

Documentation of ongoing food smells from 6B from 2018 through 2025

Hi everyone,

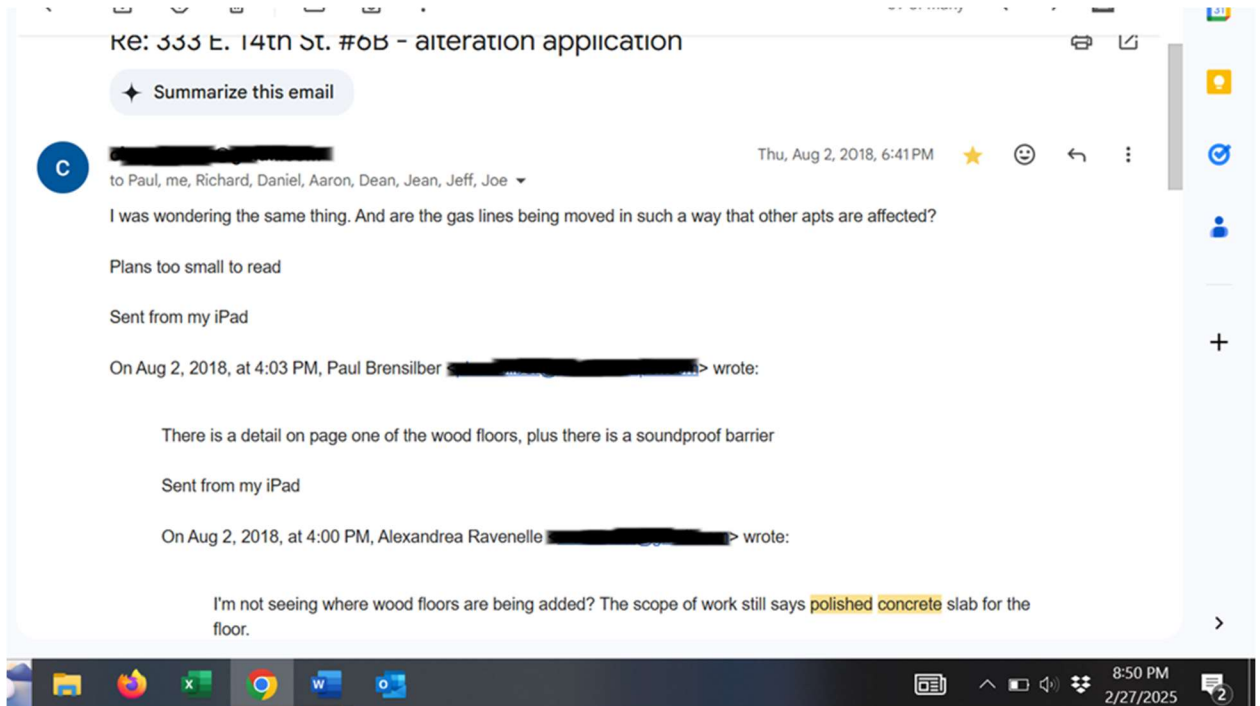
I want to clarify what is going on here, how long it has been going on, and how this should be addressed, complete with extensive documentation.

1. I purchased 6N in Nov 2009. I never had any smells in the apt.
2. After getting married, my husband and I purchased 6A in 2015. There were no claims of smells from the previous owner of 6A. We did not experience any smells.
3. We combined the apartments in 2016 and still did not experience any smells during the construction. There were no smells from our construction project either – we lived in 6N while 6A was renovated and then switched apartments and there were no smells.
4. In late 2016, 6B went on sale. My husband and I toured the apartment out of curiosity. We noted that there was a pipe being vented out the kitchen window. You can sort of see it in this photo from the Zillow listing. The pipe that I remember was a large silver duct. (photo taken from https://www.zillow.com/homedetails/333-E-14th-St-APT-6B-New-York-NY-10003/219659533_zpid/?mmlb=g,19)

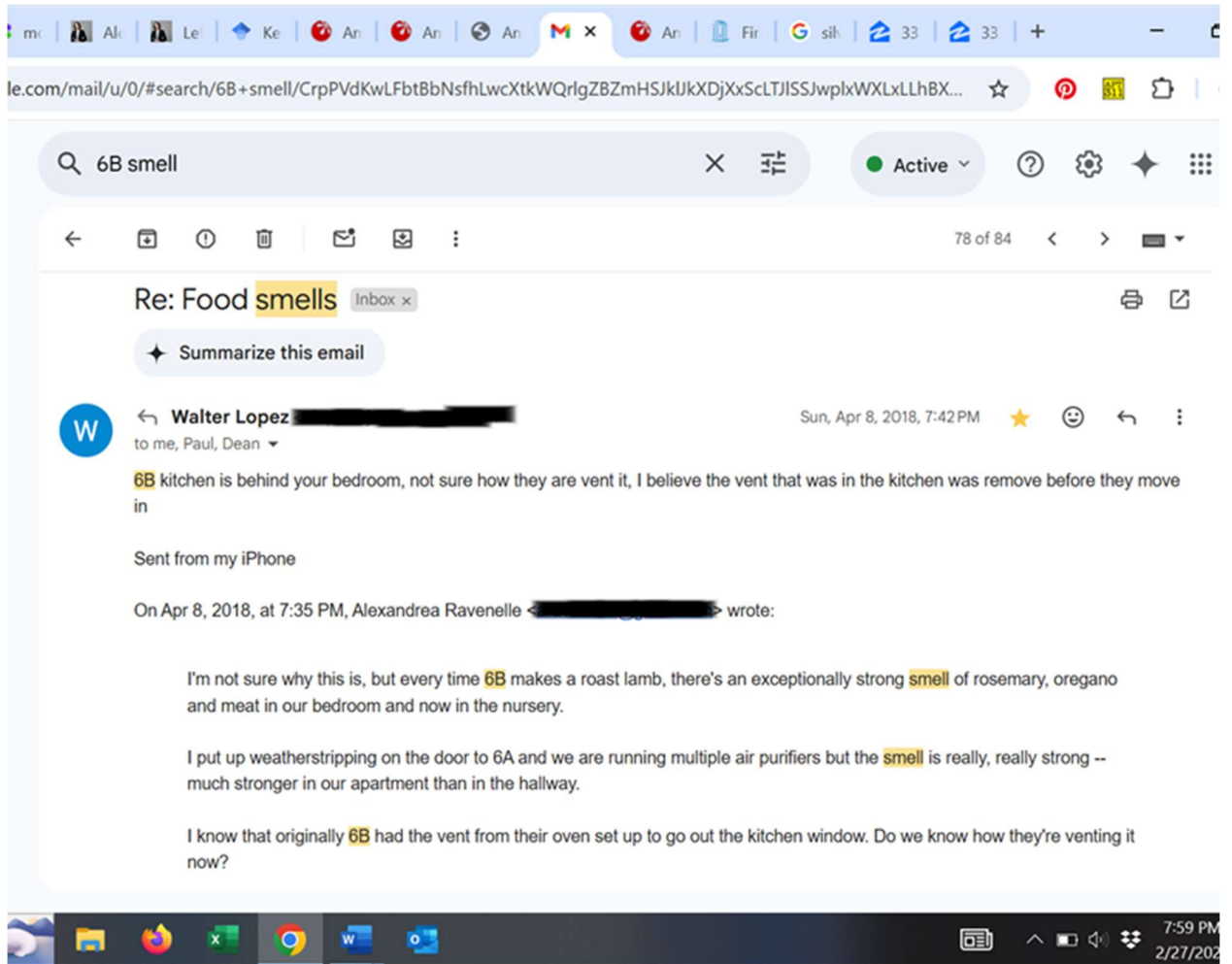


5. The Board was well aware that there was a makeshift vent.

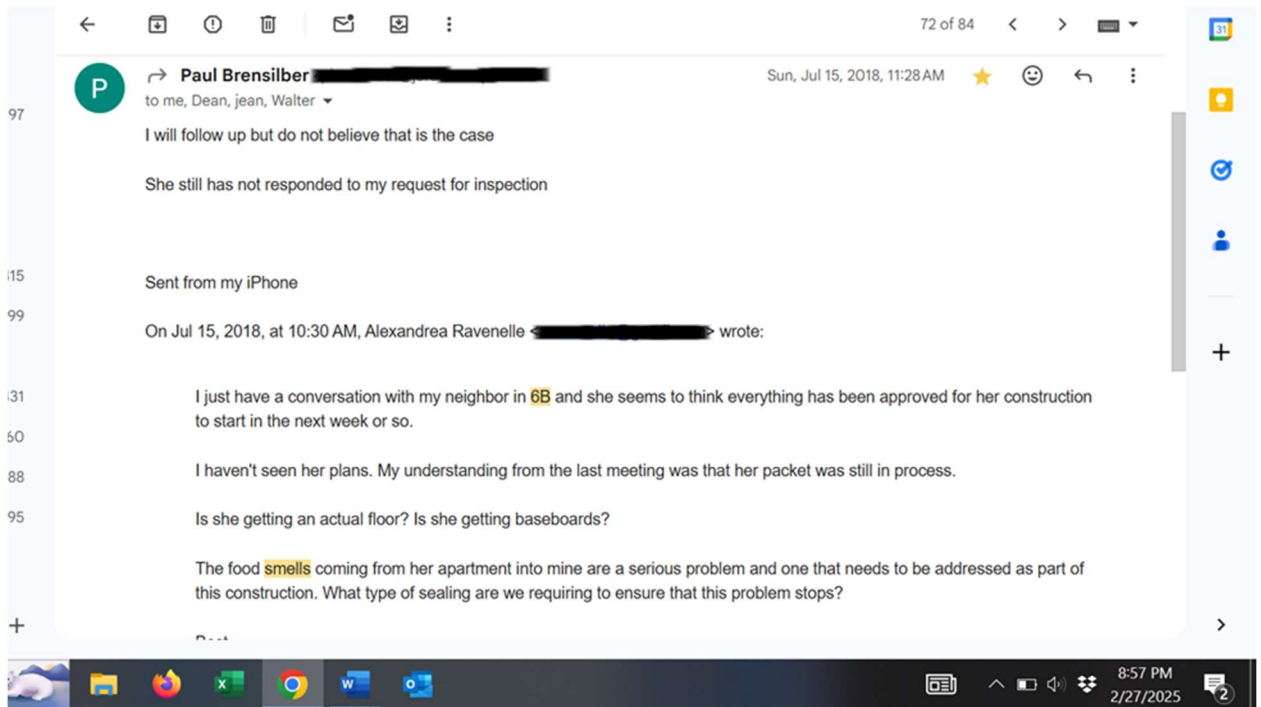
6. On Feb 14, 2017, 6B sold.
7. By July 2017, the toilet in 6B had flooded, leading to the co-op to pay for the asbestos remediation and floor replacement for 6B. (The insurance loss appears on the Board agenda for the July 2017 meeting and a later email on July 31 noting that the apartment was nearly empty). It appears that the shareholder moved out of the apartment for several months while this was occurring. The Board agenda for Nov 2017 notes that an environmental review was done and the floor would be demo'd. The March 2018 Board agenda notes that the floor was completed and it appears that the shareholder moved back in. It should be noted that the floor was concrete when the shareholder moved back in. They had decided that they wanted polished concrete instead of wood. You can see this email later in July where the issue of the concrete floors (which caused extreme noise in 5B) was addressed:



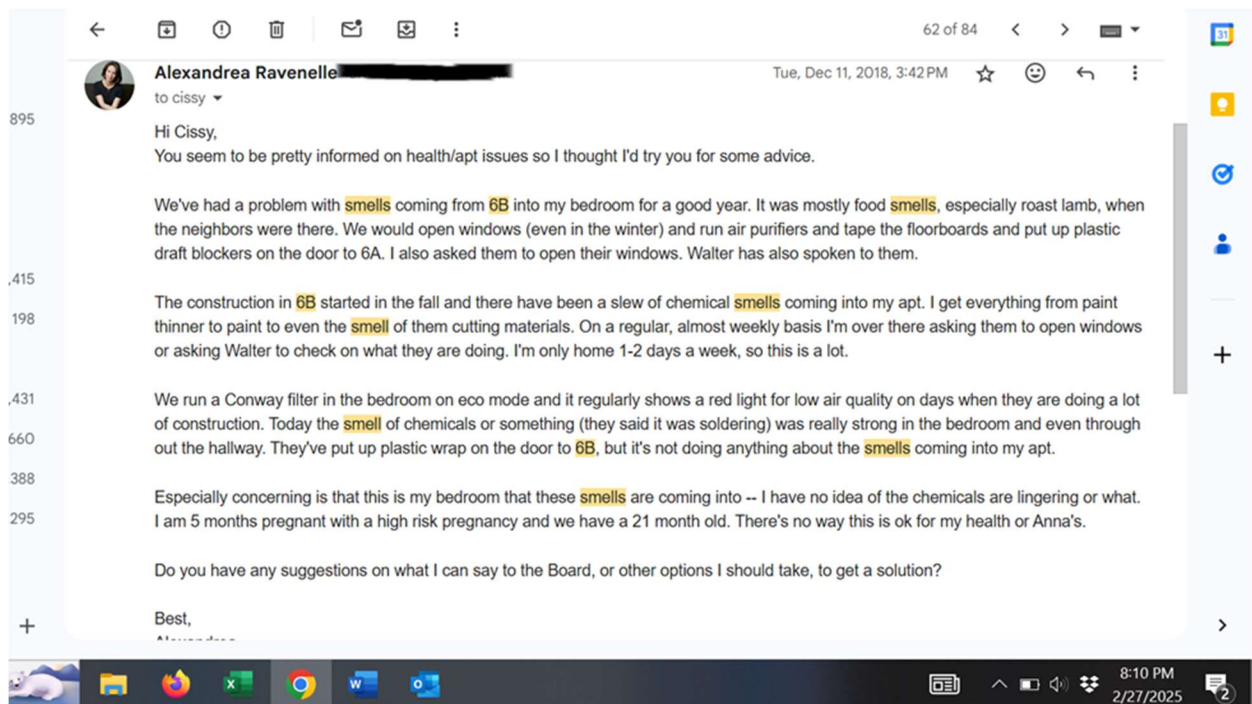
8. In any case, the shareholder in 6B returned to the building in March 2018 and the food smells began within a few weeks. Here's an email I sent in April 2018 noting that I was getting food smells and that they had been happening regularly. You can see that Walter has noted that the vent from the stove was removed before they moved in:



9. In June 2018, 6B submitted an application to renovate the apartment. The renovation took time to approve and on July 15, 2018, I sent the following noting that the smells were ongoing, questioning if floorboards and an actual floor had been added and asking about sealing:



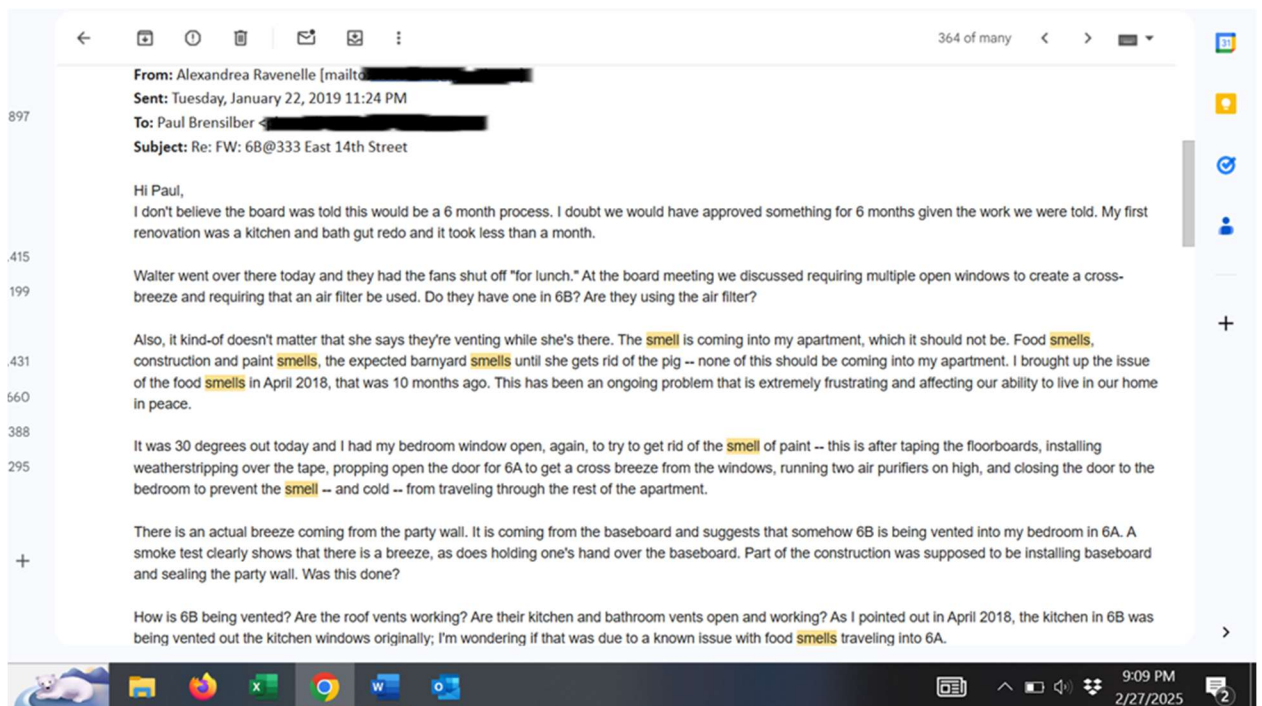
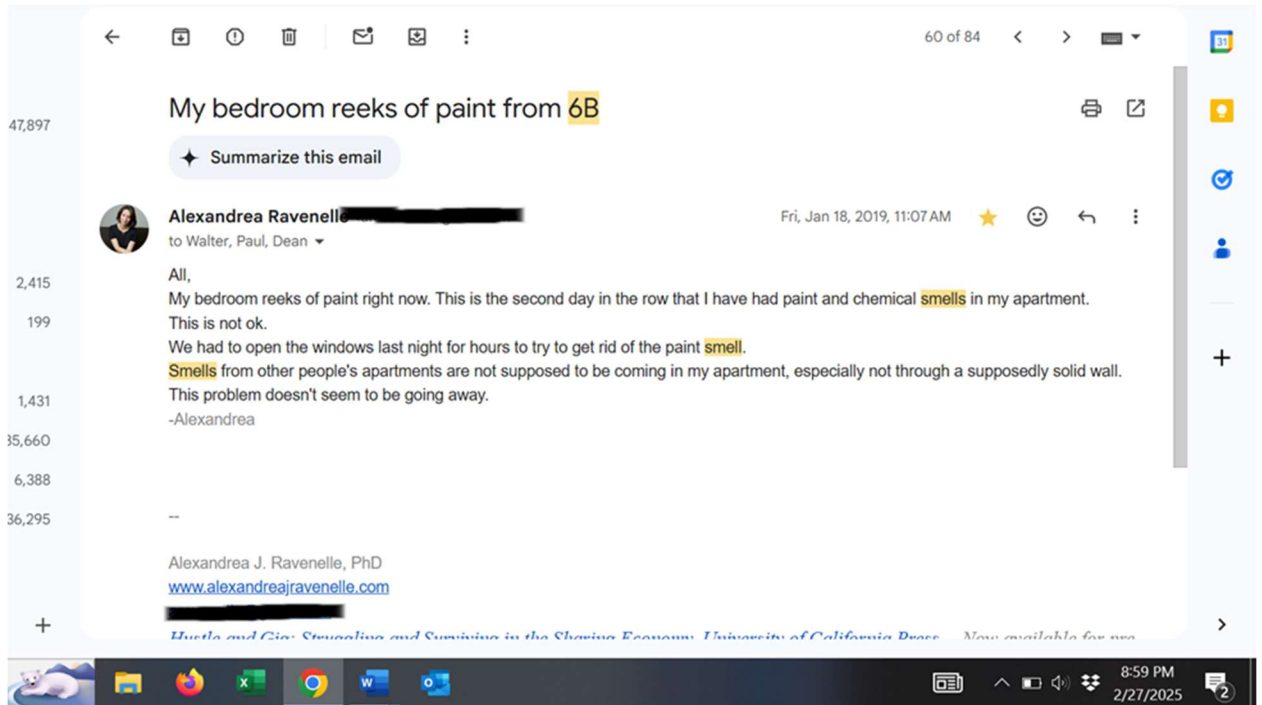
10. The construction on 6B began in the fall of 2018 and now the smells were construction based.



11. We also found plaster dust in our apartment on the floor under our bed (which is against the shared wall with 6B). This photo was taken on Dec 13, 2018:

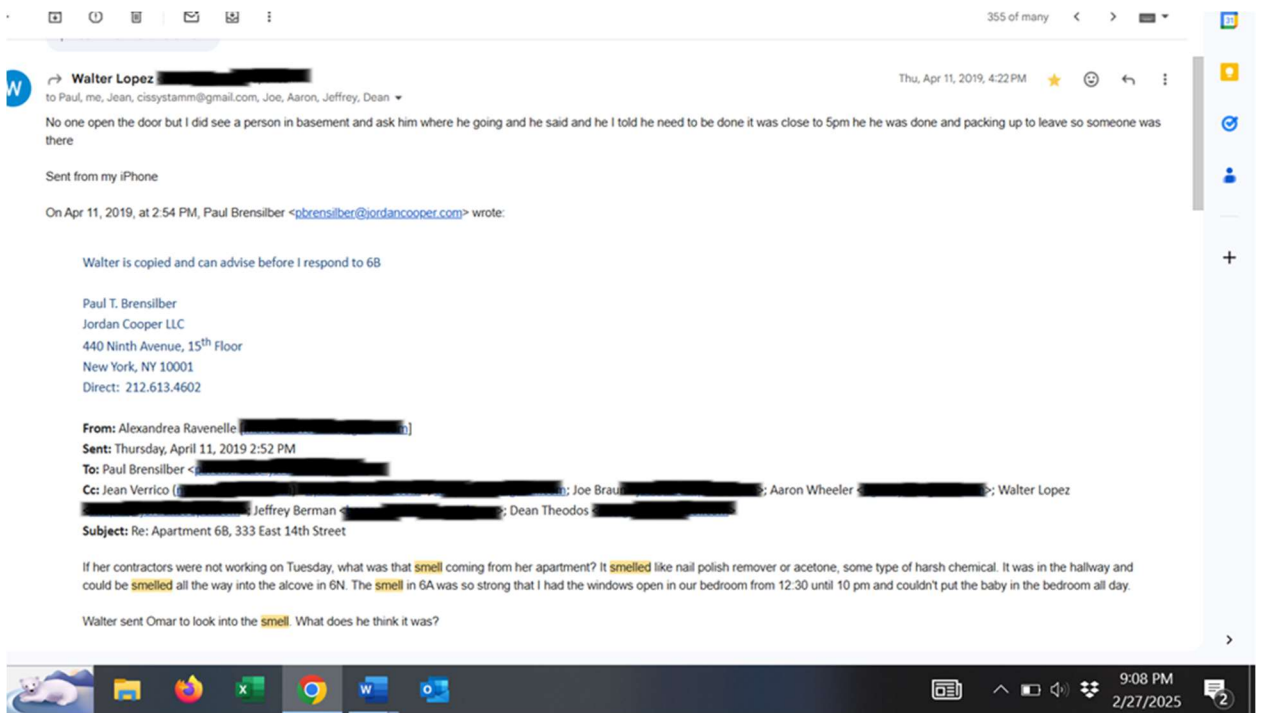


12. The construction on 6B continued for months. There were no food smells, but there were regular construction smells that started in the Fall of 2018 and lasted until April 2019:

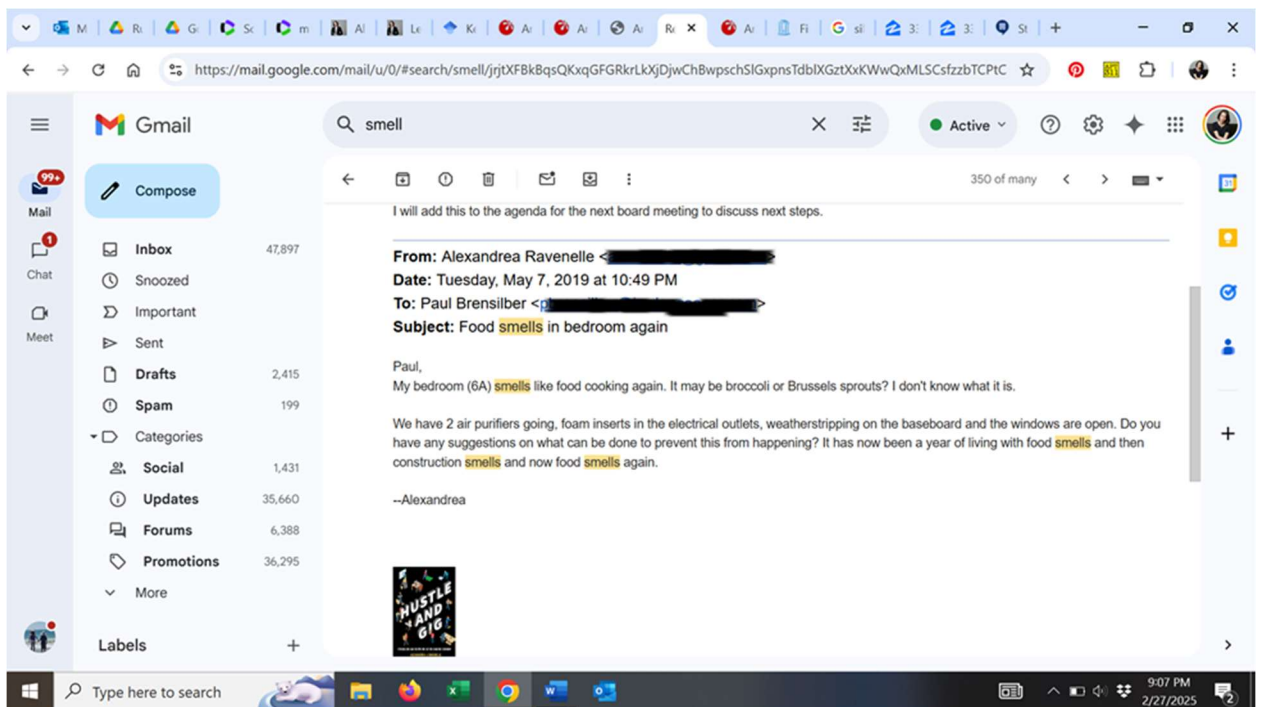


13. I also sent photos of plaster dust on the plugs that were in my electrical outlets and was simply told that I was wrong, that the plugs did not show dust (photo attached):






14. When the construction on 6B ended, the food smells returned:



Spoke with walter and will follow up in the am

From: Alexandra Ravenelle [redacted]
Date: Tuesday, October 22, 2019 at 8:20 PM
To: Paul Brensilber [redacted]
Subject: Apt **smells** like food

Hi Paul,
 Are you still nearby? My bedroom reeks from the neighbors.
 Can you come **smell**?



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Hustle and Gig: Struggling and Surviving in the Sharing Economy. University of California Press -- Now Available!

Apt smell


Summarize this email

Alexandra Ravenelle [redacted]
 to Paul, Walter [redacted]
 Tue, Oct 22, 2019, 8:38 PM

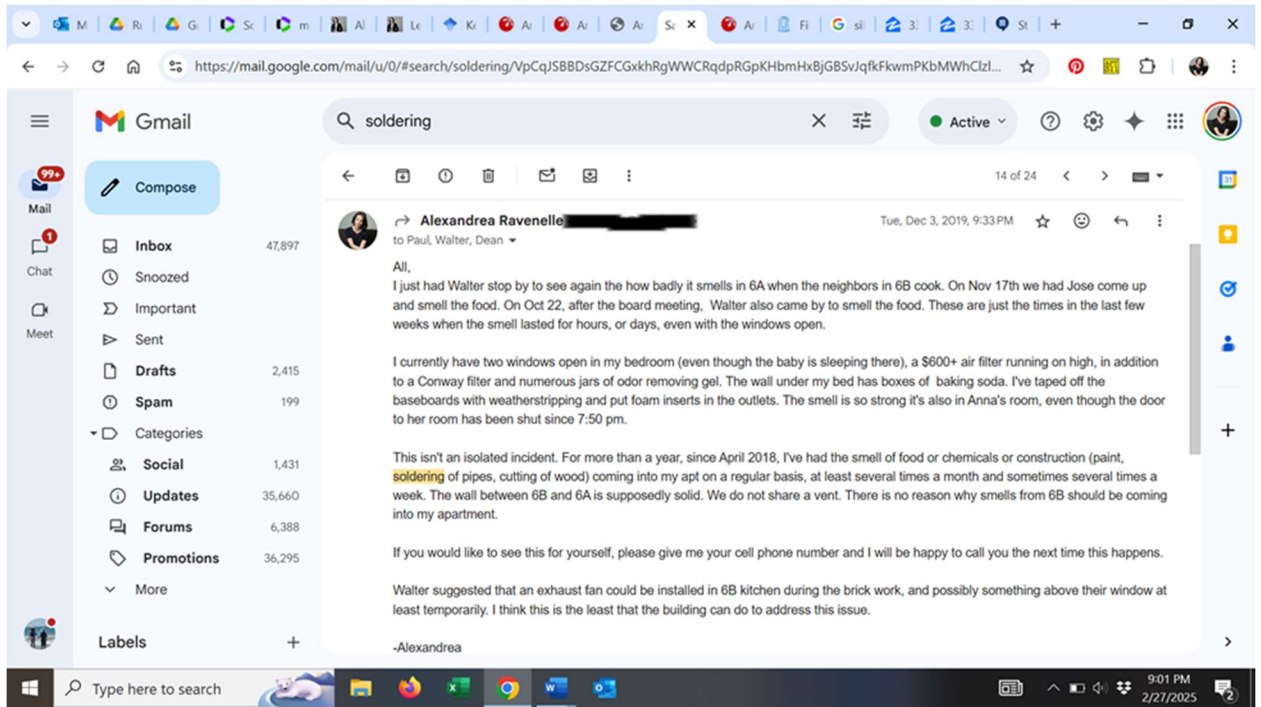
Paul,
 Walter came by and a **smelled** the oregano **smell** in the apartment. It is in the bedroom and in the living room -- pervasive.

Now I have my male neighbor in 6B at my door, twice in the last few minutes-- who is a very large guy -- demanding to know what to do. When I suggested an air purifier, he stomped off. Then he came back to accuse us of harassing him.

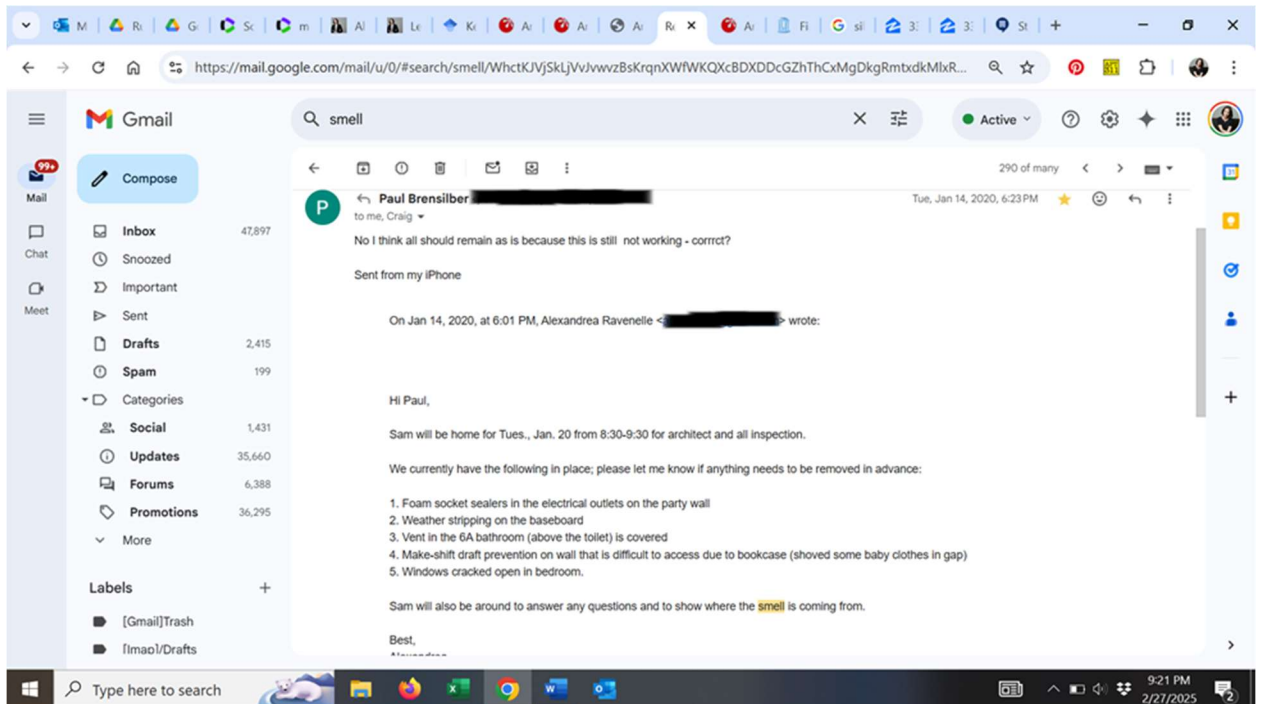
I was told to not talk to them. And I don't talk to them. Having him come to my door to harangue me over his cooking **smells** is not ok.
 -Alexandrea

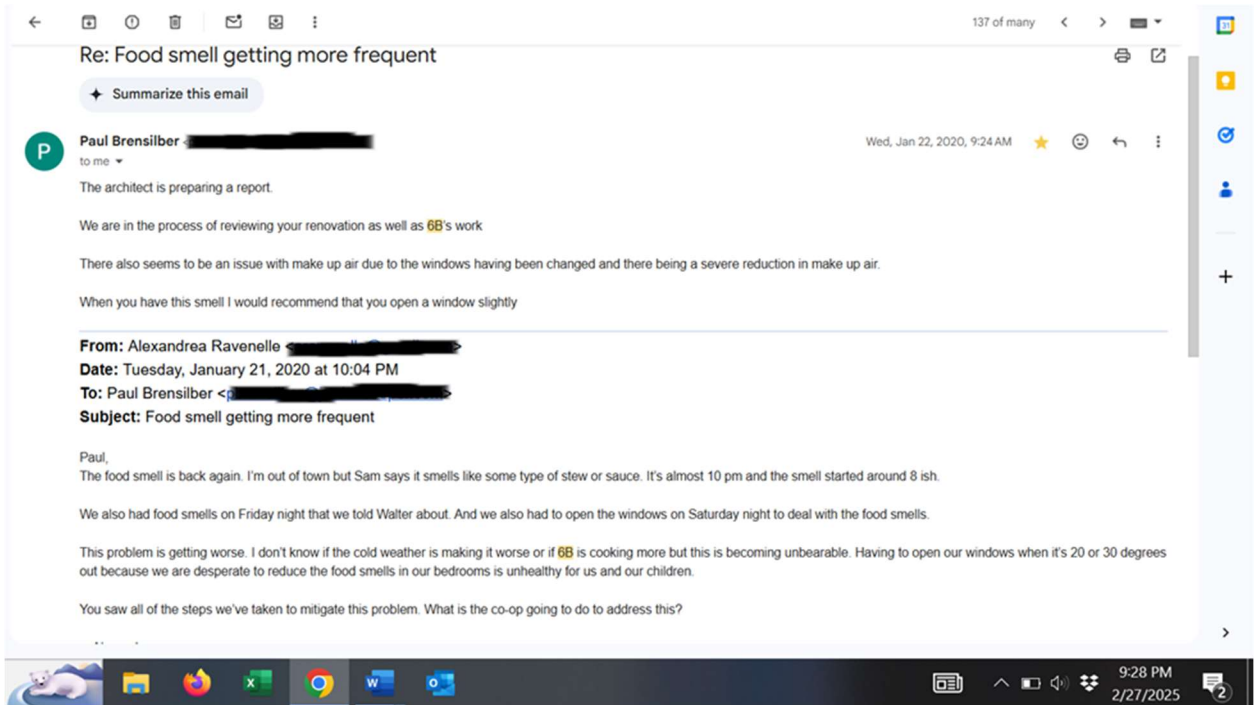


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The apartment was inspected in Jan. 2020 but there was no testing of an air differential or even a smoke test to see if air current was being vented from 6B into 6A:



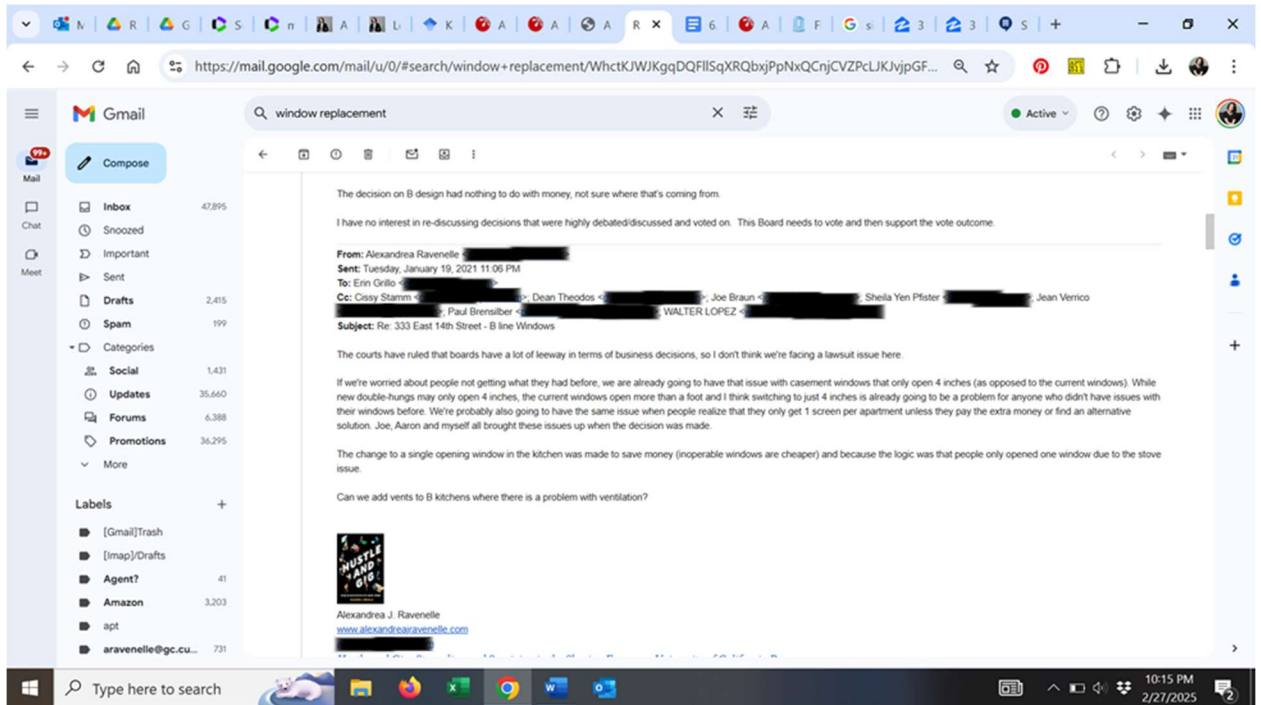


15. In January 2020, the owner of our management company told me to simply open a window -- even when it was 20 or 30 degrees outside -- and regardless of the fact that I had two children under the age of 2 living in my apartment.

At that point, I kind of gave up. I was essentially told by the co-op that I was a problem for complaining and that having Walter come and smell my apartment was harassment of 6B. It was obvious that the co-op had no interest in addressing this issue and pretty soon there was a pandemic. It should be pointed out here that the same steps that were taken in Jan. 2020 have been repeated again in Feb. 2025 and there is still no actual action to address this issue.

6B had a child around July/August 2020 and her mother moved into an apartment on the floor. It appears that the cooking for the family was mostly being done by the mother in 6F, and food smells were minimal.

16. You can see here in 2021 that I have pointed out the ongoing issues with ventilation in the B line as we discuss the window project:



17. In June 2023, 6B subleased to 2 tenants.

18. At this time, smells continued to come into my apartment. We also had an issue with the tenant in 6C that she was falling asleep while making toast or boiling water and starting small fires in her apartment. When this occurred, the smell from the fire would seep from 6C into 6B and then into my apartment from there. Due to this, I became friendly with the tenants in 6B and we exchanged text messages about smells that they were experiencing and our concerns about 6C and building upkeep, such as malfunctioning fans on the back roof. Through this time we continued to keep our windows open.

19. The situation was not good. We had to live with our windows open year-round. In the summer that often meant no air conditioning. In the winter, our bedroom was often cold. I often ran a space heater in the kids' room at night because it was so cold. We bought 4 Coway air purifiers at a cost of roughly \$250 each and spent another \$500 to \$600 on a Honeywell purifier with a large carbon filter.

20. And then the situation got worse. On the weekend of Jan. 11 and 12, 2025, the shareholder in 7B installed covers on their heaters and replaced their baseboards. That weekend we had the smell of sawdust in our apartment. It was strong enough that we had to open the windows all the way and I still felt like I was choking on the smell even though we don't share a vent and are not connected in any way – the 7B apartment is diagonal to us. The tenants in 6B

noted that their apartment also smelled like sawdust, suggesting that the smell was going through their apartment and into ours.

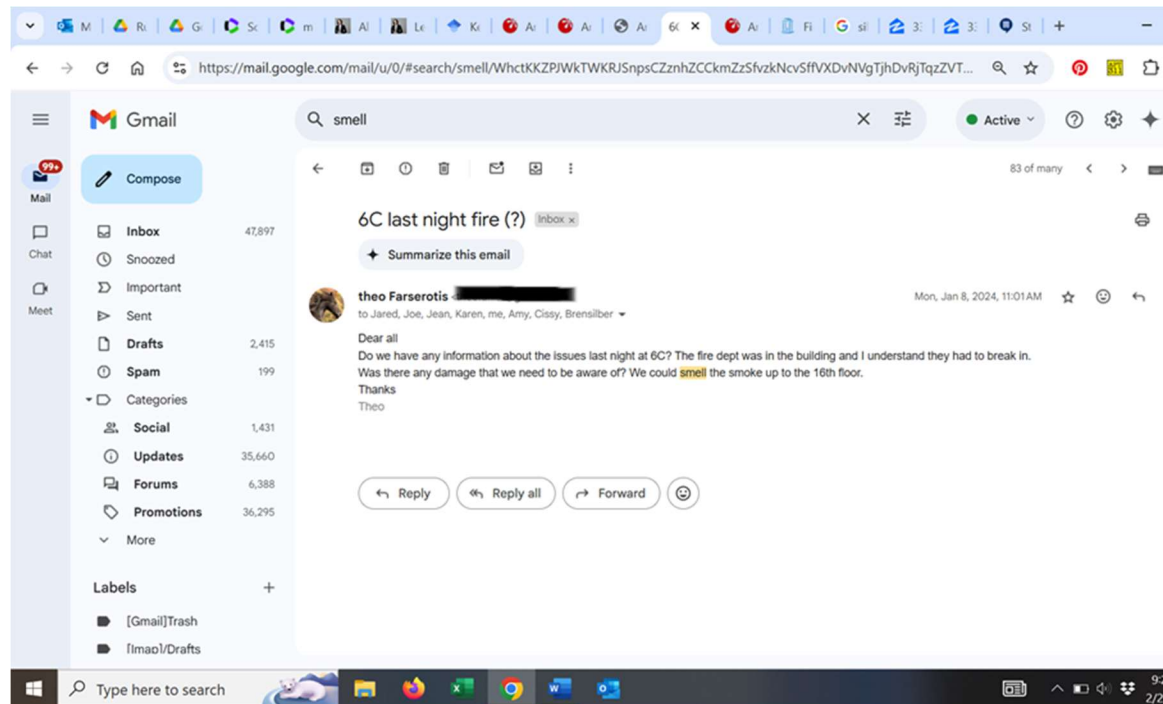
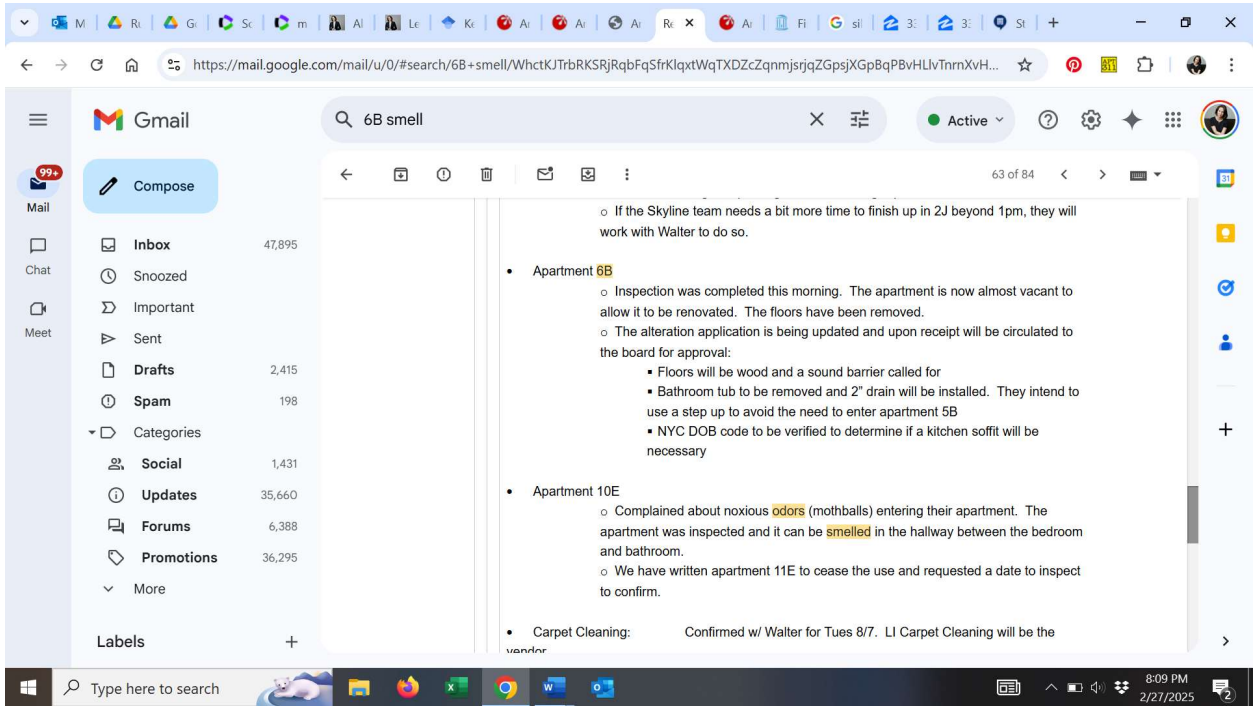
21. Ever since that weekend, the food smells have been overpowering.
 - a. Jan. 12: strong food smell, opened windows
 - b. Jan. 28: texted Walter, strong smell of fried chicken in bedroom, Amy also smelled it and noted that it was hard to sleep at a family member's home when there were strong food smells.
 - c. Feb 3: bedroom smells like food again, texted Walter to come smell it
 - d. Feb 4: texted Walter, smell was back again, even with windows open; texted Joe also, both Joe and Walter came to smell. Joe described it as "like living above a fast food restaurant."
 - e. Feb. 5: no smell at 9:45 pm. I thought this was because an air purifier was provided to 6B but they later said that they ordered in Chipotle
 - f. Feb 6: apartment smelled again, texted Amy to come experience it.
 - g. Feb. 13: Food smells began at 5pm and could be smelled in the 6B master bath while I was blow-drying. We left windows open in the bedroom and at 9:15ish pm came home and closed the windows. The food smells were back by 9:55 and Cissy and Theo came to smell, describing it as "foul."
 - h. Feb. 14: Rob visited apartment ~730PM and observed food smells
 - i. Feb. 15 – 17: no food smells
 - j. Feb. 18-3pm on Feb. 25, we were out of town
 - k. 2/25/2025 - 8PM - Food smells noticed in 6A, Walter Lopez came to witness
 - i. We covered the vent in the 6A bathroom and ensure it is not sucking an air. We had done this previously for more than a year and it didn't help, but we have done it again anyway.
 - l. 2/26/2025 - 745pm- food smells, texted Walter. Walter witness smells 9PM

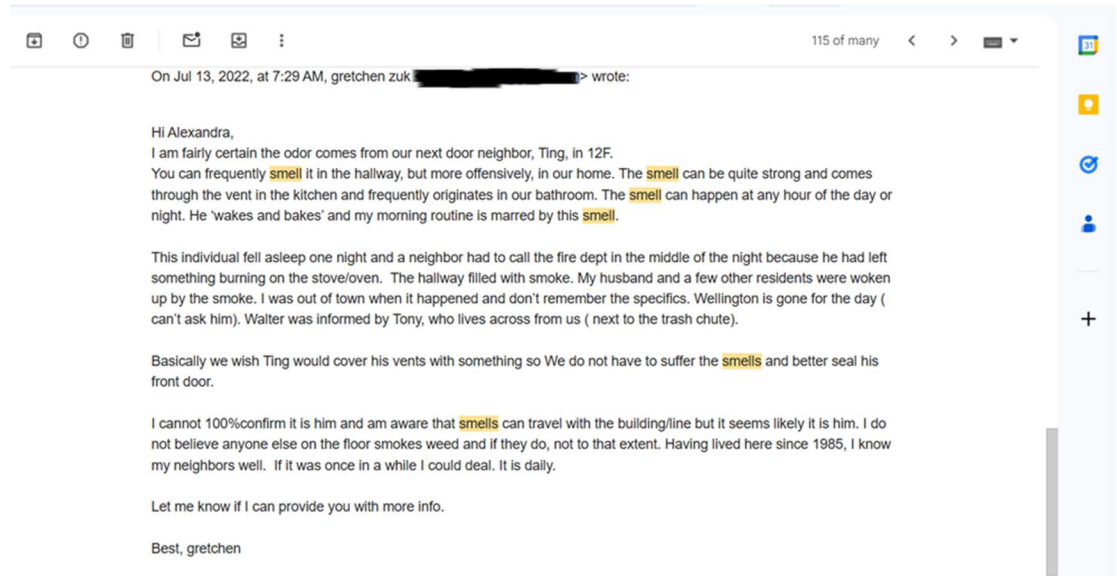
22. **I want to note here that this has been an ongoing problem since March/April 2018. This has never gone away.** I've never actually stopped mentioning it to the Board and to Paul in passing. But I was quite frankly bullied last time and I gave up. After seeing the co-op incur considerable expenses fixing problems in other apartments, I'm not giving up this time.

23. Paul claims that no other apartments are experiencing smell issues. No one has asked. No one has surveyed A line residents in our building.

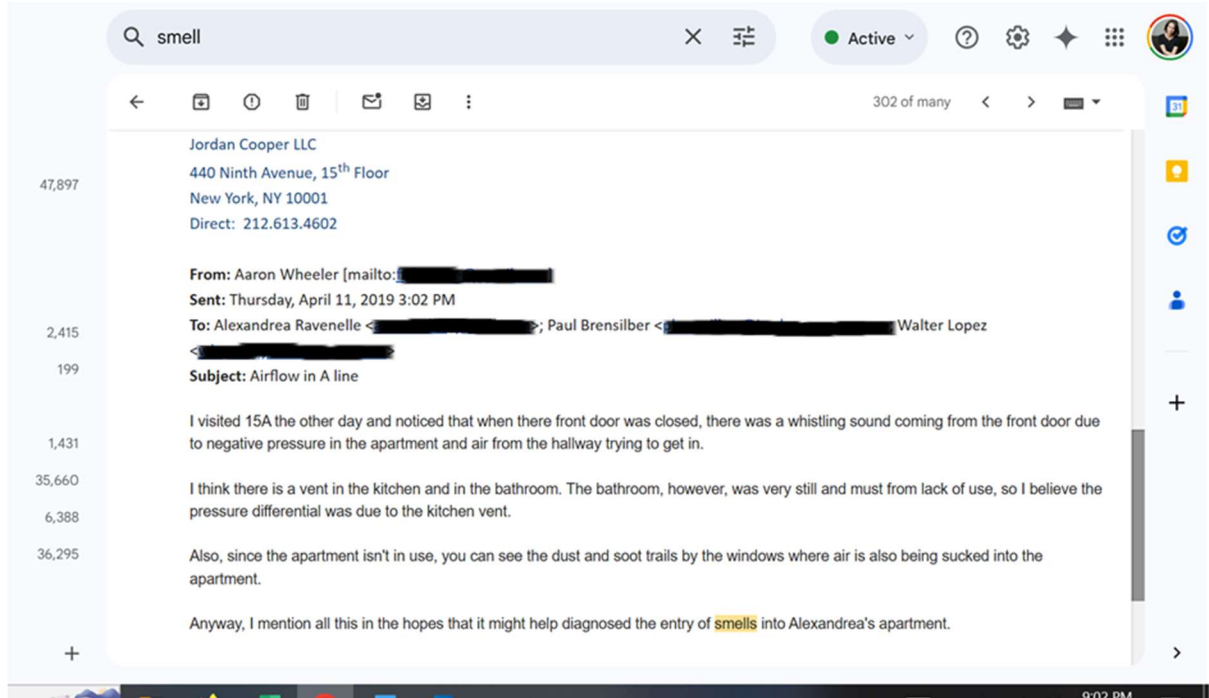
But also, that doesn't matter. I have presented documentation of an ongoing problem that was likely triggered by 1. The floor replacement in 6B; 2. The removal of the vent in 6B kitchen; 3 the renovation in the 6B apartment; and 4. The co-op's move to new windows.

Additionally, there have been multiple documented instances of smells moving between apartments in this building:





24. The issue of an air flow differential with the A apartments has been documented by (at the time) board members:



25. It should be noted that Walter last week (when he re-opened my windows after the engineer visited on Feb 19) noted that when my windows are open just a bit, there is a strong whistling sound coming through, further suggesting that this is an air flow issue.

26. We believe that 6B is essentially venting into 6A. This is likely due to the pressure differential. There are holes behind the baseboards and it is likely that the lack of venting in 6B is causing air to move into 6A. As noted repeatedly, there is a breeze between 6B and 6A at the baseboards.

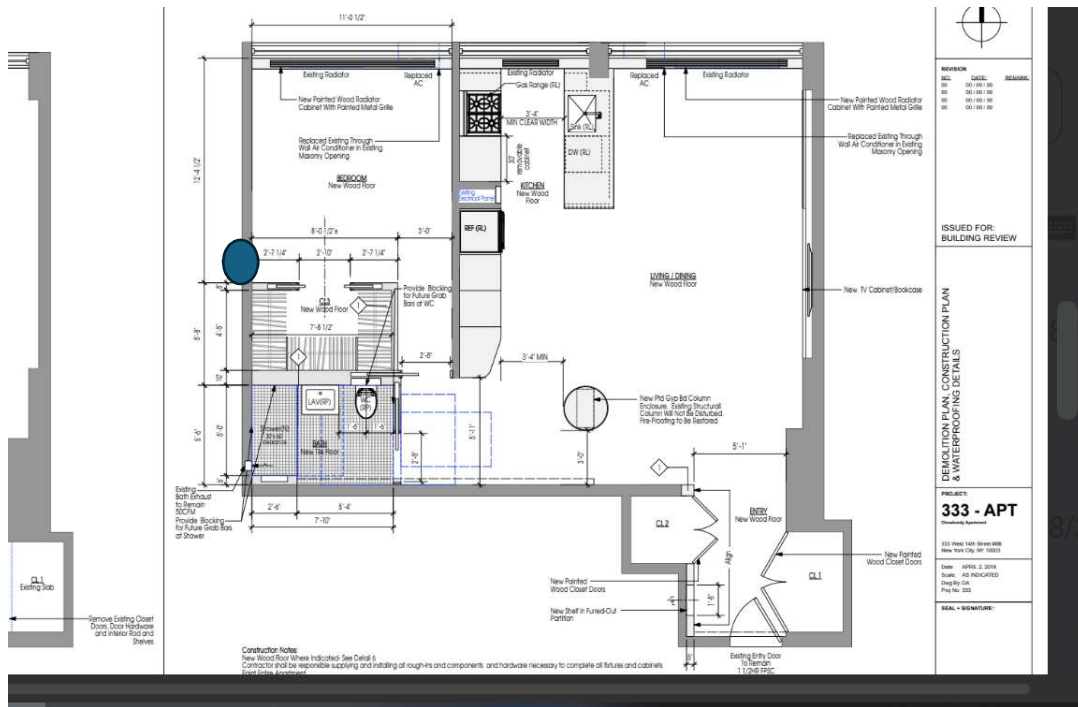
27. Further supporting this premise is the grease staining that has begun to occur on the party wall of 6A. These stains are under the paint. They are not washable or removable with Spray 9 degreaser:







28. Here is a copy of the 6B renovation plan. We have measured off where the stains are and they roughly coincide with the area circled below:



29. To be clear, the issues with noxious odors coming into 6A have nothing to do with the identity of the owner or tenant in 6B, or their gender, ethnicity, national origin, or any other personal characteristic. These are issues with the physical unit of 6B, and these issues have persisted through multiple residents. Neither my husband nor I have ever complained about the food smells on the basis of who the owner or tenant of 6B is or what they are cooking. Our complaint has nothing to do with what they are cooking, but rather with the overpowering food odors that permeate my apartment and have forced me to engage in such extreme measures as opening my windows all day during below-freezing temperatures. The smell of any food, at that potency and longevity experienced in our apartment, quickly becomes intolerable.

Conclusion and Request for Repair

30. Since 2018, there has been a persistent problem with smells coming from 6B into 6A. These have included food smells and construction smells. That these smells are coming from 6B is beyond dispute at this point. The evidence for this is that the smells coming into my apartment match the smells of whatever is going on with 6B. When there is cooking in 6B, we get food smells. When there is no cooking in 6B, such as

when the owner/tenant's mother moved to 6F and was doing the cooking there, there were no food smells in 6B. When there was construction in 6B, we got construction smells, such as chemicals like paint and acetone. There is a breeze/air movement between 6B and 6A at the baseboards, which has led, among other things, to visible plaster dust appearing in 6A, adjacent to the party wall with 6B, during the construction work in 6B. The grease staining that has begun to appear on that party wall is further indication that there is a transfer of smells and other chemicals from 6B to 6A. And the likely cause of this, the removal of the venting in 6B, explains why all these things are happening. In addition, concerns have been noticed about unusual airflow between the A and B lines in the building, indicating that this is a structural problem.

31. Since 2018, there has been recognition by multiple people in the building that the problem with the smells coming from 6B into 6A is real and significant. Walter has personally confirmed the existence and potency of the smells on multiple occasions. Multiple board members have personally confirmed the existence and potency of the smells.

32. No action has been taken to repair the problem since 2018.

33. Instead, the onus has been placed on my husband and I -- and on my children, who have had to suffer through this -- to undertake extreme personal measures to deal with this, such as opening the windows all day during sub-freezing temperatures and running air purifiers at enormous expense. We have been exposed to unknown chemicals, which we fear may have health consequences in the future. We have been forced to endure food smells that are overpowering and long-lasting to a degree that they threaten our basic right to a habitable apartment. And, the stress of having to deal with this problem for seven years has placed enormous personal strain on my husband and me.

34. Our complaints about the smells have been dismissed, often aggressively so, and we have been demanded to provide a level of proof for our concerns that the building does not require of anyone else. The co-op routinely receives complaints of odors or other problems in the units. Once it confirms the complaint, it takes action, even where that means directing the occupant of the apartment that is the source of the smell to cease the offending activity, even if that activity is otherwise unremarkable, such as in the mothballs example discussed above (point 23). When the solution to the problem requires construction work, such as when flooring damage occurs, the co-op has arranged for that work to be done.

35. No further steps are required to confirm the problem here. It has been confirmed by everyone who needs to confirm it. We now expect a solution to be applied.

36. It is our view, and the view of others, that the solution is to have a vent installed in 6B and/or to otherwise address the pressure differential between 6B and 6A that causes the airflow between the units, including but not limited to sealing the wall between the apartments and repairing the grease damage. If the co-op is of the view that the

measures are inadequate, please explain the basis for that view, hire an appropriate engineer, architect, or other professional and provide their recommended solution within four weeks of today (Feb. 28, 2025). Otherwise, we expect the co-op to take action to resolve our well-verified concerns, as it routinely does for all others in the building. Specifically, we request that the Board consider our complaint no later than the next-scheduled meeting – with earlier being preferable -- and determine the repairs that will be made. (As I am a Board member, I will not participate in either the discussion of this complaint or the vote on the repairs to be made, and will be out of the room/Zoom during that discussion and vote.)