County which to me isn't a very yep. Welcome to say,

BOICE:

Completely false, you know, I never had that kind of relationship with him. I never unwelcomed him or said anything, terribly unprofessional and inappropriate. Like that. Never did that Thursday. I want to say that then all the time. That's the way. It's done nowadays, okay? They look like they have your, but I have your letter about him that was dated in. Let's see. October 3rd, 2018 rehiring, a new building official. Okay? So so if he's incompetent off, its cost, the county thousands of dollars,

REPORTER:

he hadn't even started yet and he and he said,

BOICE:

he wasn't qualified and Schroeder, knew that.

REPORTER: You are not a person hiring him. That that is not the job of the Commissioners. The commissioner's job is to set policy, not to hire people.

BOICE:

Oh, I totally disagree with that. If, if I had it to do over again, I would make sure that every single applicant come to before the Board of Commissioners.

REPORTER:

KCIW IS TOLD THAT DESIRE TO CONTROL ALL ASPECTS OF COUNTY GOVERNMENT CREATES MAJOR PROBLEMS. BECAUSE WHEN MR. BOICE SAYS THE BOARD SHOULD APPROVE ALL EMPLOYEES ... WE'RE TOLD IT UNDERMINES THE AUTHORITY OF EXISTING DEPARTMENT HEADS AND OPENS THE DOOR TO NEPOTISM ... FAVORITISM AND CONTRIBUTES TO THE CULTURE OF FEAR AT THE COUNTY ... WHAT BRYAN GRUMMON CALLS PATRONAGE.

GRUMMON:

It is a really hard problem to fix because of of this patronage, kind of an environment that's been laid over the top that all these people have learned what they have to do to keep their job. And, you know, what else are they going to do in the community, if you get a good-paying job, if you're assessor, if if you're Clerk of Court, what else are you going to do to get that kind of money? So you better find a way to do what you have to do to keep that job just to make it right? It's just what it is. You know what really teed me off. Though is here just for the two of them retired, they get huge raises you know in excess of what everybody else in the county is getting so that they max out their prayers when they retire now. How does that happen? They can't get the raise themselves so you have to have this system, you know, I call the patronage system that takes care of their own, so they both got taken care of just before they retire.

REPORTER:

GRUMMON IS TALKING ABOUT THE 13 AND 14 PERCENT RAISES BOTH JIM AND RENEE KOLEN GOT IN 2021.. AND THE 3 AND 4 PERCENT RAISES THEY RECEIVED IN 2022. SO OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS ... THE KOLEN HOUSEHOLD INCREASED THEIR INCOME BY ALMOST 29 THOUSAND DOLLARS. RUMOR HAS IT BOTH OF THE KOLENS ARE RETIRING SOON ... AND BOTH OF THEM ARE VESTED IN THE PUBLIC EMPLOYEE RETIREMENT SYSTEM KNOWN AS PERS. PERS BENEFITS ARE CALCULATED IN PART ON YOUR SALARY WHEN YOU RETIRE. JIM KOLEN'S CURRENT SALARY IS 81 THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED EIGHTY FIVE DOLLARS PER YEAR AND RENEE KOLEN EARNS 79-THOUSAND THREE HUNDRED TEN DOLLARS A YEAR. KCIW REACHED OUT TO BOTH COUNTY CLERK RENEE KOLEN AND TO ASSESSOR JIM KOLEN MULTIPLE TIMES FOR OUR REPORT BUT HAVE YET TO HEAR FROM EITHER OF THEM.

PAASCH:

You know there should be separation of things. Now I know in rural counties because they're very limited in the amount of people that you have to choose from for elected offices.

REPORTER:
CURRY COUNTY COMMISSIONER CHRIS PAASCH

PAASCH:
But to have a husband and a wife, one is the Assessor and deals with properties, and transfer properties, and assessment of properties, and those kind of things, and his wife is the county recorder. And that just to me, I don't know, you know, maybe State should look at or County. I don't think it could be County government but stayed in federal government should look at that separation because and I'm not saying there's anything to that, don't misunderstand me, but it sure it sure has a poor visual effect. When you're when you're seeing all this other stuff hath it just look good.

REPORTER: Well, I've been told that we are eighteen years behind in assessments for Curry County. Is that correct? Have you heard that? Do you know anything, about

PAASCH:
I have heard that. Actually that, that, that that came from assessor colon now at the last budget committee he says, he's down to I believe ten or eleven years behind, but imagine the millions and millions of dollars that that is cost into the general fund and the taxing districts of this County. Because if you're not collecting the tax, that is costing the districts and inevitably the, the county and the sheriff's department, millions and millions of dollars.

REPORTER:
SO CURRY COUNTY'S GOVERNMENT USES PROPERTY TAX DOLLARS TO HELP FUND ITS OPERATIONS ... AND CURRY COUNTY IS BEHIND ON ITS TAX ASSESSMENTS ... THE COUNTY IS RUNNING IN THE RED FINANCIALLY ... AND ALL OF THAT IS REPORTEDLY ENTRENCHED IN A PATRONAGE SYSTEM BRYAN GRUMMON SAYS THAT IT'S GOING TO BE VERY DIFFICULT TO CHANGE THE CULTURE OR THE SYSTEM HERE.

GRUMMON:

Fixing this is not an easy thing to do and of course, Outsiders are going to be resented because everybody knows that it's basically a broken system. But they're afraid of how it's going to affect them if we fix it. I mean, all these people that own property that aren't being assessed, the proper valuation because we haven't done a lot of Assessments in, you know, twenty years in some cases are more. They're going to find out I built that garage door. Going to find out, I did this. That ends up that threatens a lot of people.

REPORTER:

AND THAT SEEMS TO BE ANOTHER PROBLEM WITH CURRY COUNTY'S GOVERNMENT. KCIW IS TOLD THE RULES ARE THERE ... BUT THEY'RE NOT FOLLOWED BY EVERYONE ... THE ELECTED OFFICIALS REPORTEDLY TURN A BLIND EYES FOR FRIENDS ... SO PERMITS AND FEES ARE WAIVED ... AND ELECTED OFFICIALS ALSO REPORTEDLY REGULARLY OVER RIDE DEPARTMENT HEADS AND SUPERVISORS ... REVERSING OR CONFUSING DECISIONS AND MAKING IT TOUGH FOR EMPLOYEES TO FIGURE OUT WHAT TO DO OR WHO TO PLEASE. BRYAN GRUMMON SAYS IN HIS EXPERIENCE OF MAKING ORGANIZATIONS SUCCESSFUL ... THAT'S A MISTAKE.

GRUMMON:

So that's number one. The biggest rule you can have a system where they management every organization is not focused on productivity and actually doing a service because it's kind of government is a service organization basically. So it should be focused on providing those services to the population in general, not serving the Commissioners and that's what happens when you have the Commissioners doing it, the problem you get into like I said is also that the Commissioners change every so often so that it really puts strains on any system to if it's a patronage system that suddenly the person I'm doing favors for is not there anymore and I have to do favors for the new person. So everybody's off balance

REPORTER:

THAT ISSUE OF COMMISSIONERS COMING AND GOING BY ELECTIONS IS WHY FORMER COMMISSIONER SUE GOLD BELIEVES THE COUNTY SHOULD BE RUN BY A FULL TIME COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR ... OVERSEEN BY COMMISSIONERS WHO ARE PAID A SMALL STIPEND.

GOLD:

I am a firm believer and I can't say that strongly enough a firm believer in having a manager manage the county.

REPORTER:

why is having a non-elected county operations, manager or supervisor so important to you.

GOLD:

Because they have the training number one. Number two, there's more consistency. They're not elected every three or four years. So they're not dependant upon the voters and they're answerable to the Commissioners. I realize that but we just need the expertise when you're you're handling that much money, and we're talking millions of dollars. And this is taxpayer money. You need to have someone that knows what the heck they're doing.

REPORTER:

AND THAT'S WHY IN APRIL OF 2018 SHE AND THEN COMMISSIONER TOM HUXLEY VOTED TO HIRE CLARK SCHROEDER TO ASSUME THE POSITION OF COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR. MR. BOICE OPPOSED THE HIRE. LATER THAT YEAR ...COMMISSIONER PAASCH WAS ELECTED TO HUXLEY'S SEAT. AND ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS THE NEW BOARD DID WAS TO TERMINATE SCHROEDER'S POSITION. GOLD VOTED AGAINST THE MOVE.

GOLD:

Others on the board felt like they knew how to run the county better than those who were trained to be administrators and I felt very strongly in fact, so strongly that I lowered my monthly salary for two years that there should be an administrator because those running for commission there, there really are no requirements for an individual running for commission. So I felt very strongly

that there should be an administrator and that's what I ran my campaign on and I would run it again the same way if I were to run again because I think that there needs to be a professional that's running a county of our size. Now. That's my personal opinion. That's all also the opinion of many others who would agree with me.

REPORTER:

BRYAN GRUMMON SAYS THAT SHROEDER'S POSITION CREATED A CONFLICT BETWEEN THE PEOPLE WHO WANTED THE RULES TO BE FOLLOWED ... AND THE OLD GUARD ... THE OLD BOYS CLUB ... WHO WANTED THINGS TO STAY THE SAME. AND REMEMBER ... HE KNOWS WHAT HE'S TALKING ABOUT. GRUMMON MADE A LIVING TURNING FAILING BUSINESSES AROUND ... AND HE WAS VOLUNTEERING AT THE COUNTY WHEN ADMINISTRATOR CLARK SCHROEDER WAS THERE.

GRUMMON:

He came in and I thought he was doing a wonderful job. But Clark made the mistake of going on, trying to enforce the rules and regulations to the county and what happened. Of course people have been called up court and complained that he was coming up and he's going to make me file. I get a building permit. He's going to make me do this and that legitimate things that Clark was trying to do and Court would get in and interfere with and as a result whole thing came to a head, I think you could remember, there was a court case where Clark was trying to insist that Court basically followed the money and not spend money, that wasn't within the budget, and the whole thing kind of blew up and the result Clark was fired but, you know, fired for doing his job and I don't know how he else he could try to get his job done. So I was pretty upset about Court's heavy handed I know best kind of an attitude on that whole thing.

REPORTER:

INTEREFERENCE ... HARASSMENT ... RETAILATION AND THE STRESS THAT COMES FROM WORKING IN A TOXIC ENVIRONMENT HAS AN AFFECT ON THE PEOPLE AT THE COUNTY OFFICES. MORALE IS LOW ... GOSSIP IS HIGH. BUT GOOD JOBS ARE HARD

TO COME BY IN CURRY COUNTY. AND COUNTY TREASURER DAVE BARNES SAYS THAT'S WHY HE BELIEVES EMPLOYEES STAY ... EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE AFRAID OF SOME OF THE ELECTED OFFICIALS THERE.

REPORTER: Why would employees of the county? Be afraid of one of the Commissioners?

BARNES:

Because he he controls whether they work or not. You know, this is Curry County. There's very few positions for finance, people for human resources, people for planners, or for building people, or anything else. If you don't work, if you have a job for the county, there's very little chance that you're going to get a similar position in another Corporation in the county. There's just not the jobs there. you know, if you look at it, I mean, who has Human Resources, departments in this County except for South Coast Lumber and the hospital and the county, you know, I'm just I'm not saying that I'm not implying the human resources is fearing for her position. I'm just using that as an example, you know, there's very few Finance directors in the county. There's very few people who work in, you know, promoting tourism and Industry. There's very few people, you know, there's no other jobs, if you were a planner or a building inspector or something like that. So, you know, there's just there's not a lot of other work out there and commissioner boice knows this. He, you know, I know for a fact that he's been attempting to get another group, has come in and take over economic, The Economic Development Department. He's threatened to get rid of the finance department before and threatened Mister Rickards, the finance director's job. You know, he just said he believes that he has that he is the king and he can do whatever he wants.

REPORTER:

COMMISSIONER COURT BOICE.

BOICE:

People afraid of me that is really baffling, incredibly baffling. I'm, I'm the the most people person you'll meet in a long, long time. I

mean, I have relationships on both sides of the political aisle and I could give you plenty of examples, you know, would it be better and easier for them if I was gone? No. But in their minds, they probably think that I'm fighting to keep the I'm fighting to keep their job time, fighting to manage, this County well. I'm fighting to overcome this constant bickering and and undermining that I don't I don't start these fights.

REPORTER:

BUT THERE ARE FIGHTS. AND PERSONAL ATTACKS. AND CURRY COUNTY RESIDENTS ARE SUFFERING BECAUSE OF IT. TREASURER BARNES SAYS THE COUNTY IS IN ITS LAST GASPS FINANCIALLY AND IS OPERATING AT A DEFICIT ... THERE LITERALLY ISN'T ENOUGH MONEY TO PAY ITS BILLS. SO ... UNSURPRISINGLY ... THE COUNTY IS LOOKING AT DIFFERENT WAYS TO INCREASE REVENUE. TREASURER BARNES IS PROMOTING A SEASONAL TAX TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF TOURISM DOLLARS ... AND YOU MAY HAVE HEARD SOMETHING RECENTLY ABOUT ARP ...THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ... FEDERAL MONEY THAT WAS DESIGNED TO HELP SMALL BUSINESSES STAY OPEN ... AND COUNTIES LIKE CURRY TO KEEP PUBLIC WORKERS ON THE JOB AND PAID. BUT ON JULY 20, 2022 ... COMMISSIONERS COURT BOICE AND JOHN HERZOG VOTED TO SPEND A QUARTER OF A MILLION DOLLARS TO BUY COUNTY VEHICLES USING ARP MONEY. COMMISSIONER PAASCH VOTED NO ... TREASURER BARNES CALLED IT A SCHEME. BRYAN GRUMMON IS SUSPICIOUS.

GRUMMON:

the problem is there's even more money that's going to be given to the county. And I just do not believe it's going to be well, spent, I think it's going to squander but, you know, They just voted to spend a quarter of a million dollars of ARP money to purchase vehicles, for the county. Yes which which they will sell after they are fully depreciated at six months, to County Employees or something like that. And I'm exaggerating a bit but the number of County vehicles that gets that are obsolete R. After a year of or or maybe, as much as two years of serves to County Employees is extraordinary. Go back and look at those numbers.

REPORTER:

Excuse ... Can you tell me that again? Because I've never heard that. Took me what you're saying? Again be very clear

GRUMMON:

They buy County vehicles and after one or two years they are found to be at the end of their useful life. And they're sold at a greatly reduced price, to some County employee.

REPORTER:

AND IT'S THAT KIND OF ALLEGATION THAT HAS MANY ... INCLUDING FORMER COMMISSIONER SUE GOLD ... TALKING ABOUT CHANGING THE WAY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS WORKS ... EXPANDING IT TO A FIVE PERSON BOARD. SHE THINKS THAT WOULD HELP ELIMINATE WHAT SHE CALLS SOME OF THE SHENNEGANS THAT GOES ON AT THE COUNTY.

GOLD:

I think of five-member board would help tremendously with part-time commissioners. Maybe one full-time, but mostly part-time. Work it like the ports or the school board or whatever get competent Management in there.

REPORTER:

COMMISSIONER CHRIS PAASCH ALSO BELIEVES A FIVE PERSON BOARD WOULD BE A BETTER WAY TO GOVERN.

PAASCH:

The public needs to know what's going on in this county. The reason I'm doing this interview is too, so the public can learn exactly what's happening in this County. And they are the people in charge to fix it. If they want to do a recall if they want to, you know, change the way the County government is, I believe there should be five Commissioners, not three. I would love to see five Commissioners, either, they're all work on a stipend or they have three of them as they are now work for pay and two of them are part-time. The work for a stipend but they all have an equal voice on the board and they're all elected onto the board. I know, you know, and they'll say, well, that's been voted on and voted down.

If people really understood the way this County was run, they wouldn't vote that down. And why wouldn't you want to have five voices to make decisions and not three the, the more broad your, your input is to meetings and decisions, the better decisions you'll have so but

REPORTER:

one of the reasons to have a five-member commission Would be for public meeting laws. That's been something that has been brought up multiple times in the boc meetings is that there are that there are limitations because there are three of you. Can you talk to me about what that has meant with regard to efficiencies at the county getting things done?

PAASCH:

Well, and and that's the other thing is, we we really can't get a lot done and I'm, I'm the one that's been pushing that forward to have five Commissioners. And one of the big reasons for that is, is that two Commissioners can actually sit in a room and work on ideas and and develop those ideas rather than having a, a secret meeting behind closed doors or or trying to come up with ideas on our own and then having it, you know, done in in, on a Wednesday afternoon and a workshop.

REPORTER:

THERE ARE RUMORS OF A BALLOT MEASURE PROPOSING A FIVE MEMBER BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS. AND THERE ARE OTHER BEHIND THE SCENES ISSUES THAT COULD GET PUBLIC VERY SOON. CURRY COUNTY IS REPORTEDLY ON THE RADAR OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION. KCIW IS TOLD THE ACLU IS AWARE THAT COMMISSIONER JOHN HERZOG REGULARLY OPENS COUNTY MEETINGS WITH CHRISTIAN PRAYERS ... AND RECENTLY TAUNTED THOSE WHO CHOSE NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN THOSE PRAYERS AS ... USING HIS EXACT WORD ... CRYBABIES. AND AGAIN ... ALL OF THIS IS TAKING PLACE AT A TIME WHERE CURRY COUNTY IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY UNABLE TO TAKE CARE OF ITS OWN BUSINESS. THE COUNTY'S PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES ARE ALREADY IN THE HANDS OF THE STATE ... AND TREASURER BARNES SAYS HE WOULDN'T BE SURPRISED IF THE STATE TOOK

OVER ALL OF CURRY COUNTY'S SERVICES. IN FACT ... KCIW IS TOLD THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE HAS ITS EYE ON CURRY COUNTY RIGHT NOW. BRYAN GRUMMON SAYS THAT'S A GOOD THING.

GRUMMON:

If it happened I think it would be the best thing to happen because it's only way you're going to break up this. Incestuous kind of environment we've got here, and, you know, in saying this I'm probably giving you the wrong impression. They're not that people working in the county. There are just people that have adapted to the environment, they're in, and work in that environment. Some of those people would probably do very well in a formalized, former management where people are held accountable for their actions and you have to enforce policies and procedures and all the rest of it off. I don't know that. I'm just saying that the change would be substantial and if the state came in, it was certainly well it might not I was going to say it would break up the Patronage environment. But the state is the state and some of these threads go upwards as well as downwards as one hand washes the other.

REPORTER:

FORMER FACILITIES AND MAINTANENCE DIRECTOR CHET BREWER SAYS THAT PATRONAGE SYSTEM IS GOING TO BE TOUGH TO GET RID OF ...

BREWER:

it gets so hard fighting to fight by yourself against the colons in court, You know, it's just a stress, the bullshit, the crap, the cover in the worrying, about your jobs and wondering if you're doing what's right wrong. Nobody truly knows what they're doing. They skimmed by just it's a sad state. It's a really sad State and it and it seems like the voters of Curry County, don't know that's exactly right if they only knew.

PAASCH:

I'm hoping you can do all you can do to get this out because the public needs to be aware of what's happening in this county.

GOLD:

The thing that bothers me most is that I don't think the people are being served.

STAUFFER:

I think the citizens of Curry County live in, probably the most beautiful place in Oregon and there's a lot of good businesses and business owners there and and citizens. And I would hope that they look at the situation in the Commissioner's Office over the last few years and realize that they need to ask more of their elected officials off. The elected officials, should be working for them, not for themselves or not. You know, it has to be a team effort and it's a beautiful place and they need to hold their elected officials accountable for their behavior.

REPORTER:

KCIW WOULD LIKE TO THANK EVERYONE WHO CONTRIBUTED TO THIS REPORT. IT'S DIFFICULT TO SPEAK UP ... AND IT'S EVEN MORE DIFFICULT TO SPEAK TRUTH TO POWER. KCIW APPRECIATES THE CANDOR AND COURAGE OF THE MORE THAN A DOZEN PEOPLE WHO SPOKE TO US ... BOTH ON AND OFF THE RECORD AS BACKGROUND ... AND WE APPRECIATE THEIR CANDOR AND COURAGE.

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