

Memo

Date: December 31, 2019

From: Melissa S. Quon Huber, PhD

Re: City Inspection on November 19, 2019

I am documenting my recollection of events that transpired on this date at 1128 Dakin Lansing MI on November 19, 2019.

I had volunteered to come be present while the inspector was at this home for safety and to be a second set of eyes and ears.

When I arrived there were 3 gentlemen present. Only Mr. Bennett provided a business card so I do not know the names of the other two city employees. One was quite tall and dressed in office attire and the other was wearing Carhartts.

I arrived with a smile and greeted the men. I was extremely surprised by the unwelcome reception I received from the tall gentleman. His facial expression, demeanor, and tone of voice indicated to me he was unhappy I was there.

It was also a surprise that there were 3 city employees and not just one inspector as had been communicated.

Ms. Arend and I had planned to observe the inspection process to understand how it was conducted.

However, Mr. Bennett remained outside while the other 2 gentleman went inside, though periodically stepping outside for fresh air breaks due to poor indoor air quality.

Whether by design or accident, it appeared that the other two gentlemen were keeping Ms. Arend from observing Mr. Bennett's inspection.

I took a moment to step outside to observe. I saw Mr. Bennett standing on the ground looking up at the roof and writing on a piece of paper. He also looked at the roof with his binoculars.

I had casual conversation with him about his retirement from the city and his return as a contract employee and plans to enjoy his retirement when he finally gets to take it.

I had known of Mr. Bennett as he and my spouse cross paths occasionally at work and was genuinely interested in his life. I routinely meet city employees through my spouse and thoroughly enjoy getting to know them.

I don't recall if I had asked or if he volunteered the information, but he stated he was not going to go on the roof to inspect it.

I thought that was unusual given that some of the prior complaints about the roof had to do with flashing, caulking, ice shield, underlayment, and issues that would seem to be difficult to observe without close physical proximity.

However, from his vantage point I believe he would have been able to observe the installation of ridge vents instead of the vents designed for older homes (and had been removed by the contractor.)

I didn't stay outside long but just wanted to see how things were going. He said he wasn't going to prematurely come to any conclusions.

Ms. Arend had already relayed to me that Mr. Bennett had indicated his plans to have limited communication about his final decision. So I had hoped to glean some information from him verbally.

I came back inside and at one point Ms. Arend mentioned to me that the tall city employee expressed concern and dissatisfaction that I went outside. He had insinuated I was bothering Mr. Bennett or causing trouble.

I was taken aback by that. I genuinely couldn't understand the persistent frustration with my presence. As a matter of protocol and safety I do not think any female should be left alone with 3 males, 2 of which were completely unexpected. It angered me that a city employee would be so insensitive.

The 2 gentlemen were intermittently inspecting the inside of the house and going outside to look at things and get fresh air.

I would often go outside for fresh air myself and I observed them seemingly speaking in hushed voices.

At one point when indoors, the gentleman in Carhartts started giving Ms. Arend advice on products to purchase to try to remediate some of the mold so it didn't get worse.

Ms. Arend explained that as a low-income individual she did not have the funds to purchase non-essentials like that, especially having taken out a home equity loan for the roof and paying higher heating bills from having to keep the house windows open for breathable air.

As the hours progressed, the gentleman in Carhartts seemed to soften a bit and seem a bit sympathetic.

I asked both gentleman what they would do in this situation if this happened to their mom or sister.

The tall gentleman seemed to scoff but the gentleman in Carhartts seemed reflective.

The gentleman in Carhartts said there was clearly a problem but he didn't know where it was coming from.

The 2 gentlemen continued speaking in hushed voices inside as well. They seemed to try to keep out of earshot.

However, Ms. Arend came and relayed to me that she overheard the tall gentleman speaking skeptically of her. He said that she was "out to make a buck," probably assuming she could not hear them.

I was angered hearing this. I could not fathom how he could see all that mold on the floor and walls, holes in the wall left by contractors, the broken faucets and shower door damaged by contractors, and broken gutters and not have scintilla of empathy or willingness to entertain that a city contractor could have caused this.

They experienced the poor indoor air quality themselves. It stupefied me that a city employee would jump to the conclusion that Ms. Arend would live in these intolerable conditions for over a year, just to "make a buck."

Mr. Bennett then came inside to repeat the inspection of the same problem areas Ms. Arend had already shown the other 2 gentlemen.

I truly did not understand the role of the other 2 gentlemen and why they were present. They did not seem to augment the inspection in any substantial manner. Mr. Bennett also appeared to supersede comments and conclusions offered by the younger gentleman in Carhartts.

I did not follow them to the basement or attic but Ms. Arend came back and nervously reported to me that Mr. Bennett seemed to turn his attention away from the job at hand (inspecting the roof and subsequent damage following its installation) and focusing on a variety of inconsequential and unrelated issues in the house. She feared she was going to get written up for code violations.

I was unable to stay for the remainder of inspection. I left feeling very unsatisfied and unconvinced that a proper, thorough, and unbiased inspection had occurred.

I felt worried that the inspection would bring further harm to Ms. Arend rather than much needed relief and remedy.