

September 4, 2009

Dear Commissioner Young and members of the Septic Ordinance work group:

My husband Dick and I came to Thursday's meeting (9-3-09) to watch appointed citizens do the hard work of refining the septic system ordinance for the County Commission's consideration. Instead the meeting's progress was taken off track by the 30-minute presentation by Barbara Lindberg. Although she insisted that she had been treated rudely, she repeatedly interrupted other speakers and the group chair.

As she spoke, I wondered about her "citizen expertise" especially when she referred two or three times to expert hydrologist and consultant Dr. Perry Rahn as "Ron Perry." She clearly did not know him, nor did she recognize Dr. Scott Kenner of SDSMT or Dr. Foster Sawyer, hydrologist of USGS, who were in the meeting room. Because I've gone on hydrology tours with Perry and heard Foster on several occasions, I was surprised Mrs. Lindberg did not know of their career dedication to water quality and protection if this were such a passion for her.

I got no answer when I asked about her expertise. At home, I googled Barb Lindberg, discovering that currently she appears to be a pastor of Freedom Life Outreach Family Church at 390 Westberry Drive. Apparently, she and her husband Layne did business as Master Log Builders (MLB) about 10 years ago. On Bob Ellis's blog, she is identified as an activist of the political right and a proponent of limited government and individual freedom. She appears to have no particular expertise or long-term involvement in water issues.

My husband and I have owned the property on which we live in Pennington County for nearly 25 years. As permanent residents since June 2001, we volunteer in community organizations in Hill City and Silver City as well as in Rapid City. A retired public school teacher, I lead 6-day Elderhostel tours of the Black Hills and Badlands and have studied something of the geology of the region for this job. I am no expert on water issues, only a concerned citizen like Mrs. Lindberg.

From research, I conclude that while Barbara Lindberg is entitled to express her opinion and opposition to the ordinance, she has no more right to speak for 30 minutes (and to interrupt the testimony of recognized authorities on water and hydrology) than I would have. More importantly, she has no right to de-rail the assigned task of the committee to construct the septic ordinance under the direction of the County Commissioners who had decided, upon hearing public testimony, that such an ordinance is appropriate.

Mrs. Lindberg spoke repeatedly that her freedom was being limited. Her behavior limited my freedom last night. I was not able to watch progress on an important ordinance that I've quietly and respectfully supported as a citizen of Pennington County. I watched respected experts and public officials as well as fellow citizens be verbally attacked and wrongly accused of being rude. I saw public service time squandered. My right to make a

public comment in support of the work of the committee for a strong septic ordinance was infringed by Mrs. Lindberg's agenda.

I urge you to grant citizens like me the freedom, as a home owners in Pennington County, to have an ordinance that allows us to pay a small fee for certification (upon an appropriately scheduled inspection) that our septic systems are safe for us and for our neighbors here in rural Pennington County and in the urban water galleries supplying Rapid City.

May I respectfully request that statements by the public, including my own, be limited to 3 minutes at future public meetings on the septic ordinance and other water issues including overlays. May I request that questions be written on cards and read by a moderator? May I suggest that guidelines be posted before these public hearings so that all who attend will know what to expect and will abide by them?

Please convey my appreciation to the Commissioners and county employees for their willingness to tackle this important issue and thank the citizen committee for hours of public service.

Respectfully submitted,

Donna M. Fisher  
12311 Whitetail Road (Pennington County)  
Deadwood SD 57732 (mailing address)

Cc

Brenda Young, Chairman      Commission District 1  
Nancy Trautman, Vice-Chairman      Commission District 2  
Ethan Schmidt      Commission District 3  
James Kjerstad      Commission District 4  
Gale Holbrook      Commission District 5