

Washington County Fair
78 Richmond Townhouse Road
Richmond, RI 02812

August 17, 2023

Town of Richmond
c/o Town Administrator – Ms. Karen Pinch
5 Richmond Townhouse Road
Wyoming, RI 02898

Dear Ms. Karen Pinch,

Members of the Washington County Fair Committee and members of our staff would like to provide you details of encounters that were had with the Richmond Electrical Inspector, Jeff Vaillancourt, during our recent inspection on Tuesday, August 15, 2023. Below are statements from key witnesses regarding behavior that occurred during their visits with the Inspector.

Andy Lemoi, Fair Electrician, reported the following encounters:

- On Thursday (8/10), Jeff introduced himself to me during the final inspections for Dan's Place (WCF – Pizza Booth). Within the first three mins of our conversation Jeff indicated that he wanted the job of being the Fair's Electrician.
- During the same visit (Thursday, 8/10), he stressed that he wanted to walk around to review the Fair's electrical infrastructure, which was more extensive than what our permit was pulled for. I feel that he was trying to position himself to take over the job by learning more detailed information regarding the Fair's Electrical System.
- Additionally on Thursday (8/10), I offered to meet with him on Saturday (8/12) or Sunday (8/13). I offered these dates because it was a better time to perform a facility review prior to the days before fair operation. I never heard from him regarding meeting on Saturday/Sunday and therefore a meeting was never set up. On Sunday (8/13), while I was here working within the upstairs of the Main Office, I saw him drive through in an unmarked personal vehicle and never asked anyone where I was. To note, I was here for 9 hours that day with no interaction with him.
- After our Thursday meeting, I sent him an email through the permit portal regarding the Verizon Cell Tower and he never got back to me until the Tuesday (8/15) before fair. While he was with me, he indicated that he was not notified that I sent a message through the permit portal. However, he pulled up his email in front of me where he found the notification email.
- On Tuesday (8/15) (the day before opening day), he showed up to the fairgrounds in his lettered company vehicle and parked right outside the main entrance (in the walkway). He was parked here for the duration of his visit while vendors and livestock exhibitors were checking into the grounds. The reason he indicated that he was here was for the state inspections and the town inspections of Rockwell Amusements. With Tuesday being the day before fair and vendor/livestock move in day this could not have been a worse time to do an extensive walkthrough with him as he requested. I continued doing my job that day and he was here for approximately 9-10 hours walking around. During his visit, he wanted me to drive him through

the grounds which I was not able to do as I had electrical tasks that needed to be completed for the opening day of the fair.

- He came back Wednesday Morning (8/16) unannounced and applied violation notice stickers to two units that we are aware of. One of the units was in regard to an infraction of the Verizon (cell tower) which has been corrected by Verizon. The other violation he issued was a notice regarding the dunk tank for not having a GFI. However, there is a GFI and always has been. I was never asked regarding the GFI in order to show him the set up.
- I want to stress that the Fair is a living process with electricians onsite throughout the 5 days to fix any issues that may occur. Personally, I am onsite for the entire fair to address those potential issues.

Sean McGrory, Co-Vice Chairman, reported the following encounters:

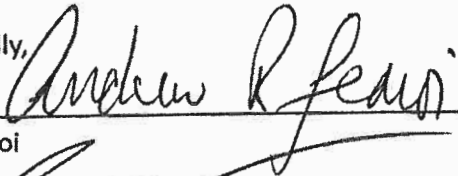
- During his visit on Tuesday (8/15), the day before the fair, our electrician was occupied with vendor arrival and setup, therefore, I rode with the electrical inspector in order to show him everything as he requested. I drove him around the entire fairgrounds several times stopping at multiple locations. Our first stop was at the Main Office where he started questioning the service to a mini split regarding the unit and parts installed during the original construction. The service was installed 7 years ago with the electrical inspected and approved during the original building permit by the prior electrical inspector. After this, we drove the grounds several times stopping in multiple locations where the conversation started to get more and more uncomfortable regarding projects, he had done comparable to this event and how he could do them differently or better than what we were doing. In my opinion, it felt as if he was trying to push his company/brand on us without going through proper channels (i.e. RFP, Bids). I felt like he was pushing his way to become the next fair electrician. He was promoting the projects that he had done regarding wiring the balloon festival with temporary wiring at URI, and more than once pushing the fact that his company had generators available. He indicated that if he was hired to be the fair electrician, he would be able to bring in generators onsite quicker than anyone in the industry in the event the fair had electrical issues. This conversation occurred at pole P in the parking lot while looking at a Cedar Tree that could potentially obstruct the light when it was turned on. While on the ride, there were multiple questions regarding how we do things, how we inspect things, how the facility ran, and who goes through every piece of the grounds. These questions had nothing to do with electricity and it made me feel very uncomfortable. He additionally asked about the pump house and how many wells we had onsite. While on the tour with him, he would not give specifics on what he wanted to see during the tour. The very few electrical questions that were asked are regarding specific questions about the main stage. These questions were regarding temporary wiring that was not completed at the time of our walkthrough. We drove around the entire fairgrounds approximately 4-5 times looking at the sandwich boards adjacent to the Verizon truck. At this point, he started questioning the upcoming work we had, and possible upgrades in the future. This conversation additionally made me feel uncomfortable. It felt like he was attempting to dig for information to perform possible future work that he could bid on. The meeting concluded with mild pleasantries when our electrician came back on the grounds.

Pete Fish, Chairman, reported the following encounters:

- During opening day on Wednesday (8/16), the Electrical Inspector stopped me near the Verizon Booth (cell tower) for he had concerns with the Verizon hook up. I would like to note that this was during operational hours of the fair and Verizon had their professional electricians hook up the cell tower on Tuesday, 8/8. His concern was regarding the length of the cord hook up because he wanted it to be the exact length to the Verizon Truck. He told me that he had the right to cut the power to the truck if he wanted to. I told him that he would have to take responsibility for the safety of the fair because he would be cutting the communication of the police, fire, fair staff, and its patrons. I felt that he was annoyed based of his body language because I said that.
- My concern with this is that he was here for a 9-hour inspection on Tuesday (8/14), which should of occurred on the weekend for issues to be addressed. The Verizon Truck travels throughout New England and uses the same hook up everywhere. My concern is that this could have been addressed long before the opening day, but it was decided to put a violation notice during operations on Wednesday morning with patrons in attendance passing by the truck.
- During this same conversation, he told me that he placed a violation notice on the Chariho Cowboy Booth because of a GFI Concern. However, our own electricians stated that the GFI was in the panel box as required. Again, he takes that day to place the violations sticker on when patrons were present on the fairgrounds. My complaint is that this should have been handled on Tuesday when the fair was not open to the public at that time instead of putting the violations during operational hours with patrons present.
- I would like to note we have worked diligently with the town and their inspectors to get inspections done before the opening of the fair, and we appreciate all that the town has done to do this. I just feel that fining us with violations should have been reported prior to gates opening on Wednesday thus avoiding giving the impression to our patrons that the fair is unsafe.

We feel that these concerns need to be brought to your attention. Any questions please do not hesitate to reach out to any of us directly to discuss further.

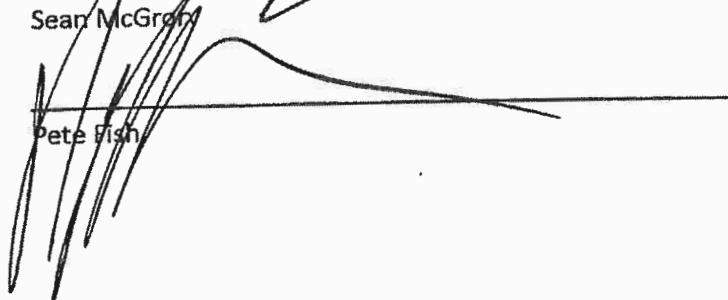
Respectfully,



Andy Lemoi



Sean McGrath



Pete Fish

Electrical - Underground

Not Inspected

Electrical Inspection

Fail

Inspection History

Date	Inspector
Aug 16, 2023	Jeff Vaillancourt

Ask a question about this

TOWN OF RICHMOND

Electrical
VIOLATION NOTICE

525-3D

CITE

VIOLATION

NEC

SIGNED

Jeff VA

DATE

8/15/23 -

DIVISION OF
BUILDING INSPECTION

TOWN OF RICHMOND
Electrical
VIOLATION NOTICE

CITE *NFEC code*
VIOLATION *525.20 A*

JEFF V
SIGNED _____

DATE *8/15/23*

DIVISION OF
BUILDING INSPECTION

Erin Liese

From: Electrical Inspector
Sent: Wednesday, August 16, 2023 8:36 PM
To: Karen Pinch
Subject: Re: Issues at the Fair
Attachments: processed-7f561f3b-ba00-4fda-8348-8c975b17ecea_aHyKT2jy.jpeg;
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No problem.

The complainants felt that you were overzealous and issued many violations and fines

There were three issues I sited at the fair.

1. the dunk tank was not bonded grounded as needed, inuse weather proof cover not In Place.
 2. A verizon truck which is a mobile concession vendor, has a wire not rated for the purpose and over fused.
 3. Dels lemonade had /has a worn out damaged electrical wire, with exposed live parts
- All above Relevant to article 525 national electrical code.

Attached pictures for review.

That's three items total I requested to be handled as repairs / violations as they are critical for safety / compliance.

Another item I inquired about was 2nd floor of grange building wiring and air conditioning wiring Susan had emailed me about while I was on the fairgrounds. The fairgrounds was very stand offish on that and didn't want to Review or disclosure to much about those activities didn't even want to let me in to look at second floor that was being utilized?.

There were numerous broken electrical box covers and electrical boxes around also that needed repairs and unlocked panels needing secured. but only mentioned, as seen in passing, and was told was on to do list.

No fines or fees or stoppage of fairgrounds activities were issued or even spoken of, not once.

Uncomfortable is an odd word, I let myself be available for the carnival and fairgrounds without any high pressure, never rushed or pushed them to hurry up and get done for inspections etc didn't even crowd around or shadow them. Pretty much was there mostly for carnival as their repairs took a lot time to finalize, and they needed my personal signature on a state form to operate when repairs were completed and Re-inspected.

I arrived at the fair around 2:05 pm per my GPS.

Met with the carnival electrician and carnival management.

Walked thru all the carnival equipment and generators, during that walk thru I was greeted by the fairgrounds electrician, he asked a question about a pvc pipe he was planning on using, I advised on his question, we planned to meet when. I was done with carnival

The carnival had a list of items to correct and needed a few hours to get it done, so in meantime I went looking for the fairgrounds electrician, he was very busy and hadn't eaten yet also for the day so, he wanted to leave and come back so he introduced me to a fair member who knew about open permits etc,(air conditioning susan had emailed me about). And Electrical items and that person (Sean, I believe). He drove me around the fair showing me all round. I asked inquisitive questions on certain items, including the open permits and plans they have Surrounding those open permits and future plans connected to them.

During the drive around, He mentioned many times how he works at u r l. I let him know that we worked at your uri also, I mentioned that we did all the wiring at the balloon festival that was there for many years. And it's similar wiring to what is done here. We talked shop About the various work and the various people that we knew together.

I did not indicate or ask or solicit for any contract or work I know the line not to cross. I always let them know I was familiar and knowledgeable about this type of work letting them know I understood the challenges they faced, as we do this many places ourselves, and enjoy a great safe outcome, so any questions or assistance needed I was always available.

I thanked him for the tour around, let him know I knew he was busy today and appreciated meeting him, and all the information, told him I seen a few items on our drive that I would adress direct with the electrician and waited for electrician to arrive back from his lunch break.

I packed a lunch and ate it at some picnic bench's watching all the activities.

When the electrician arrived back from lunch or when I seen him next, I inquired about 2nd floor grange wiring and ac wiring. We spoke about a receptacle that would be needed per code and a need for a permit and inspections needed if not done already.

I asked if he was ready to walk around and review grounds together, and he was not, I told him no problem I'm waiting on carnival to be done with repairs, I've got time. So I walk the grounds taking notes for our next staff meeting.

At one point , I did tell the electrician that if he got into a jam and needed any tools or anything he didn't have during the fair set up or during the fair and I had them that I, would be more than happy to be helpful and let him borrow /use them, as I am very close by in town, all he needed to do was ask.

Checked in with carnival on their repairs, they were not ready yet, so I continued to walk the grounds reviewing what I could see, without the electrician, made some more notes.

Carnival came to find me. Reviewed their repairs and signed off on their release at approximately 4pm, at that point I spoke to Susan at 4pm about the permit to operate fair. Told here carnival was all set. Fairgrounds just waiting for them to be done, I was sure anything needed to be done they would do. Not to hold anyone up.

Went looking for electrician on grounds. Could not contact or find him.
Left a note on the three above items for the corrections and repairs.

I was leaving fairgrounds at approximately 5pm ran into a friend if mine who had arrived and spoke with him for a while before departure.

Left information in portal.

The Carnival called me this am 8/16 on an issue. Stopped by at 9am, adressed their item.

A fairgrounds member, I was introduced to in passing was nearby, I reintroduced myself, Asked if his electrician was around, he said not yet. I didn't plan on staying any longer, so I Let him know the of the items I had left notes on were important and to have electrician adress. I left at 9:30am.

You called at 2pm.

You asked about the follow up to the code violations.

All issues with the amusements and generators were addressed and are of no concern. No added fees etc

The fairgrounds issues I pointed out.

They should be adressed Immediately.

They are a Life safety hazard, That I clearly pointed out. And are the minimum code standard.

I let them know about it, They looked right through me as if I wasn't there. I got the clear impression that they were gonna do whatever they wanted to, whenever they felt like doing it, so I wrote my notes, Cited the specific code requirements on paper, noted the portal and left it at that.

I did not want to create or incite any type of a combated instance, I learned my lesson previously.

My plan is that, I know that Tony will be in the office on Thursday. And was going to approach him directly in person and ask him what he wanted to do together, As a department.

As I mentioned on the phone, I'm not comfortable with the fact that these items are not addressed.

Jeff Vaillancourt
Electrical Inspector
Town Of Richmond RI

From: Karen Pinch <townadministrator@richmondri.com>
Sent: Wednesday, August 16, 2023, 5:12 PM
To: Electrical Inspector <electricalinspector@richmondri.com>
Subject: Issues at the Fair

Jeff,

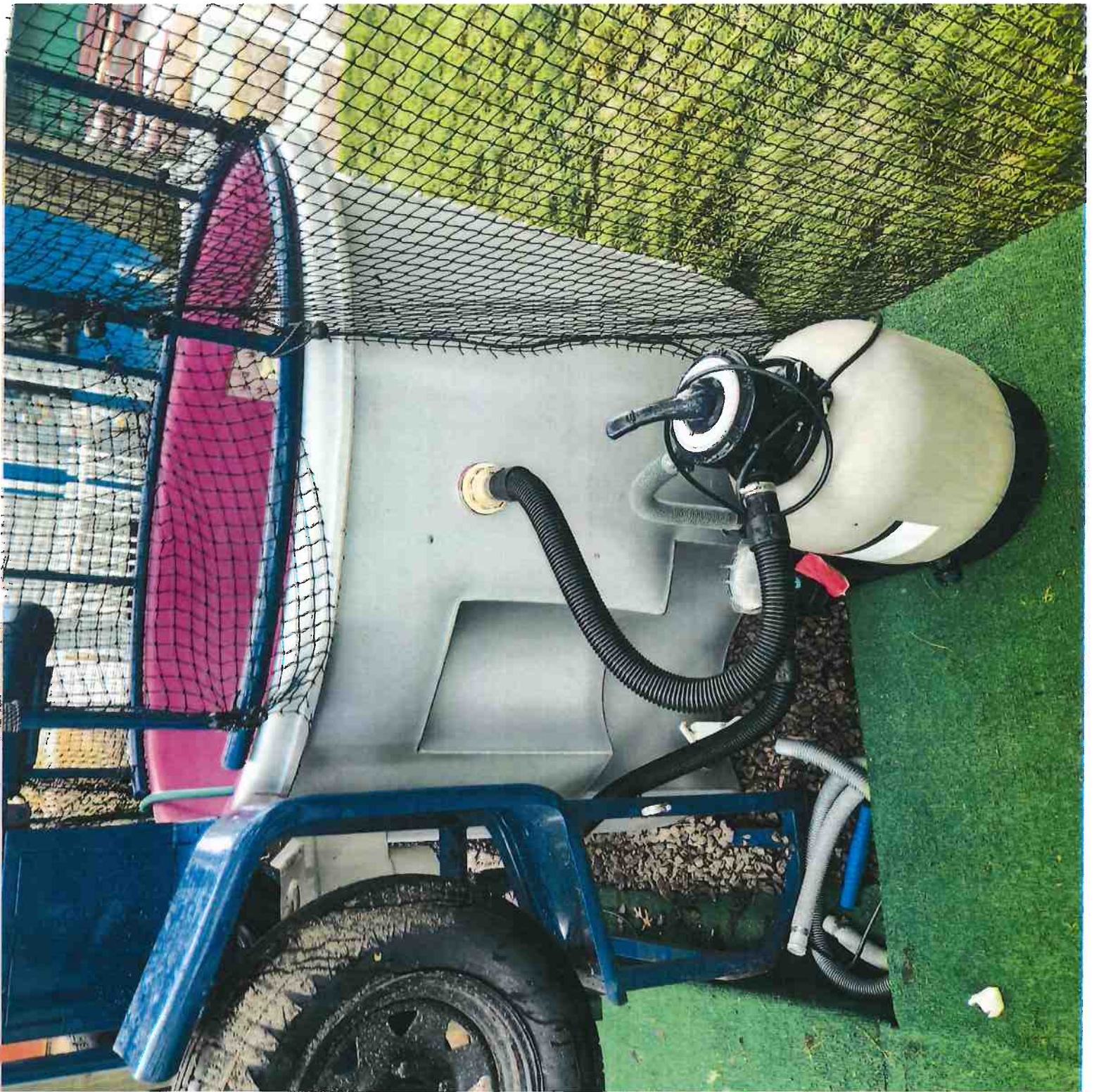
Per our conversation, we had some complaints about your actions while doing inspections at the fair. The complainants felt that you were overzealous and issued many violations and fines and that you stayed for a long period of time, making them uncomfortable. One even went as far as to say that they felt that you were trying to get business for your company and/or get the job as electrician there in the future. We discussed this today and you said that wasn't the case. Could you write out a short narrative (or response to this email) outlining what took place, to include the violations and what will be the follow-up to those? I just want you to do this while it's fresh in your mind so that you can accurately refute any formal complaints should they come in. Thanks.

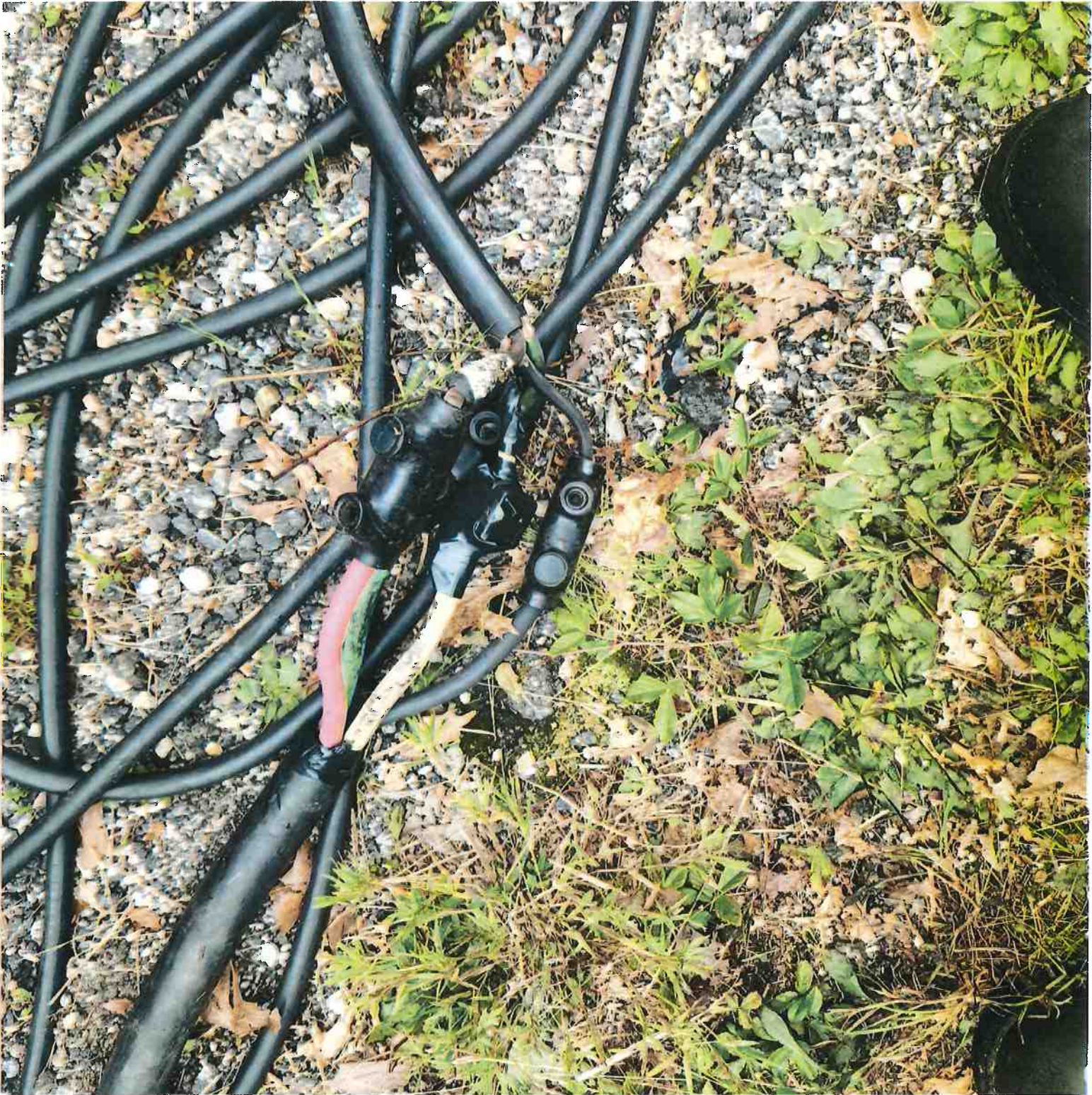
K

Karen D. Pinch

Town Administrator
Town of Richmond, RI
Town Hall
5 Richmond Townhouse Road
Wyoming, RI 02898
401-491-9624 (office)
townadministrator@richmondri.com

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VIOLATION NOTICE
Electrical
NEC - Code -
CITE 525.20-D-E-H
VIOLATION JEER ✓
SIGNED Electrical Dept
DATE 8-15-23
DIVISION OF
BUILDING INSPECTION



TOWN OF RICHMOND
Electric
VIOLATION NOTICE

CITE	NEC CODE
VIOLATION	525.20 A
REASON	2600 V
DATE	8/15/23

DIVISION OF
BUILDING INSPECTION

NOT IN USE



