

October 15, 1984.

Cambridge City Council

Cambridge City Hall

Cambridge MA 02138.

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CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

To the Honorable Chairperson and
City Council Members:

I am writing to express support
of your questioning the Cambridge
City Building Department's practices.

During the last seven
months my neighbors and I have
been seeking assistance from the
Building Department toward
rectifying conditions in our
apartment building. What we
anticipated being a somewhat
straightforward matter has in fact
been a harrowing experience.

Throughout the months,
the building inspectors have been
reluctant to cite blatant housing
code violations. When asked reasons
for overlooking conditions, these
inspectors often gave weak, inapprop-
riate answers in lieu of the citation.

For example, when shown the hole creating a passage between indoors and out resulting from a missing brick in a nice radder building, the inspector exclaimed "Well the furnace needs oxygen you know. What else seems to be a problem?" Another time while witnessing a kitchen sink filling up with dirty dishwater from the apartment above, the inspector, failing to cite this problem, mentioned that the plumbing did indeed need attention. At yet another occasion an inspector failed to cite a peeling paint violation claiming that the tenant may have hacked the ceiling with a screw driver.

Notification of reinspections has been problematic. Cards have been left erratically, an unreliable method. But of course tenants who were uninformed held responsible when inspectors could not gain entry. The record shows a tenant barred entry to an inspector, when in fact the inspector had asked via the building intercom system whether citations has been repaired and at a negative response from the tenant stated there was no reason for him to come upstairs.

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My neighbors and I have had a chronic problem with our landlord illegally entering apartments. At a court hearing the judge ordered that reasonable notice be given to tenants. Forty-eight hours was agreed upon by all. The landlord chose to ignore the order. At a later court date when asked by tenants to enforce the access agreement, the building department's representative responded that he had heard differently from the landlord, so he had no way to know who to believe and if we continued to push this issue he would press criminal charges against both parties.

In summary, our dealings with this department have been a huge frustration. Numerous extensions have been granted to the landlord to allow him to make repairs, yet it was still necessary for this case to end up in court. Then, again two more extensions were granted. The Department has demonstrated an overwhelming reluctance to do its job. The same inspectors who are unwilling to cite violations also will not ^{recommend} enforcing.

State laws to ensure that violations are repaired in a timely fashion. Instead the process continues ~~is~~ ad infinitum. One wonders for whom the laws were written and exactly what is required for their enforcement. This department's interpretation certainly offers little protection and aid to Cambridge tenants.

Sincerely yours,

Gail Collas

15 Trewbridge Street, #9

Cambridge

MA. 02138.



F-347

Comm. from Gail Collas, 15 Trowbridge St.,
recounting experiences she & her neighbors
have had in seeking assistance from the
Inspectional Services Dept.

*copy sent to the City Manager
10/24/84 mh*

In City Council,

October 15, 1984

10/15/84

WOT

Placed on file

Referred to the

City Manager for

Report in 1 week