
MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE
OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
2016 ANNUAL REPORT



"Auditur et altera pars. (The other side shall be heard as well.)"
— Seneca

Municipality of Anchorage, Office of the Ombudsman

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Dedication

The Anchorage Municipal Ombudsman's Office dedicates our 2016 Annual Report to former Anchorage Municipal Ombudsman, Greg Moyer (May 3, 1954-January 29, 2017)

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March 7, 2017

To the Anchorage Municipal Assembly, the Anchorage School District Board of Education, the Mayor and Administration, and the people of Anchorage:

We are pleased to present the Anchorage Municipal Ombudsman's 2016 Annual Report. This report explains how the Ombudsman's Office fulfills its role as an independent, impartial office that provides information about Municipal government, while investigating concerns involving Municipal government and employees, including the Anchorage School District.

The Ombudsman's Office acts as an informational resource for the public and also recognizes outstanding performance by Municipal and School District employees and workgroups, through our Above and Beyond Award.

Behind the cases and statistics are real people; individuals who need help navigating and understanding Municipal government, as well as the dedicated Municipal and School District employees who serve the people of Anchorage, and visitors to our community. As the Ombudsman's Office celebrates our 40th Anniversary in 2017, it is our pleasure to serve, inform and empower the public.

Sincerely,



Darrel W. Hess
Municipal Ombudsman



Elizabeth A. Eisses
Deputy Ombudsman



May Ramirez-Xiong
Associate Ombudsman

"Right is right, even if everyone is against it, and wrong is wrong, even if everyone is for it."

— William Penn

PURPOSE

The Office of the Municipal Ombudsman is mandated by the Anchorage Home Rule Charter. The Charter's Bill of Rights guarantees the people of Anchorage "The right to the assistance of a municipal ombudsman in dealing with grievances and abuses." The Office of the Ombudsman is governed by Anchorage Municipal Code, Chapter 2.60 which established the Office as "...an independent, impartial municipal office, readily available to the public, responsible to the assembly, empowered to investigate the acts of administrative agencies and to recommend appropriate changes toward the goals of safeguarding the rights of persons and of promoting higher standards of competency, efficiency and equity in the provision of municipal services." (AMC 2.60.010)

The goal of the Ombudsman's Office is to serve the people of Anchorage, by providing information or referrals, or investigating complaints and concerns regarding Municipal and School District departments, agencies and employees. The Ombudsman's Office has limited jurisdiction over Anchorage charter schools. If issues and concerns are not jurisdictional to the Ombudsman's Office, we do our best to direct persons to the appropriate person or organization.

"It takes a great deal of courage to stand alone even if you believe in something very strongly."
— Reginald Rose, *Twelve Angry Men*

HOW TO FILE A COMPLAINT

When people have questions or concerns regarding Municipal government or the Anchorage School District, the Ombudsman's Office is here to assist you. You may contact our office in-person, or by phone, email or postal service. Our staff will assess whether or not your issue is jurisdictional to our office. If an issue is not jurisdictional to our office, we will do our best to provide a referral to another agency or entity that may be able to address the issue. In 2016, the Ombudsman's Office provided information and referrals to 1,375 individuals, and opened 229 cases.

The Ombudsman's Office is located on the ground floor of Anchorage City Hall, in Suite 160. You can find a Complaint form online on the Ombudsman webpage at www.muni.org/departments/assembly/ombudsman. Complaints can be filed online through the Municipality's CityView Portal, at www.muni.org/cityviewportal. One-time registration is required to use the portal. Although details of Ombudsman complaints are confidential, contact information entered on the portal is accessible by Municipal agents.

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www.muni.org/departments/assembly/ombudsman.

STATISTICS

The Ombudsman’s Office uses an application called “CityView” to maintain information and process statistics. The number of Inquiries listed in Table 1 and Graph 1 indicate the total number of public interactions with the Ombudsman’s Office in 2016, either by telephone, email, postal mail, fax, or in-person. Contacts were interactions with persons who may have only needed information, or who may have wanted to express their opinions or concerns regarding local government. These interactions normally require no further action by the Ombudsman’s Office. Referrals reflect inquiries that were referred to state or federal agencies, community agencies, or to Municipal or School District employees, or departments. Cases refer to inquiries that required some level of investigation by the Ombudsman’s Office.

Table 1 2016 Processing Statistics

| 2016 Processing Statistics | From Prior Year | New | Processed or Closed | Remaining Open |
|----------------------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------------|----------------|
| Cases | 9 | 229 | 233 | 5 |
| Referrals | 0 | 979 | 979 | 0 |
| Contacts | 0 | 393 | 393 | 0 |
| Total Inquiries | 9 | 1601* | 1605 | 5 |

Graph 1 2016 Processing Statistics

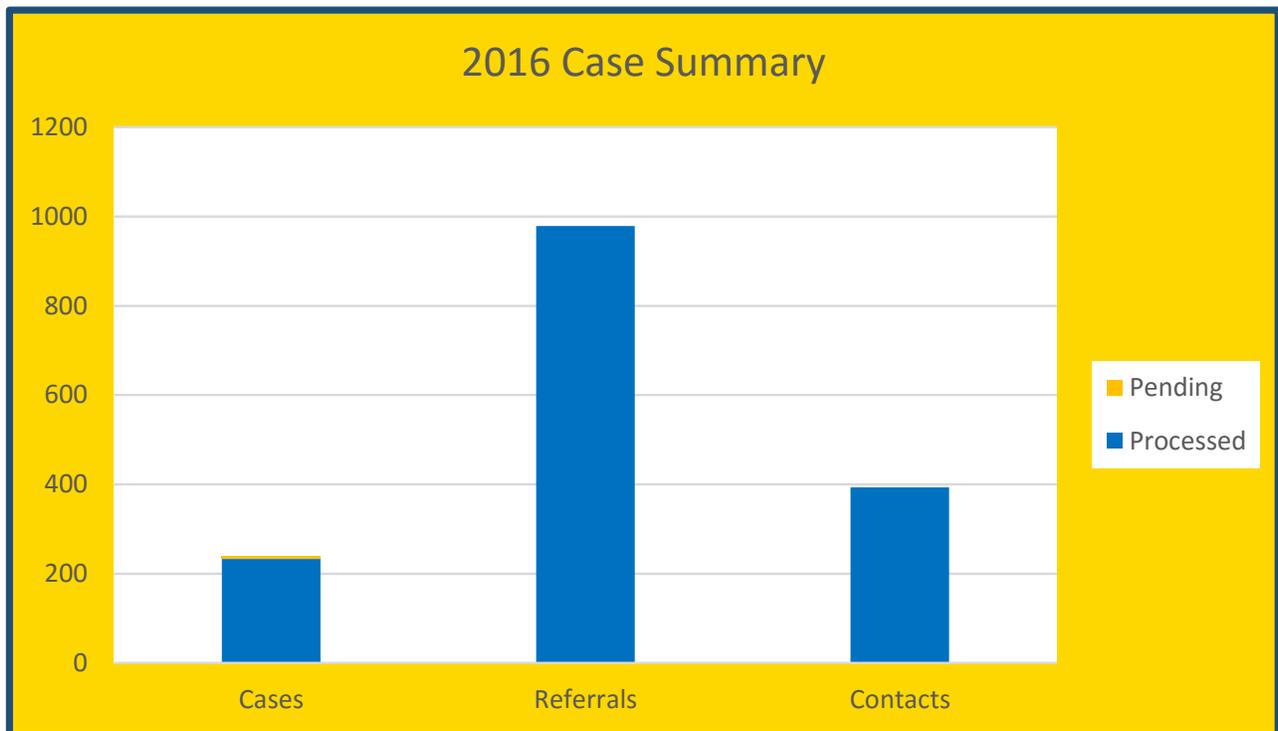
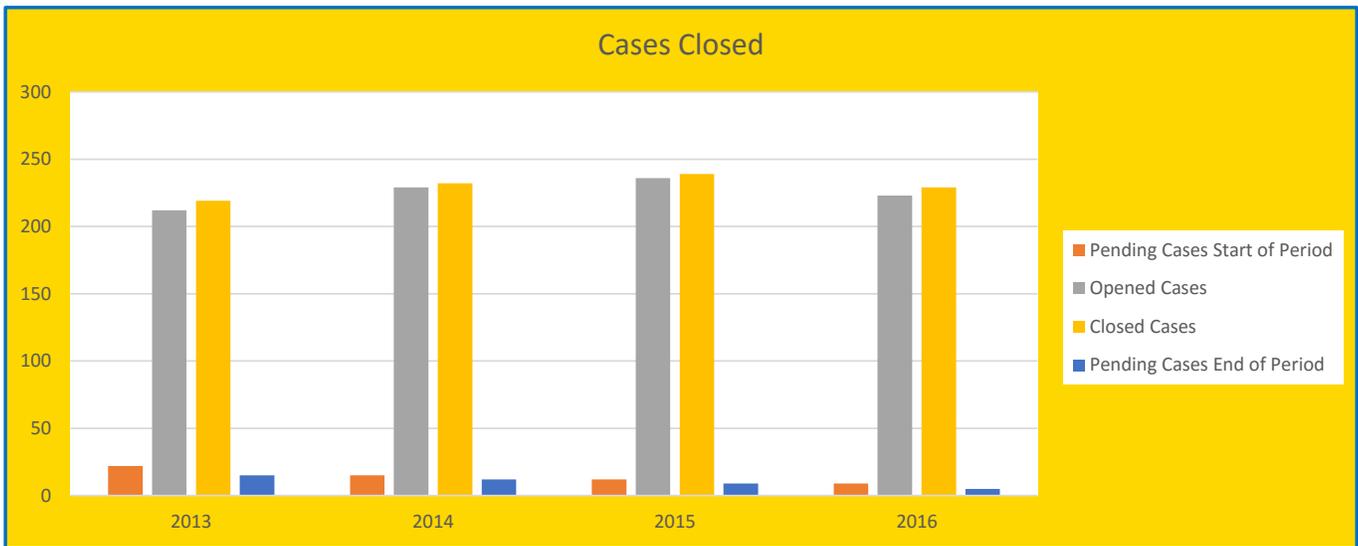


Table 2 and Graph 2 reflect the work of the Ombudsman’s Office over the past four years.

Table 2. Case Closures and Pending Inventory from 2013-2016

| Case Inventory | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 |
|-------------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Pending Cases Start of Period | 22 | 15 | 12 | 9 |
| Opened Cases | 212 | 229 | 236 | 223 |
| Closed Cases | 219 | 232 | 239 | 229 |
| Pending Cases End of Period | 15 | 12 | 9 | 5 |

Graph 2. Case Closures and Pending Inventory from 2012-2015

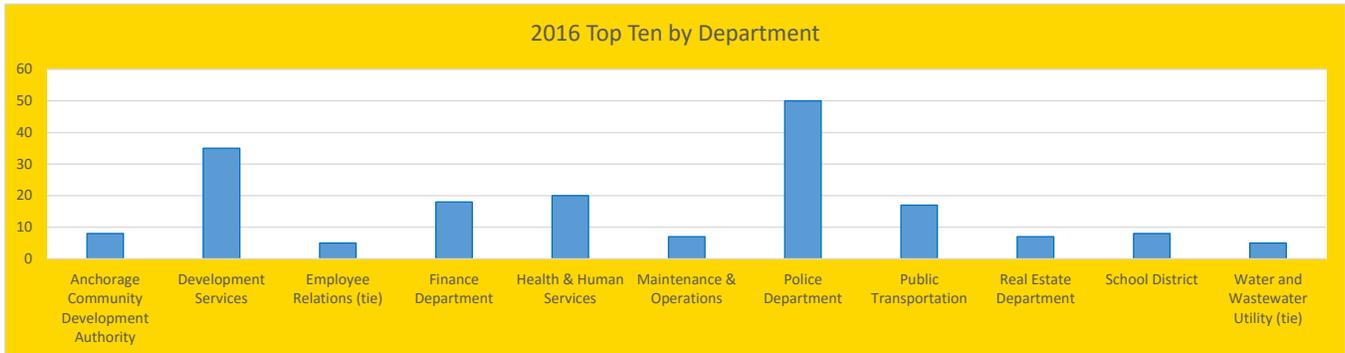


Historically, the larger Municipal Departments and those with the greatest public contact generate the largest number of cases in the Ombudsman’s Office. In 2016 the Police Department (22%), Development Services (15%), Health & Human Services (9%), Finance Department (8%), and Public Transportation (7%), ranked 1-5. (See Table 3 and Graph 3). The department listing for 2016 reflects the 2015 executive branch reorganization.

Table 3. 2014-16 Cases by Department

| Department | 2014 | Percent | 2015 | Percent | 2016 | Percent |
|---|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|-------------|
| Anchorage Community Development Authority | 4 | 1.75% | 7 | 2.97% | 8 | 3.49% |
| Assembly | 0 | 0% | 4 | 1.69% | 1 | 0.44% |
| Community Development | 49 | 21.40% | 42 | 17.80% | 3 | 1.31% |
| Development Services | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0.42% | 35 | 15.28% |
| Economic & Community Development | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0.44% |
| Employee Relations | 3 | 1.31% | 5 | 2.12% | 5 | 2.18% |
| Equal Rights Commission | 0 | 0% | 3 | 1.27% | 1 | 0.44% |
| Finance Department | 25 | 10.92% | 15 | 6.36% | 18 | 7.86% |
| Fire Department | 1 | 0.44% | 11 | 4.66% | 2 | 0.87% |
| Health & Human Services | 21 | 9.17% | 20 | 8.47% | 20 | 8.73% |
| Information Technology | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 2 | 0.87% |
| Legal Department | 3 | 1.31% | 9 | 3.81% | 2 | 0.87% |
| Library | 0 | 0% | 3 | 1.27% | 0 | 0% |
| Maintenance & Operations | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 7 | 3.06% |
| Mayor's Office | 1 | 0.44% | 0 | 0% | 4 | 1.75% |
| Merrill Field | 1 | 0.44% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| Municipal Clerk | 0 | 0% | 3 | 1.27% | 1 | 0.44% |
| Municipal Light & Power | 4 | 1.75% | 0 | 0% | 4 | 1.75% |
| Municipal Manager | 1 | 0.44% | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% |
| Museum | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0.42% | 0 | 0% |
| Not Department Specific | 10 | 4.37% | 4 | 1.69% | 6 | 2.62% |
| Office of Equal Opportunity | 1 | 0.44% | 1 | 0.42% | 0 | 0% |
| Office of Management & Budget | 0 | 0% | 3 | 1.27% | 0 | 0% |
| Parks & Recreation | 6 | 2.62% | 4 | 1.69% | 3 | 1.31% |
| Planning | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 2 | 0.87% |
| Police Department | 33 | 14.41% | 25 | 10.59% | 50 | 21.83% |
| Port of Anchorage | 1 | 0.44% | 0 | 0% | 1 | 0.44% |
| Project Management & Engineering | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 2 | 0.87% |
| Public Transportation | 6 | 2.62% | 13 | 5.51% | 17 | 7.42% |
| Public Works | 30 | 13.10% | 27 | 11.44% | 0 | 0% |
| Public Works Administration | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 2 | 0.87% |
| Purchasing Department | 0 | 0% | 2 | 0.85% | 0 | 0% |
| Real Estate Department | 2 | 0.87% | 2 | 0.85% | 7 | 3.06% |
| Risk Management | 1 | 0.44% | 1 | 0.42% | 4 | 1.75% |
| School District | 11 | 4.80% | 16 | 6.78% | 8 | 3.49% |
| Solid Waste Services | 7 | 3.06% | 8 | 3.39% | 4 | 1.75% |
| Traffic | 0 | 0% | 0 | 0% | 3 | 1.31% |
| Transportation Inspection | 3 | 1.31% | 4 | 1.69% | 1 | 0.44% |
| Water & Wastewater Utility | 5 | 2.18% | 2 | 0.85% | 5 | 2.18% |
| All Departments | 229 | 100% | 236 | 100% | 229 | 100% |

Graph 3. 2016 Cases by Department (most frequent)

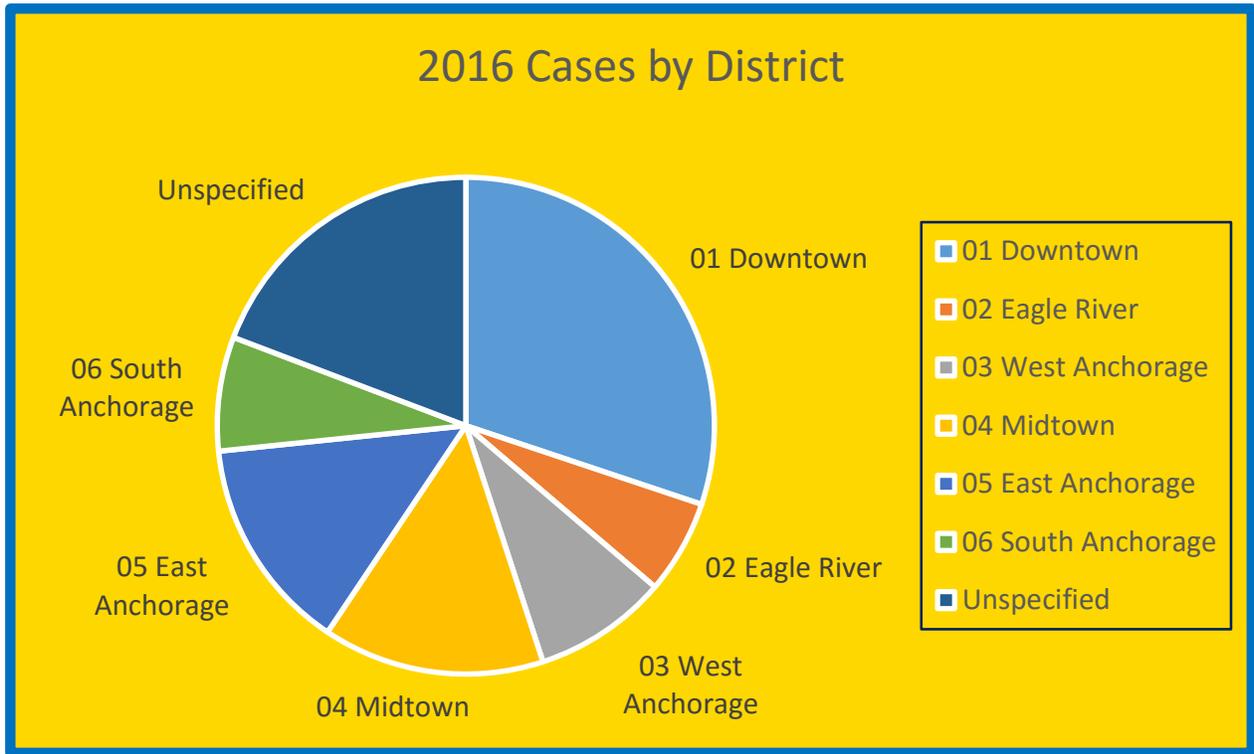


The Ombudsman’s Office also tracks Cases by Assembly District. These numbers are reflected in Table 4 and Graph 4.

Table 4. Cases by Assembly District 2014-2016

| District No./Name | Cases 2014 | Percent | Cases 2015 | Percent | Cases 2016 | Percent |
|--------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| 00 Not District Specific | 1 | 0.44 | 1 | 0.42 | 1 | 0.44 |
| 01 Downtown | 27 | 11.79 | 39 | 16.53 | 69 | 30.13 |
| 02 Eagle River/Chugiak | 21 | 9.17 | 10 | 4.24 | 14 | 6.11 |
| 03 West Anchorage | 41 | 17.9 | 40 | 16.95 | 20 | 8.73 |
| 04 Midtown | 44 | 19.21 | 37 | 15.68 | 33 | 14.41 |
| 05 East Anchorage | 26 | 11.35 | 30 | 12.71 | 32 | 13.97 |
| 06 South Anchorage | 29 | 12.66 | 33 | 13.98 | 17 | 7.42 |
| 77 Out of Anchorage | 5 | 2.18 | 7 | 2.97 | 8 | 3.49 |
| 99 District Unknown | 35 | 15.28 | 39 | 16.53 | 35 | 15.28 |
| Total | 229 | 100 | 236 | 100 | 229 | 100 |

Graph 4. Cases by Assembly District 2016



2016 CASE RESOLUTION SUMMARIES

In 2016, the Ombudsman’s Office opened 229 cases, and closed 233 (with 9 carried over from 2015). We ended 2016 with 5 open cases. The majority of Ombudsman investigations are resolved informally, and final investigative reports are not required. Frequently the Ombudsman’s Office achieves good results, including changes to Municipal Code, policies and procedures through informal case resolutions, working with Municipal employees and departments, as well as complainants. Below are summaries of some of our 2016 cases:

Ombudsman Complaint OM20160476

Multiple inmates incarcerated by the State of Alaska complained that they could not call the Anchorage Municipal Ombudsman’s Office, unless the Ombudsman’s Office set up an account with the contracted telecommunications provider, and agreed to pay for the calls. The inmates noted that they were allowed free calls to the State of Alaska Ombudsman. *The Deputy Ombudsman contacted the State of Alaska contract administrator for the program, and worked with him to have the Anchorage Municipal Ombudsman’s Office phone number added to the list of phone numbers that inmates incarcerated by the State of Alaska are allowed to call, at no charge to the inmates or the Ombudsman’s Office*

Ombudsman Complaint OM20160657

An individual contacted the Ombudsman’s Office alleging that the Municipality of Anchorage, Property Appraisal Division had assessed her condominium at market rate, although the property had been

damaged by a fire, and was uninhabitable. Investigation by the Deputy Ombudsman revealed that the complainant had missed the code-mandated deadline to file for a “Real Property Valuation Reassessment Following a Disaster Caused by Fire”. The deadline to file was 60 days from the date of the disaster (fire). Although it would not help the complainant’s situation, the Ombudsman’s Office believed that the timeframe in code to file should be lengthened; after someone experiences a disaster (fire), filing for a property appraisal reassessment is something that most people would not think about in the near-term. The complainant was referred to her Assembly Member regarding potential legislation to lengthen the timeline to file. *The Deputy Ombudsman communicated with the Assembly Member regarding amending the code. Assembly Ordinance 2016-123, passed by the Assembly in October 2016, extended the deadline to file for a Taxpayers Claim for Reduction of Assessments from 60 to 120 days.*

Ombudsman Complaint OM20160992

An individual contacted the Ombudsman’s Office regarding the Municipal Clerk’s denial of the refund of the fees and costs associated with an appeal of a decision of the Planning & Zoning Commission to the Board of Adjustment. The complainant was a member of the group that had filed the appeal. The State of Alaska withdrew its application during the appeal process, rendering the appeal moot. Subsequently, the Board of Adjustment dismissed the appeal. The group appealed the dismissal, and requested that the Board “overturn” the Commission’s decision. Instead, the Board “vacated” the Commission’s decision, and upheld their dismissal of the appeal. Municipal Code states that “successful” appellants will have their fees and costs refunded, if the Board “overturns” the Commission’s decision. The complainant believed that the Clerk erred in denying the refund. *After reviewing the applicable sections of Anchorage Title 21 (new), the case files, the Board’s “Dismissal of Appeal”, their “Resolution on Motion for Reconsideration”, and their “Order”, as well as case law, the Ombudsman reached the same conclusion as the Clerk’s Office; based on current Municipal Code, the appellants were not entitled to a refund of the fees and costs associated with their appeal to the Board of Adjustment. In order for the fees and costs to be refunded, the Board would have had to “overturn” the decision of the Planning & Zoning Commission. Instead, the Board “vacated” the decision, which has a very different legal connotation than “overturn”, and does not meet the requirements of the code for refunding the fees and costs.*

Ombudsman Complaint OM20161027

An individual contacted the Ombudsman’s Office alleging that a customer (a Swiss tourist) of his recreational vehicle rental business had his rental vehicle towed from Downtown Anchorage, even though the vehicle had been legally parked. The complainant had to pay \$200.00 in impound and towing fees to retrieve his vehicle. Investigation by the Deputy Ombudsman revealed that the customer had parked the rental vehicle at a parking meter on 4th Avenue in Downtown Anchorage, after 6 pm on a Friday evening. He had been advised by employees at his hotel that on-street metered parking in Downtown Anchorage was free from 6 pm on Friday, until Monday morning. Municipal Code states that vehicles parked on a public street must be moved every 24 hours, except from noon Friday until noon on Monday. For metered parking, the meters would have to be paid until 6 pm on Friday, and starting again on Monday morning. The Deputy Ombudsman discovered that a Downtown nonprofit was renting multiple parking meter bags from Easy Park, to place on the meters in front of the 4th Avenue Marketplace building

on Saturdays and Sundays, for tourist bus parking. She ascertained that the group had placed a bag on the meter where the vehicle in question was parked, and had then contacted the Anchorage Police Department to have the vehicle towed. The APD and Traffic Department acknowledged that this was not the first time that something like this had occurred. The Ombudsman's Office opined that the APD should not tow vehicles that are parked legally before a parking meter bag is placed on the meter. *The APD Traffic Sergeant sent an email to all sworn APD Officers informing them that they were not to tow vehicles from bagged parking meters in Downtown Anchorage until the parking meter bag program was revised to address the concerns of the Ombudsman's Office. Easy Park subsequently revised the program; now only Easy Park employees place the parking meter bags, taking photos to show that no vehicles were parked at the meters when the bags were placed.*

Ombudsman Complaint OM20161343

An individual contacted the Ombudsman alleging that a nonprofit that had obtained a zero-cost lease on a Municipality owned building, had become a for-profit business. At the time the Anchorage Assembly approved the lease, by ordinance, the organization was a nonprofit registered with the State of Alaska. If the organization had become a for-profit business, the lease would be invalid; they had to maintain their nonprofit status for the lease to remain valid. Investigation by the Ombudsman revealed that the organization was still a registered nonprofit. However, the Ombudsman learned that the organization had moved a for-profit business into the building, without the written approval of the Municipal Real Estate Department, as required by their lease. A for-profit business, that serves the public good, can be a tenant in the building, as long as they obtain a valid, written sublease, and the original nonprofit lessee occupies a minimum of 51% of the space being occupied in the building. *The Ombudsman communicated his findings to the Director of the Real Estate Department. The Director subsequently verified the square footage being occupied by the nonprofit and the for-profit business, and a market-rate lease was drafted and implemented for the for-profit business.*

Ombudsman Complaint OM20161405

An individual contacted the Ombudsman's Office alleging that Municipal Animal Care & Control had "given" her daughter's lost hedgehog away. Investigation by the Deputy Ombudsman revealed that a hedgehog had been turned into AC&C, and had been claimed within an hour. An AC&C employee stated that the hedgehog had been sent home with someone that she knew, who claimed that it belonged to a "friend". When the AC&C supervisor contacted the "friend" who allegedly owned the hedgehog, he knew nothing about the hedgehog. *The person who claimed the hedgehog was contacted and instructed to return the animal. After the hedgehog was returned to AC&C, the complainant provided information that proved ownership, and the hedgehog was reunited with the complainant's daughter. The AC&C policy violations were referred to AC&C management.*

Ombudsman Complaint OM20161482

An individual contacted the Ombudsman's Office alleging that he had stood in line at the Downtown People Mover customer service counter to purchase a bus pass, only to be told that People Mover does not accept Discover credit cards. The complainant was upset that the customer service counter did not display any signage that showed which credit cards are accepted by People Mover. He noted that retailers generally display such signs to inform customers, so that they do not stand in line to make a transaction,

only to be told that their credit card is not accepted by the vendor. *The Associate Ombudsman made a site visit to verify that the customer service counter was not displaying credit card acceptance signage. She then contacted a supervisor in the Treasury Department. The supervisor contacted the Municipality's vendor, to request additional credit card acceptance signs/stickers (free of charge to the Municipality). The Treasury supervisor then contacted all Municipal departments to ensure that they were displaying the signs at any customer service counters where payments from the public are accepted. If they did not have signs, she routed some to them.*

Ombudsman Complaint OM20161589

An individual contacted the Ombudsman's Office alleging that the Municipal Health & Human Services Department was not offering accommodations for older persons, and others, who might not be computer savvy, to allow them to complete the department's food handler's card training and test. Several years ago DHHS switched from in-person training and testing, to online training and testing, facilitated by a contractor. The complainant alleged that his friend was recently removed from his chef's position because he was unable to use a computer to take the training and test, to obtain the food handler's card necessary to continue his employment. *The Associate Ombudsman contacted DHHS Environmental Health Services, and the Primary Sanitarian agreed to accommodate the individual by reading the training information and test questions off of the computer screen. The Associate Ombudsman provided the individual with the contact information for the Primary Sanitarian, so that he could schedule an appointment.*

2016 PUBLIC OUTREACH

In 2016 the Ombudsman's Office worked to improve the office's interface with the public, including;

- Continuing to use our City View Public Portal, which allows individual to file complaints online. The portal is optimized for smart phones and tablets.
- Continuing to update and make effective use of the Ombudsman's page on www.muni.org/ombuds.
- Using the Anchorage Ombudsman Facebook page to engage with the public.
- Distributing Anchorage Ombudsman t-shirts, wristbands, lapel pins and ink pens at public outreach events.
- Conducting public outreach:
 - Catholic Social Services Refugee Assistance & Immigration Services Partners Meetings
 - Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Community-Wide Celebration
 - 2016 Day of Remembrance: Alaska Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League
 - Bridge Builder's Meet the World in Anchorage
 - Hmong American Veterans Memorial Day Celebration
 - 2016 Japanese Summer Festival
 - 2016 YWCA Women of Achievement Reception and Induction Ceremony
 - African-American History Month Forums at the Fairview Rec Center
 - Leadership Anchorage

- NAACP Anchorage Unit 1000
- 2nd Annual Diversity Community Health Awareness Day
- 2016 Transgender Day of Remembrance
- Hmong Center of Alaska, Inc. Traditional New Year Celebration
- YWCA Alaska's Stand Against Racism
- Identity, Inc. Board
- Anchorage Reads Wrap-Up at the Mountain View Community Library
- Asia-Pacific Heritage Month Celebration
- 2016 Equality March & 2016 Pride Festival
- 2016 CSS/RAIS World Refugee Day Celebration
- Bean's Café 22nd Annual Empty Bowl Project
- Senator Ellis/Representative Tarr Constituent Meeting
- Senator Ellis/Representative Gara Constituent Meeting
- 2016 Choose Respect March and Rally
- 2016 Project Homeless Connect
- 2016 Chinese New Year's Celebration: Year of the Monkey
- Alaska Native Heritage Day Celebration

ABOVE AND BEYOND AWARD

The Ombudsman's Office recognizes outstanding performance by Municipal and School District employees and workgroups through our Above and Beyond Award, which acknowledges above and beyond service to the people of Anchorage. To nominate a Municipal or School District employee or workgroup to receive the Above and Beyond Award, call the Ombudsman's Office at 907-343-4461, or email to OMBUD@muni.org.

In 2016 the Municipal Ombudsman's Office recognized several individuals with the Ombudsman's Above and Beyond Award, in recognition of their commitment to delivering superior customer service to the people of Anchorage.

Brian Gallagher, Parks & Recreation Department.



Darrel Hess, Brian Gallagher, Betsy Eisses and Scott O'Brien

Felix Rivera, Mayor's Office.



Darrel Hess, Felix Rivera and Betsy Eisses

Juna Penney, Employee Relations Department.



Juna Penney and Darrel Hess

Scott Willis, Easy Park.



Darrel Hess and Scott Willis

Ferenc Takacs, People Mover.



Jerry Smith, Darrel Hess and Ferenc Takacs

THE OMBUDSMAN OFFICE

- › Acts as a resource for citizens, by answering questions and providing information regarding Municipal government.
- › Recommends to the Assembly, the School Board and the Mayor, changes in policies and procedures and Anchorage Municipal Code, to make the Municipality and School District more responsive to the needs of individuals and the community.
- › Responds in an independent, impartial and confidential manner, while safeguarding the rights of persons and promoting higher standards of competency, efficiency and equity.
- › Investigates complaints against agencies, departments and employees of the Municipality and the School District, as authorized by Anchorage Municipal Code, Chapter 2.60.
- › Makes findings and recommendations through formal investigations about the fairness of official actions by the Municipality or the School District.

BEFORE YOU CONTACT THE OMBUDSMAN

- › Be prepared. Gather any needed information and write down your questions before calling a government office.
- › Don't hesitate to exercise your right to call or write government offices for assistance.
- › Ask for the names of employees you speak with, take notes and save all correspondence.
- › If you are having problems getting answers, or are being treated discourteously, be sure to speak with a supervisor. If a supervisor cannot satisfactorily address your concerns, you can contact the Ombudsman.
- › Courtesy works both ways; be pleasant. Everyone appreciates being treated courteously. Recognizing that, for the average citizen, government is often difficult to navigate, the authors Anchorage's Home Rule Charter provided for a Municipal Ombudsman to act as an independent, impartial reviewer of citizen complaints.

FROM DARREL HESS

It is my honor to serve the people of Anchorage as your Municipal Ombudsman. The Anchorage Ombudsman's office is your independent voice for fairness in local government. Our office strives to assist citizens in navigating the agencies and departments of the Municipality of Anchorage and the Anchorage School District, responding to your concerns and questions.

Our goal is to assist, in some fashion, every person who contacts our office. Many of the issues brought to us are non-jurisdictional, but we will attempt to direct you to the correct person, agency, department, business or nonprofit, who can help you.

We look forward to informing, assisting and empowering you regarding local government policies, procedures and codes. Our services are free of charge, and available to anyone within the Municipality. It is our privilege to serve you.

WHAT IS AN OMBUDSMAN?

Ombudsman is a Swedish term, which means “protector or defender of people’s rights.” The Anchorage Ombudsman is appointed by the Assembly and is an independent, impartial reviewer of complaints and concerns. The Municipal Ombudsman is authorized by the 1975 Anchorage Home Rule Charter, and is governed by Anchorage Municipal Code, Chapter 2.60.

The Ombudsman is nominated by an Assembly selection committee, and if confirmed by the Assembly, serves a two year term. Reappointment is allowed. The Ombudsman investigates complaints of unfair treatment and unreasonable actions by the Municipality of Anchorage and the Anchorage School District, and their employees.

Complaints may result from the action, or lack of action, by a Municipal or School District employee. Often complaints are based on misunderstandings of Municipal or School District policies and procedures, Municipal Codes or individual rights. The Ombudsman can interview Municipal and School District Employees, examine confidential documents, inspect agency and department premises, and issue subpoenas.

The Ombudsman is a neutral fact finder when reviewing and researching complaints and the Ombudsman is not an advocate. If an Ombudsman investigation determines that an agency, department or employee made a mistake, or acted unfairly or arbitrarily, the Ombudsman may recommend corrective action. While the Municipality and School District do not have to follow the Ombudsman’s recommendations, they usually do.

THE OMBUDSMAN DOES NOT INVESTIGATE:

- › The Assembly
- › The Mayor
- › The School Board
- › State or Federal Agencies or Employees
- › Disputes between private parties
- › Tenant/Landlord disputes
- › Decisions more than one year old (generally)
- › Matters being adjudicated by the courts

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

In the 92-93 Ombudsman’s Annual Report, Rosa Garner put together this piece. We thought that it would be nice to update for our 40th Anniversary in 2017.

Joel DeVore 1974-1978

After serving as the Municipality of Anchorage’s first Ombudsman, Joel moved to Oregon where he earned his law degree from the University of Oregon School of Law in 1982. Joel practiced law in Pendleton and

Eugene, Oregon. Joel was appointed to the Oregon Court of Appeals in 2013.

“The insight of the Anchorage Borough, soon the unified Municipality of Anchorage, to engage an ombudsman to troubleshoot for citizens over forty years ago remains remarkable. Credit the Assembly for creating the ombudsman role. Thank the patient cooperation of each municipal department in responding to the ombudsman’s persistence. Thank each citizen who set aside the frustration of the moment to trust the ombudsman to look for a better answer or ferret out a solution.”

Karla Forsythe 1978-1980

After leaving the Ombudsperson’s Office, Karla was General Council for the Alaska Court System. She was also Executive director for the Alaska Public Offices Commission. In 1990, Karla moved to Oregon and recently retired as Chief Administrative Law Judge for the State of Oregon.

“Out of all my previous jobs, the ombuds position was the best. I really enjoyed the combination of helping people and learning about how the Municipality functions – both operationally and politically.”

Wayne Mabry 1981-1983

Wayne’s business, TLC was the contractor for Animal Care and Control from 1984 through 1997. After “retiring” he continues to run a financial/business consulting firm. Wayne resides in Anchorage.

“Being Ombudsman was an extremely satisfying job because 99% of the time you can solve the problem presented to everyone’s satisfaction. I found it difficult to impossible, however, to change the government system that created the problem.”

Michael Mills 1984-1991

Michael returned to Oregon as Dispute Resolution Coordinator for the natural resource agencies with the Oregon Dispute Resolution Commission. He was the appointed as the city of Portland’s first Ombudsman in 1993 and twice served as President of the U.S. Ombudsman Association. Michael is currently the Project Manager for Oregon Solutions at the Hatfield School of Government, Portland State University.

“Serving as Ombudsman for the Municipality of Anchorage was an experience I will hold as one of my most valuable for the rest of my life. It offered me the highest rewards as well as the greatest of frustrations.”

Rosa Garner 1993-1996

Rosa just retired in January, 2015 as Ombuds Emerita, after serving the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Medicine and Public Health for 17 years. Rosa lives in Madison, Wisconsin and is looking forward to visiting Anchorage this summer.

“For me, the privilege of serving in an Ombuds role for over 25 years, first in Alaska and finally for the UW-Madison, always centered on the one-on-one connections with the people. Learning about individual experiences and aspirations while exploring opportunities for communication and action to promote fairness within the institution made every day rewarding.”

Alan Muise 1997-2003

After leaving the Ombudsman’s office, Alan volunteered as a mediator for the small claims court in Anchorage. Alan continues to live in Anchorage and currently is the director for the Holy Spirit center, a

retreat and conference facility belonging to the Archdiocese of Anchorage.

“Being Ombudsman was an enlightening experience. Learning the workings of the Municipality made me a better citizen and allowed me to understand and assist other citizens with their issues. You can’t make everyone happy with complaint resolution, but you should be able to make sure that they were satisfied with a fair response.”

Greg Moyer 2003-2006

Greg left MOA in September, 2006 after over 20 years with the Municipality. He then moved to Oklahoma and taught middle school English for 5 years. Recently, he returned to Alaska and served as City Manager for Galena and Interim City Manager of Bethel. Greg lived in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma. Sadly Greg passed away on January 29, 2017.

“Looking back on my career, being the Anchorage Ombudsman was the best position I ever held. It was an honor for me to work every day with the citizens of Anchorage and Municipal/School District personnel to solve problems and concerns.”

Kristi Cada 2007-2010

After working for the Municipality of Anchorage since 1989 (with a brief stint living and working in Valdez), Kristi left the Ombudsman’s Office in December, 2010, after a total of over 17 years of service to the Municipality. Kristi continued working for the Assembly Department as an Assembly Aide to Assemblymember Paul Honeman for four years. In January, 2015, Kristi went back to finish her MBA, with the same emphasis as her bachelor’s degree; Knowledge Management and Conflict Resolution. In April, 2015 Kristi was recruited to help a friend develop and run a specialty catering delivery service that focuses on specialty dietary needs, including vegan, vegetarian, paleo, pescatarian, ketogenic, and just plain calorie-controlled meals for those looking to trim down.

“I’ve always been a strong believer in fair and equal treatment for all, so it was a pleasure to work in the Ombudsman’s Office, where fairness and mutual respect sought to rule the day. While complainant concerns sometimes illuminated improvements to be made within Municipal policies, procedures and processes, I took every opportunity to shed light upon and show appreciation for the hard-working employees of the Municipality. Not only did I find them to be some of the most dedicated individuals I’ve worked with, but also some of the most compassionate, patient and respectful, even when faced with provocation and adversity. Municipal employees continue to play a critical role in making the Municipality of Anchorage the wonderful place it is to live, work and play.”

Barbara Jones 2011-2012

Barbara came to the Ombudsman’s Office after serving as Staff Attorney and Executive Director of the Anchorage Equal Rights Commission for 12 years. During her tenure in the Ombudsman’s Office, the Assembly offered and appointed Barbara as Municipal Clerk, where she continues to serve the Municipality and the Assembly. “When I was working as the Ombudsman, my then 12- year old son asked me what would be the perfect job and I responded that I had the perfect job! Working as the Ombudsman allowed me the privilege both to direct citizens to hard working city employees who could solve problems, and to address issues that were problematic for citizens that departments may not have understood from the citizens’ perspective. It was a privilege to serve.”

MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE



COMPLAINT FORM

The Ombudsman's Office was established in addition to other remedies or rights of appeal, as an independent, impartial municipal office, readily available to the public, responsible to the Assembly, empowered to investigate the acts of Municipal agencies and Anchorage School District, and to recommend appropriate changes toward the goals of safeguarding the rights of persons and of promoting higher standards of competency, efficiency, and equity in the provision of municipal services.

Please fill out and mail to:

Municipal Ombudsman
PO Box 196650
Anchorage, AK 99519-6650

| | | |
|---|-------------------|------|
| Name | | Date |
| Address | | |
| City | State | Zip |
| Phone Number | Alt. Phone Number | |
| Email Address: | | |
| Name of municipal department you are complaining about: | | |
| Have you tried to resolve the complaint with the department? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO | | |
| *It is important to try to resolve your issue with the agency's help before involving the ombudsman.* | | |
| Please provide names and contact information for people you have spoken with and what their response was to your complaint. | | |
| <hr/> | | |

MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE OMBUDSMAN COMPLAINT FORM

"The Ombudsman may investigate the administrative acts of agents of the municipality,...The ombudsman shall be barred from inquiry into acts of the mayor, the assembly or school board." **AMC 2.60.110.A. D**

What did the department do that you think is wrong? _____

What do you want from the department? _____

Please provide any other information we may need to help us investigate your complaint. _____

***IMPORTANT We will not give out your name without your consent. Do you give permission to use your name when talking to the agency?** YES NO Initial _____

Use this space to provide any further information you feel may be useful in our investigation. **Remember: The Municipal Ombudsman only investigates complaints about municipal agencies.** Use extra paper if necessary.

What do you want the Ombudsman to do for you? _____

Signature _____ Date _____



WELCOMING
Anchorage
Stronger Together

In 2014, Anchorage joined the Welcoming Cities project, a collection of cities from across the United States that recognizes the economic, cultural and social contributions that immigrants and refugees make to our communities. Building on this network, Welcoming Anchorage is a collaboration between the Municipality of Anchorage, local businesses and organizations and the Anchorage Economic Development Corporation that strives to reinforce Anchorage as a place proud of our heritage and poised to position ourselves as a globally competitive, culturally vibrant 21st century community.

The Welcoming Anchorage initiative has five pillars: Employment and Entrepreneurship; Civic Engagement; Connected, Safe and Healthy Communities; Equitable Access; Education.

Employment and Entrepreneurship: Ensuring engagement in all sectors of Anchorage’s economy by tearing down barriers to entry and minimizing “brain waste.” Promoting entrepreneurship opportunities

Civic Engagement: Hosting annual Welcoming Week activities; hosting community wide diversity events, creating community partnerships, designing and hosting civic engagement academies

Connected, Safe and Healthy Communities: Promoting public safety, education about the law, and cultural awareness among service providers

Equitable Access: ensuring access for limited English proficient residents, eliminating barriers to community services

Education: building cradle to career opportunities for newcomers including childhood and adult education and ESL opportunities

#WelcomingAnchorage

On Facebook: www.facebook.com/WelcomingAnchorage

On muni.org: www.muni.org/departments/mayor/welcominganchorage

Contact Welcoming Anchorage: WelcomingAnchorage@muni.org



ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This annual report was prepared by the following members of the Ombudsman's Staff:

Darrel W. Hess, Municipal Ombudsman

Elizabeth A. Eisses, Deputy Ombudsman

May Ramirez-Xiong, Associate Ombudsman



Darrel, Betsy and May



A special thank you to the Municipal Reprographics Team, Ruth, Bob, Tiny and Brandon, for their professionalism and invaluable assistance.

“The world isn’t fair, Calvin” “I know Dad, but why isn’t it ever unfair in my favor?”

— Bil Watterson. The Essential Calvin and Hobbes: A Calvin and Hobbes Treasury