



# St. Louis County Council Ethics Committee Issues Stinging Rebuke of County Executive

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By: *Patrick Tuohey*

Jeremy Kohler of the [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#) reported last month on a St. Louis County ethics committee report investigating county leases with Northwest Crossings.

While Kohler's piece is worth reading, you might want to start with the ethics committee report. The report, which is available through a link at the bottom of this post, lists 14 findings in the executive summary on page 3. In short, the committee found that the County Executive's personal staff negotiated a lease with Northwest Crossing that failed to properly represent the county and did so against the advice of the career professionals who usually conduct such negotiations. The staff is accused of misleading others about the costs and the process by which the contract was negotiated, and that additional costs for the lease were paid through budgetary sleight-of-hand. The committee also found that the Executive and his staff refused to provide documentation when asked.

The deal appears to have exposed county taxpayers to a lot of additional costs. The *Post-Dispatch* concludes that the lease "will cost taxpayers at least \$69 million and could run as high as \$77 million." Skeptics might write this off as mere bureaucratic bungling, but the ethics committee report suggests darker motives.

Because the committee lacks the resources to further investigate, it recommended the full St. Louis County Council refer the matter to both the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of

Missouri and the Missouri Attorney General.

Irrespective of whether a crime has been committed, the report makes it clear that the County did not have in place the type of basic policies necessary to ensure transparency, accountability, and integrity. Taxpayers should be asking why not.

 [StLCo\\_Ethics Committee Report 06-19-18 Crossings at Northwest Leases\\_0.pdf](#)

## About the Author



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- [3] [https://showmeinstitute.org/sites/default/files/StLCo\\_Ethics%20Committee%20Report%20%2006-19-18%20Crossings%20at%20Northwest%20Leases\\_0.pdf](https://showmeinstitute.org/sites/default/files/StLCo_Ethics%20Committee%20Report%20%2006-19-18%20Crossings%20at%20Northwest%20Leases_0.pdf)

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