

Washington petition to recall Mayor West rejected

BY NICHOLAS K. GERANIOS
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SPOKANE, Wash. — The only effort so far to recall Mayor James West, who has been accused of sexual improprieties, has been rejected by the Spokane County prosecutor's office, officials said Monday.

The petition request filed by Shannon Sullivan was incomplete because it did not include a sworn statement from her that the accusations she leveled against West were true and that she had knowledge of

the facts upon which her recall petition was based, the prosecutor's office said in a statement.

While the petition request was rejected, Sullivan has the option of completing the statement and submitting it again, said Paul Brandt, Spokane County elections manager.

A successful petition would also require 12,567 signatures of registered voters before it could be placed on the municipal ballot.

Sullivan's effort is the only recall proposal that has come to the

attention of city officials so far, Brandt said.

The 54-year-old mayor has been on a temporary leave and has not made comments since shortly after The Spokesman-Review, on May 5, began reporting that he offered city jobs to young men he met in a gay online chat room. The FBI has opened an inquiry into a possible public corruption case involving those allegations.

The newspaper also reported allegations that West sexually abused

two young boys decades ago. West adamantly denied the molestation allegations but acknowledged he had visited a gay online chat room and had relations with adult men.

Some political and business leaders have called for the resignation of West, a former Republican state Senate leader who took office as mayor in January 2004.

West's lawyer, Bill Etter, was out of town Monday and did not return a telephone call for comment. But last week Etter rejected demands for

resignation and said a potential recall election was not appropriate.

"The mayor feels strongly that he has always performed his duties with the best interests of the city in mind and has never used or abused the office for personal reasons," Etter said in a statement last week.

"No American, let alone a popular and effective elected official like Mayor West, should ever give up their job on mere speculation that there may be other allegations against him," Etter said.

Study shows forests unable to sustain harvest rates

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PORTLAND — A preliminary study of harvest plans for the Tillamook and Clatsop state forests indicates the proposed level of timber sales cannot be sustained without sacrificing wildlife habitat improvements.

The Oregon Department of Forestry study concluded proposed logging levels are about 30 percent more than the forests can sustain if they are to boost populations of salmon, elk, spotted owls and other species.

Reducing the logging rate could trim about \$15 million in annual timber revenue split among schools, coastal counties and other programs.

Forestry officials say final figures are not due until October. But if they hold, the state faces a difficult choice: reducing state forest logging and timber revenue, or relaxing wildlife and water quality protection.

"Is this going to be a science-based decision or is it going to be a political decision?" said Susan Ash of the Audubon Society of Portland. "It's likely going to be a political decision."

State logging has high financial stakes for Oregon counties, which get millions in timber revenue. Counties and the timber industry backed a 2001 management blueprint for the state forests based on estimates that logging would total 280 million board

feet per year.

"If it falls drastically below that, we've got a big problem, and that's exactly what's happening now," said Ray Wilkeson of the Oregon Forest Industries Council.

The state forests have become an important source of timber for Oregon sawmills as logging collapsed on federal lands, where tighter wildlife protections apply. They may become even more important as new sawmills in Washington state raise demand.

The 2001 management plan was created as a way to provide a steady timber supply and a mix of forest ages and sizes for wildlife. Logging would be rotated across the

landscape, sculpting a diverse mosaic that includes older, larger trees to support species such as spotted owls and younger forest for other animals.

Logging was aimed at trees planted following the massive Tillamook wildfires decades ago and now reaching harvest size.

"We were led to believe we could have it all in terms of a substantial timber harvest and a structure base that provides us with environmental values and social values," said Tillamook County Commissioner Tim Josi. "We need to find out if that premise is still true."

The earlier logging estimates were based on sketchy details of for-

est growth. But when foresters began planning timber sales, they found about 30 percent to 40 percent less wood than the estimates had suggested.

"We're trying to present the information in the most credible manner we can with the best information we have," said Dave Johnson, project leader for the study.

The initial results of the study show the forests can sustain logging of 149 million to 169 million board feet a year, depending on whether timber revenue or habitat is the priority. Those levels are far below what's now being cut, though the difference is scarcely more than 1 percent of all wood cut in Oregon.

IN BRIEF

Bill addresses certification of death for those lost at sea

NEWPORT — A few months after the death of her 21-year-old son, lost at sea in late 2001, Newport attorney Michele Eder contacted the state medical examiner's office, looking for his death certificate.

After a few weeks with no response, Eder called officials and learned it could take up to four months to get the

death certificate for Ben Eder, who had been aboard the fishing boat Nesika when it capsized.

She asked for an explanation of the delay and said she was told by a staff person, "Well, he might still turn up."

"My jaw dropped. I couldn't respond," Eder said. "After having faced the unending grief of losing your child, to have a bureaucrat say, 'He might turn up,' was just unfathomable."

Eder's story has inspired a bill that Gov. Ted Kulongoski is expected to sign, which gives the state

medical examiner 45 days to issue a death certificate when credible information exists that the person was lost at sea. The bill was sponsored by state Rep. Alan Brown, R-Newport, at Eder's request.

It was an easy bill to pass, Brown told The Oregonian.

"Apparently this has happened with commercial fishermen, who are often the breadwinner, up and down the coast," he said. "Without a death certificate, the family is unable to get the services they need — Social Security, life insurance. They

have no other means of support, and they are in a real bind."

Since 1991, 21 commercial fishermen have died in Oregon coastal waters, according to the state Department of Consumer and Business Services. Four of those made up the crew of the Nesika, the boat Ben Eder was aboard.

The 36-foot fishing vessel went down just outside the Yaquina Bay entrance shortly after leaving the port.

A Coast Guard investigation failed to pinpoint the cause of the capsizing but noted that the boat wasn't over-

loaded and had recently passed a safety inspection.

Eder said she takes some comfort in the thanks she's received from fishermen on the coast for her effort and is content some good has come from her loss.

"When the worst thing imaginable happens, there needs to be something that makes some sense," Eder said. "There isn't a grave to visit to lay flowers — getting a death certificate allows a family to begin to accept the reality of what happened."

— The Associated Press

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