

Edit Referral

H-21-378 Referral Information

Hotline ID: H-21-378

Date of Submission: 9/3/2021

Entity Type: Local

Entity Category Type: City/Town

Entity: Lind, Town of

Sub Entity Name:

Category: Billings/Receivables

1-2 sentence description of concern: The Town of Lind made me write a check for \$5350, after pay \$1000 cash for said water and sewer connection fee. They will not give me receipts or any fact to why I am responsible for paying this huge amount

Report Issued: No

Reporting Type: Verbal Resolution

Report Number:

Investigation Contracted: No

Contract Number:

Contract Name:

Billing Time Code:

Costs:

Public Records Request: No

Flag For Annual Report: No

Substantiated: No

ARRA: No

Action: Referred to Audit Team - Consider Next Audit

Audit Team: Tri-Cities

Audit Team Contact: waltmang@sao.wa.gov

cc:

Referral Date: 9/3/2021

Action Taken: No

Response Date:

Report Date:

Follow Up Date:

Date Closed: 10/12/2021

Edit Referral

H-21-378 Contact Information

Hotline ID: H-21-378

Date of Submission: 9/3/2021

Submission Method: Letter

Date of Letter: 9/2/2021

Submission Type: Citizen

Staff: gillisj

Author(Last, First): Osborn , Briana

Address:

City:

State: WA **Zip:**

Home Phone: 509-539-9008

Work Phone:

Mobile Phone:

Email: brianna_13_1@hotmail.com

Can Contact: Yes

Contact Home Phone

Preference: Email

Anonymous: No

Waived Confidentiality: No

Edit Referral

H-21-378 Referral Details

Hotline ID: H-21-378

What state or local organization is involved?

Town of Lind

Please identify the specific concerns you are hoping the audit will address.

concerns over utility billing and meter installation (moved over from Fraud database F-21-314)

Please provide a detailed description of the assertion or outstanding achievement, including who, when, where, what, how and how much.

The Town of Lind made me write a check for \$5350, after pay \$1000 cash for said water and sewer connection fee. They will not give me receipts or any fact to why I am responsible for paying this huge amount. SUBMITTED PRIMARY LOSS TYPE: The mayor told me I pay \$500 for Water \$500 for sewer that my meter would be put in. Then she hired a company to put it in because the town didn't have employees. Now she charged me for the cost of the meter and installation which wasn't said to me! I was bent over a barrel and forced to pay this amount to get water for my family! They keep giving me more bills, they haven't been professional or straight forward. They are treating me badly, which a local reporter saw with his own eyes how the mayor talks and treats people. Very very Unprofessional!

How did this issue come to your attention?

Was charged fees for installation of meter which was not originally quoted to me. Town hall charging me \$6460! When RCW law states Town must bear cost of meter.

What employee(s), contractors, etc., were involved in the assertion or achievement? Please include employee titles if possible.

Mayor, Water Department

Please provide the names of any witnesses to the assertion or achievement, if possible.

Please provide any additional details or comments that would help us understand your assertion or achievement.

Edit Referral

H-21-378

Activity

Log

Hotline ID: H-21-378

Entry Date ▼	Log Entry
10/12/2021	Referral updated by 'JEANA Gillis (gillisj)'.
10/11/2021	Referral updated by 'GINNY Waltman (waltmang)'.
10/11/2021	Based on article attached in the supporting documents, this hotline issue was resolved by the person that submitted this hotline and the Town. The Town repaid the funds. This hotline is closed. --waltmang
10/11/2021	Added article from Ritzville Journal 10/6/2021 --olearyd
09/10/2021	Referral updated by 'RUBY Chung (chungy)'.
09/10/2021	Referral updated by 'RUBY Chung (chungy)'.
09/10/2021	Called Citizen on 9/10/2021 and updated the referral information. --chungy
09/03/2021	Referral updated by 'JEANA Gillis (gillisj)'.
09/03/2021	Task assigned to 'waltmang@sao.wa.gov'. Team notification email sent to: waltmang@sao.wa.gov
09/03/2021	Referral updated by 'JEANA Gillis (gillisj)'. Action changed from (not set) to Referred to Audit Team - Consider Next Audit.
09/03/2021	Referral updated by 'JEANA Gillis (gillisj)'.

The Ritzville Adams County Journal - Eastern Adams County's Only Independent Voice Since 1887



Council overturns Lind mayor

By [Roger Harnack](#)
The Journal

Town returns funds collected illegally

LIND – A resident who was overcharged for water connection is getting thousands of dollars returned.

Briana Osborn appeared before the Town Council on Tuesday, Sept. 28, to plead her case for reimbursement of water connection fees after Mayor Paula Bell failed to provide proof of legal authority to collect the funds.

After listening to Osborn, and the mayor's rebuttal, the council voted unanimously to return \$5,239.85 to the homeowner.

At issue was whether the mayor had authority to authorize a contractor to trespass on Osborn's property and perform work without first obtaining permission and without providing the owner the opportunity to hire her own contractor. The mayor also failed to seek a council vote on her unilateral action.

Furthermore, the issue included discussion on whether the mayor even had the authority to demand payments totaling \$6,460 after only providing Osborn with information that set the connection cost at \$500 for water and \$500 for sewer, then agreeing with the fee schedule.

Osborn showed up at the meeting with a number of supporters and the signatures of about 100 residents calling for the exorbitant amount to be refunded.



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"I was given an amount (\$500 for water and \$500 for sewer connection); I paid cash that day," Osborn told the council. "I don't think it's fair to charge me thousands of dollars... The council should honor what your mayor and your clerk told me."

The mayor tried to justify collecting additional the excess amount, noting that she contacted a company working in town and asked if it would have employees install a water meter on Osborn's property.

Osborn said she came home to find a meter installed and the mayor extorted the funds in exchange for turning on the water.

She said the mayor has made the issue "nothing but hell for me," noting the issue had been ongoing for several months without resolution.

Those at the meeting asked the mayor to provide some verification Osborn new and agreed to the fees, but Bell was unable to provide any proof.



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"I don't know why she would have to approve it," Bell said.

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Residents pointed out the mayor, and town, would lose if Osborn sued. So, they asked the council for a refund vote.

The council unanimously approved of the refunded amount.

Author Bio

Roger Harnack, Publisher

Roger Harnack is co-owner and publisher of Free Press Publishing. An award-winning journalist, photographer, editor and publisher who grew up in Eastern Washington, he's one of only two Washington state journalists ever to receive the international Golden Quill for editorial/commentary writing. Roger is committed to preserving local media, and along with it, a local voice for Eastern Washington.

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