
MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE
OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN
2019 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 2019 Annual Report to the hardworking, dedicated Municipal employees and officials who have kept our local government functioning during the ongoing COVID-19 international health pandemic. Thank you for your service.”

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contact Information.....	Front Cover
Transmittal Letter.....	5
Purpose of the Office of the Ombudsman.....	6
How to File a Complaint.....	6
Statistics.....	7-11
Case Resolution Summaries.....	11-17
Public Outreach.....	18
Ombudsman's Office.....	19-20
Ombudsman Complaint Form.....	21-22
Complaint Resolution Process Flowchart.....	23
Welcoming Anchorage.....	24
Acknowledgment.....	Back Cover

September 15, 2020

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 2019 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 work groups, 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. It is our pleasure to serve, inform and empower the public.

Sincerely,



Darrel W. Hess
Municipal Ombudsman



May Ramirez-Xiong
Deputy 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 2019, the Ombudsman's Office provided information and referrals to 1,271 individuals, and opened 178 cases.

The Ombudsman's Office is located on the ground floor of Anchorage City Hall, in Suite 100. 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](http://www.muni.org/cityviewportal), 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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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 2019, 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 2019 Processing Statistics

2019 Processing Statistics	From Prior Year	New	Processed or Closed	Remaining Open
Cases	4	178	176	6
Contacts	0	328	328	0
Referrals	0	943	943	0
Total Inquiries	4	1449	1447	6

Graph 1 2019 Processing Statistics

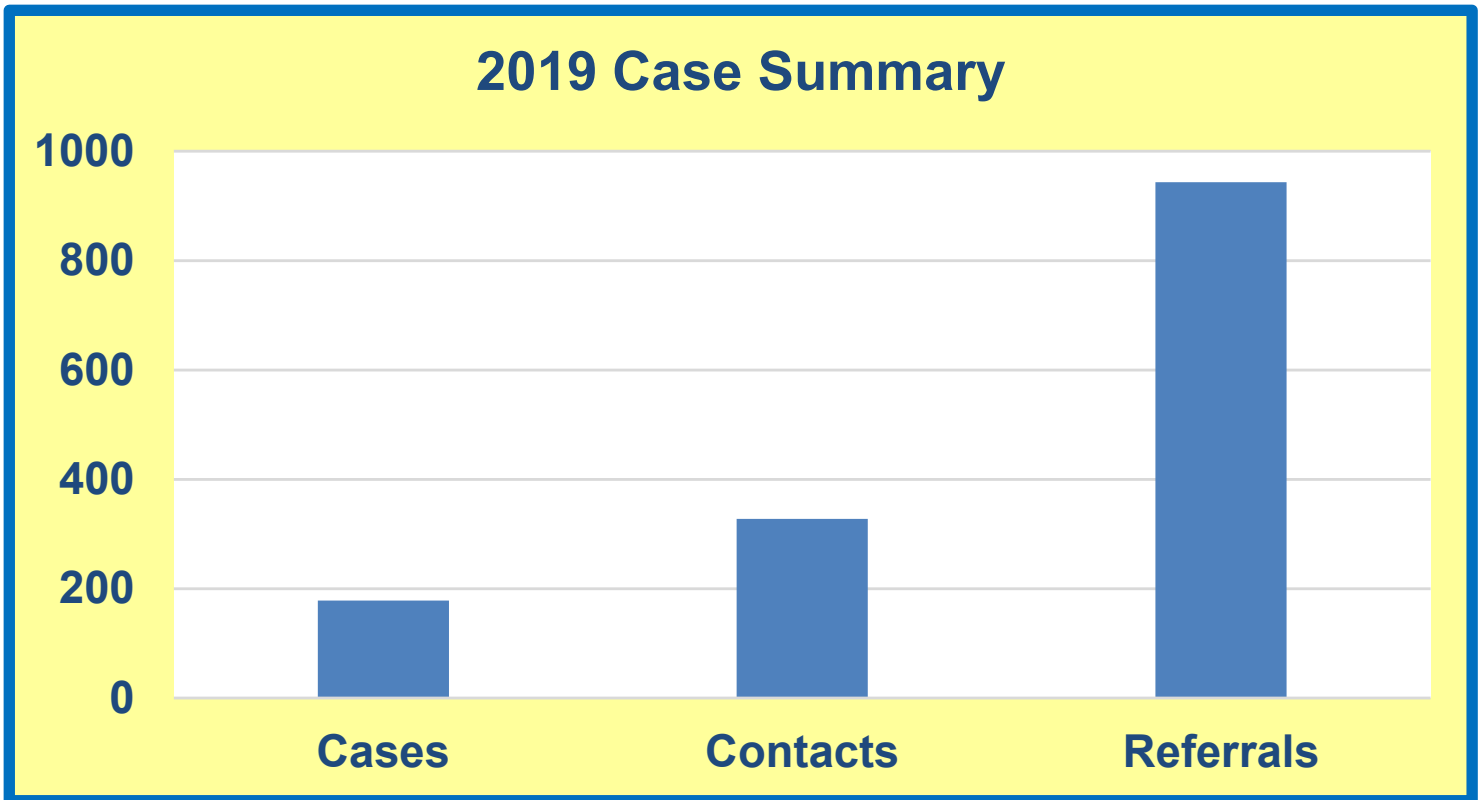
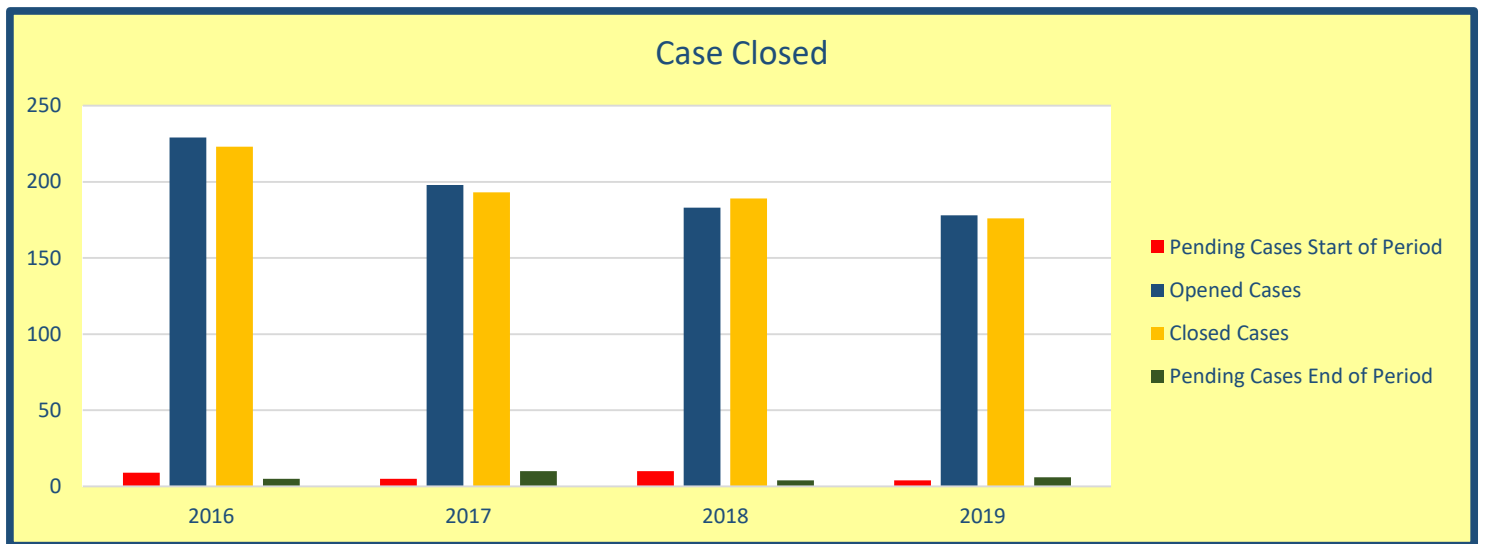


Table 2. Case Closures and Pending Inventory from 2016-19

Case Inventory	2016	2017	2018	2019
Pending Cases Start of Period	9	5	10	4
Opened Cases	229	198	183	178
Closed Cases	223	193	189	176
Pending Cases End of Period	5	10	4	6

Graph 2. Case Closures and Pending Inventory from 2016-2019



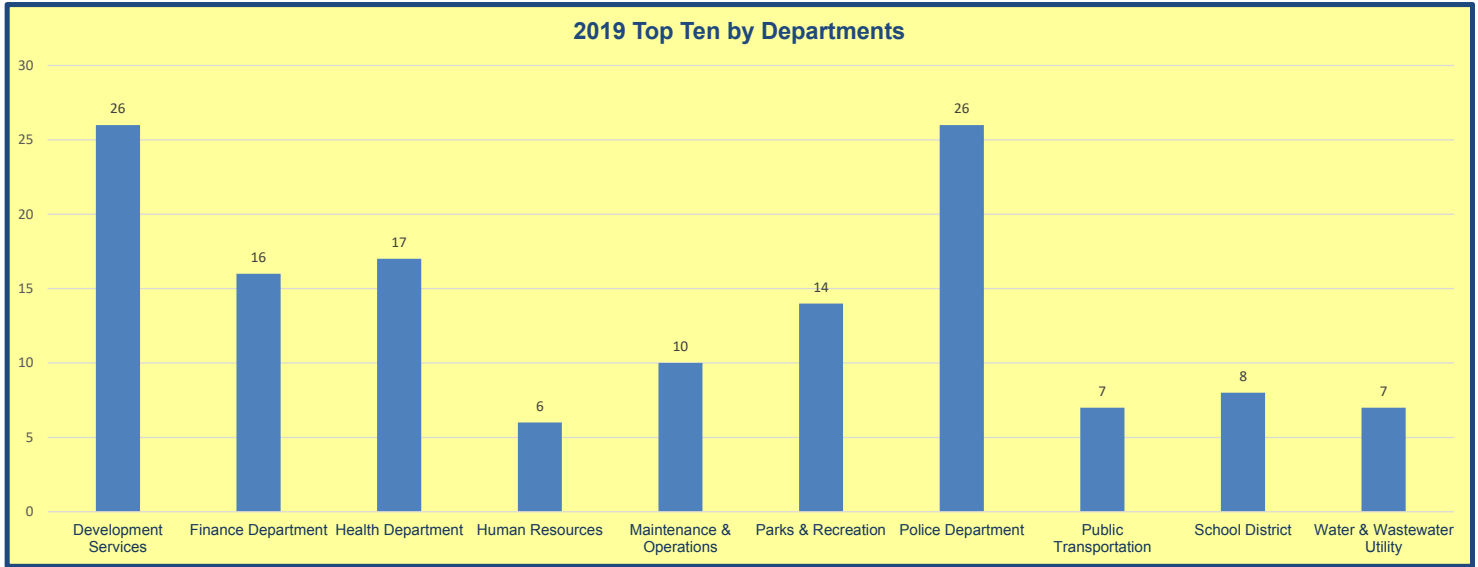
Historically, the larger Municipal Departments and those with the greatest public contact generate the largest number of cases in the Ombudsman’s Office. In 2019 the Development Services Department & Police Department (tied at 14.61%), Health Department (9.55%), Finance Department (8.99%), and Parks & Recreation Department (7.87%), ranked 1-5. (See Table 3 and Graph 3).

Table 3. 2017-19 Cases by Department

Ombudsman Cases by Department

Department	2017	Percent	2018	Percent	2019	Percent
Anchorage Community Development Authority	7	3.55%	7	3.83%	3	1.69%
Assembly	3	1.52%	3	1.64%	4	2.25%
Development Services	36	17.77%	25	13.66%	26	14.61%
Economic & Community Development	1	0.51%	1	0.55%	0	0%
Emergency Management	0	0%	1	0.55%	0	0%
Finance Department	22	11.17%	14	7.65%	16	8.99%
Fire Department	1	0.51%	0	0%	2	1.12%
Health Department	6	3.05%	18	9.84%	17	9.55%
Human Resources	4	2.03%	3	1.64%	6	3.37%
Information Technology	0	0%	2	1.09%	1	0.56%
Legal Department	6	3.05%	4	2.19%	1	0.56%
Library	1	0.51%	1	0.55%	0	0%
Maintenance & Operations	13	6.6%	16	8.74%	10	5.62%
Mayor's Office	2	1.02%	1	0.55%	2	1.12%
Merrill Field	1	0.51%	0	0%	0	0%
Municipal Light & Power	4	2.03%	6	3.28%	5	2.81%
Municipal Manager	0	0%	1	0.55%	0	0%
Not Department Specific	5	2.54%	3	1.64%	7	3.93%
Office of Management & Budget	1	0.51%	1	0.55%	1	0.56%
Parks & Recreation	4	2.03%	6	3.28%	14	7.87%
Planning	1	0.51%	2	1.09%	3	1.69%
Police Department	34	17.26%	23	12.57%	26	14.61%
Port of Alaska	0	0%	2	1.09%	0	0%
Project Management & Engineering	4	2.03%	0	0%	0	0%
Public Transportation	13	6.6%	8	4.37%	7	3.93%
Public Works Administration	0	0%	2	1.09%	0	0%
Purchasing Department	1	0.51%	1	0.55%	1	0.56%
Real Estate Department	3	1.52%	1	0.55%	0	0%
Risk Management	5	2.54%	5	2.73%	3	1.69%
Safety Department	0	0%	1	0.55%	0	0%
School District	8	4.06%	7	3.83%	8	4.49%
Solid Waste Services	4	2.03%	4	2.19%	2	1.12%
Traffic	3	1.52%	8	4.37%	3	1.69%
Transportation Inspection	2	1.02%	1	0.55%	3	1.69%
Water & Wastewater Utility	3	1.52%	5	2.73%	7	3.93%
All Departments	198	100%	183	100%	178	100%

Graph 3. 2019 Cases by Department (most frequent)

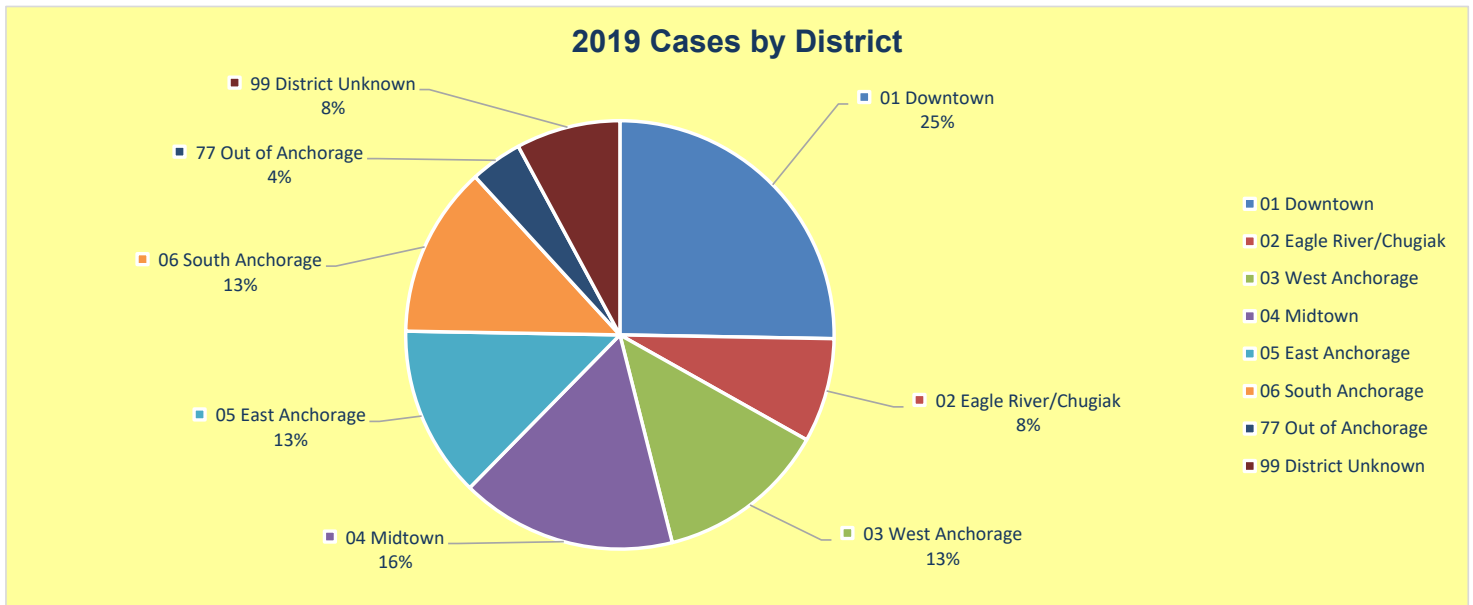


The Ombudsman’s Office also tracks Cases by Assembly District. These numbers are reflected in **Table 4** and **Graph 4**.

Table 4. Cases by Assembly District 2017-2019

District No./Name	Cases 2017	Percent	Cases 2018	Percent	Cases 2019	Percent
01 Downtown	59	29.44	54	29.51	45	25.28
02 Eagle River/Chugiak	9	4.57	12	6.56	14	7.87
03 West Anchorage	29	14.72	28	15.3	23	12.92
04 Midtown	21	10.66	28	15.3	29	16.29
05 East Anchorage	31	15.74	21	11.48	23	12.92
06 South Anchorage	25	12.69	28	15.3	23	12.92
77 Out of Anchorage	6	3.05	1	0.55	7	3.93
99 District Unknown	18	9.14	11	6.01	14	7.87
Total	198	100	183	100	178	100

Graph 4. Cases by Assembly District 2019



2019 CASE RESOLUTION SUMMARIES

In 2019, the Ombudsman’s Office opened 178 cases, and closed 176 (with 4 carried over from 2018). We ended 2019 with 6 open cases. Most 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 2019 cases:

2019-0043 & 2020-0057

Two employees of Municipal Light & Power (ML&P) contacted the Ombudsman’s Office to express their concerns that the sale agreement document between ML&P and Chugach Electric Association, that was posted online, included the names and case summaries for employees who had open cases with the Anchorage Equal Rights Commission (AERC) and State Commission for Human Rights (ASCHR). The employees questioned if this confidential information should be posted online.

The Ombudsman reviewed the relevant sections of code and determined that, as the respondent in the cases, ML&P was not legally prohibited from sharing information regarding the AERC and ASCHR complaints. However, posting the names of the complainants online could potentially lead to allegations of retaliation regarding the original complaints that were filed with the two compliance agencies. Because the AERC and ASCHR are outside compliance agencies, posting the information did not violate any employee or labor policies of the Municipality. The Ombudsman contacted the Deputy Municipal Attorney and the Employee Relations Department, Director regarding the documents being posted on the internet and intranet; the documents were pulled from the internet and redacted on the intranet.

2019-0068

An individual contacted the Ombudsman's Office regarding his concerns with the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA), Street Maintenance. The constituent stated that the alley behind his property had always been plowed by the Municipality, but that apparently "some dispute has caused Street Maintenance to stop plowing". The constituent requested that the Ombudsman's Office review the situation.

The Ombudsman's Office inquired into the constituent's concerns and reviewed the history of the alley. The Ombudsman determined that the "alley" behind the constituent's property is an unimproved public right-of-way, that has not been developed to Municipal standards. The right-of-way has functioned as a private driveway since 1941. There are dozens of rights-of-way throughout the MOA that have not been improved to MOA standards, and consequently are not maintained by the MOA, Street Maintenance. The property owners adjacent to this unimproved right-of-way can petition the MOA to be assessed for developing the right-of-way to MOA standards, so that the MOA would "accept" the right-of-way and maintain it. Or the property owners can apply for a permit to maintain the right-of-way and hire a private contractor.

2019-0138

An individual contacted the Ombudsman's Office regarding his concerns with the Anchorage Transportation Commission (ATC). The constituent had requested to be heard on the agenda for the January 2019 ATC meeting. The request was denied, and the constituent contacted the Ombudsman requesting that he intervene. The constituent alleged that the denial of his appearance request was not consistent with the ATC's mission in MOA code.

The Ombudsman reviewed Anchorage Municipal Code, Title 11, Title 4, and Charter Section 17.05. The Ombudsman determined that there is no requirement that MOA boards and commissions must grant all appearance requests. The Charter requires that the public have a "reasonable opportunity" to provide comments at boards and commissions meetings. The ATC's public comment period during their meetings fulfills the requirement of the Charter. The constituent had the opportunity to address the Commission under public comments at their January 2019 meeting.

2019-0211

Over the past several years the Ombudsman's Office has been contacted by multiple individuals who have expressed concerns with the Municipality of Anchorage's Scofflaw code and program, including cases OM201801765, OM20181768, OM20190586 & OM20190807. The Scofflaw list is generated by the Treasury Division. The list contains the names of individuals who have accumulated delinquent traffic fines for "moving violations" totaling more than \$1,000. The code allows the Anchorage Police Department to abate vehicles operated by the individual's whose names are on the list, per Anchorage Municipal Code 9.28.035 – Abatement of vehicles operated by delinquent offenders. Traffic fine is defined in municipal code as "a fine issued by the municipality for a moving violation". The Treasury Division informed the Ombudsman's Office that they always understood "moving violations" to be "any offense committed while the vehicle is in motion." This includes all paperwork and equipment violations, which typically are not considered moving violations in multiple municipalities, cities, and states, or by the State of Alaska, Division of Motor Vehicles (DMV). While multiple constituents had contacted the Ombudsman's

Office regarding the Scofflaw code and program, this was the first time that a complainant had raised the issue of how the Municipality interprets and enforces the term “moving violation” for purposes of the Scofflaw code. The constituent believed that was unfair for the Municipality to categorize paperwork and equipment violations as moving violations, especially with “moving violations” not being defined in municipal code or state statute. The Finance Department submitted AO 2019-59 to the Assembly for their consideration. The ordinance would have codified moving violations in municipal code to include paperwork and equipment violations (“a fine issued by the municipality for a moving violation, which includes any offenses, including those relating to paperwork or equipment, that occur while a vehicle is in motion”).

The Ombudsman’s Office reviewed the relevant sections of the Anchorage Municipal Code and the Alaska State Statutes, the Alaska DMV Handbook, the 2007 state legislation that authorized local governments to enact Scofflaw codes (HCS SB 145), the minutes of the House Judiciary Standing Committee meeting where the proposed state legislation was discussed, and AO 2007-161, which enacted the Scofflaw code. The Ombudsman’s Office opined that changing the code to include “paperwork and equipment violations, that occur while a vehicle is in motion” was not fair and reasonable. The State of Alaska, Division of Motor Vehicles does not assign points against driver’s licenses for those offenses, because they do not consider those violations to be reflective of a person’s ability to operate a motor vehicle. The Ombudsman’s Office drafted a memo to the Assembly recommending against approval of AO 2019-59 and disagreeing with the MOA’s current interpretation of “moving violation” relative to the Scofflaw ordinance. The Assembly subsequently indefinitely postponed AO 2019-59.

2019-0220

An individual contacted the Ombudsman’s Office to express concerns with People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) advertising signs being placed on People Mover buses. The constituent believed that the advertisement was not appropriate because the Iditarod and Fur Rendezvous sled dog races are part of Anchorage’s history and are economic engines for the city.

The advertising program for People Mover buses is contracted to a private third-party company. The Ombudsman’s Office determined that advertisements placed on Municipality of Anchorage public transportation vehicles are not required to reflect the views and opinions of the Municipality of Anchorage, or any special-interest group. The Public Transportation Department’s restrictions on bus advertising are set by Municipal Code and state and federal regulations. Municipal code restricts advertising that includes:

- *Any use of obscene, indecent, or profane language.*
- *Any performance or exhibition which depicts:*
- *Nudity as defined in Anchorage Municipal Code (AMC) section 8.50.010E.2.*
- *Sexual conduct as defined in AMC subsection 8.50.010E.3.,*
- *Sexual excitement as defined in AMC subsection 8.50.010E.4.,*
- *Indecent materials as defined in AMC subsection 8.50.020A.6., or*
- *Is harmful to minors as defined in AMC subsection 8.50.010E.5.*

- *Tobacco products.*
- *Alcoholic beverages.*
- *Advertising promoting illegal or unlawful activities as defined by local, state or federal codes, laws, and regulations.*
- *Retail marijuana store, marijuana, and marijuana products (AMC subsection 10.80.360C.2).*

2019-0243

An individual contacted the Ombudsman's Office regarding her concerns with the Municipality of Anchorage, Property Appraisal. The constituent had recently sold her home, and the Municipal Tax Division was showing that she owed several thousand dollars in back taxes, penalties, and interest. The constituent believed that she was not responsible for the taxes and questioned why the Municipality was billing her.

The Deputy Ombudsman reviewed the constituent's concerns and worked with the Property Appraisal Supervisor to determine if the constituent was responsible for the taxes, penalties, and interest. In the course of their review the Deputy Ombudsman and the Supervisor discovered that there was an error during the sale of the property that caused the MOA to bill the constituent for payments that should have been paid by the mortgage company. The mortgage company remitted the tax payments, and the constituent's tax balance was zeroed out.

2019-0344

On Friday, February 22nd, an individual parked her vehicle on 5th Avenue in front of the Egan Center while unloading materials for setting up her organization's table at the Bridge Builders Meet the World community celebration. The constituent received a citation from Easy Park for parking in a passenger loading zone. She appealed, informing Easy Park that the security guard at the Egan Center had told her she could park where she had parked to unload her vehicle. Easy Park denied her appeal.

The Ombudsman made a site visit to survey the signs in front of the Egan Center. The Ombudsman determined that the signs in front of the Egan Center are confusing and that the passenger and freight loading zones overlap. The Ombudsman determined that, due to street closures for Fur Rendezvous, the loading docks behind the Egan Center were not accessible to the constituent or other vendors to use that day. The constituent's citation was reduced to a warning, and the Traffic Department agreed to review the placement of the passenger and freight loading zone signs.

2019-0343

An individual contacted the Ombudsman's Office alleging that the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA), Parks & Recreation Department had been accepting a "defective" insurance certificate provided to his community council by the Federation of Community Councils (FCC), for their annual community picnic that is held in an MOA park. The constituent alleged that the insurance certificate did not cover or protect the MOA or the council.

The Ombudsman met with the Municipal Attorney's Office, Parks & Recreation Department, and Risk Management Department to review the constituent's concerns, including the relationship between the MOA and the community councils. Anchorage's community councils are not part of local government; they are independent, self-governing neighborhood associations that are an integral part of the local government process. The MOA, Risk Manager determined that the FCC's insurance policy did not cover the individual community councils, and the certificates that the FCC had been issuing did not provide liability insurance coverage to the councils or the MOA. The FCC and the councils were informed of the determination. As with any other user group, the community councils need to provide proof of insurance to use any MOA facilities, including parks.

2019-0411

Two individuals contacted the Ombudsman's Office with their concerns regarding the Municipality of Anchorage, Parks & Recreation Department. The constituents alleged that the Parks & Recreation Department would not issue them a permit to hold the 2019 Anchorage Juneteenth Celebration in Delaney Park, near the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial.

The Ombudsman contacted the Parks & Recreation Department, Director, to discuss the issue. The Ombudsman learned that after the 2014 renovation of the MLK Memorial the Parks & Recreation Department had developed a written policy that only allows events related to the nationally recognized holidays associated with the Veterans & MLK Memorials (Veteran's Day and MLK Day) to be held in that block of Delaney Park. This was done for multiple reasons. It is the smallest block of the park, the open green space is substantially smaller than the other blocks of the park, parking is more limited, and there were concerns about a lack of signalized crosswalks for persons who park on the blocks to the east and west of the block. The Ombudsman and the Director discussed the significance of the MLK Memorial for the African American community, and the history of the Juneteenth holiday. The Director waived the policy and allowed the group to hold the 2019 Juneteenth celebration in Delaney Park, near the MLK Memorial, subject to all standard permitting requirements.

2019-0678

An individual emailed the Municipal Ombudsman's Office, the State Ombudsman's Office, the Parks & Recreation Department, and the members of the Anchorage Assembly. The constituent inquired who at the Municipality of Anchorage (MOA) "enforces platted easements". The constituent alleged that a property owner was blocking access to a parcel that was platted as an easement to be used as a parking lot by the Boys & Girls Club (BGC), and their successors as owners of the property. The BGC sold a portion of the land to the MOA, which is now part of a MOA park, and the public had been using the easement as a parking lot for several years.

The Ombudsman researched the history of the parcel and the easement. The Ombudsman determined that the original easement document was never recorded with the State of Alaska, and the original parties to the agreement are no longer owners of the property. Because the easement was not recorded, it did not remain in place when the property was sold. The "easement" is not an easement and is now owned by the property owner who purchased the property from the BGC.

2019-0737

An individual contacted the Ombudsman's Office regarding his Municipal Light & Power (ML&P) monthly bills. The constituent stated that for several months his ML&P utility bills had been excessive for his studio apartment. His bills were normally \$15-\$35 per month but had been averaging \$100-\$200 a month for six months. The constituent stated that he had unsuccessfully attempted to resolve the issue with ML&P. The constituent requested that the Ombudsman's Office look into his concerns.

The Deputy Ombudsman reviewed the constituent's concerns and contacted ML&P. ML&P researched the history of the constituent's account and had his electric meter removed to the ML&P shop for examination. During the examination of the meter it was determined that the meter was malfunctioning. ML&P adjusted the constituent's utility bills based on his normal average monthly usage.

2019-0921

A constituent contacted the Ombudsman's Office with her concerns regarding the Anchorage Police Department (APD). The constituent alleged that in 2017 she reported to the Anchorage Police Department that her vehicle had been stolen. The vehicle was later recovered, and she did not claim it from the tow company where it had been towed for safe keeping. In January 2019, the vehicle was involved in a hit-and-run accident. The insurance company for the other party involved in the hit-and-run sent the constituent a bill for \$17,000 for the damage to their client's vehicle. The constituent was having difficulty in obtaining a copy of the 2017 police report from when she reported her vehicle stolen.

The Ombudsman reviewed the constituent's concerns and determined that when she did not claim her vehicle from the tow company, she forfeited ownership, and the tow company had the right to sell the vehicle. The Ombudsman contacted the tow company and confirmed that the vehicle had been sold to an ex-employee of the company. The tow company's file on the sale of the vehicle was stolen by the ex-employee, who is wanted by law enforcement. The tow company provided the constituent with a letter stating that the vehicle was sold, who it was sold to, and when it was sold. The Ombudsman contacted an APD supervisor and expedited the constituent receiving a copy of the 2017 police report. The constituent provided a copy of the letter and a copy of the 2017 police report to the insurance company that had billed her.

2019-1007

An individual filed a complaint with the Ombudsman's Office regarding the Anchorage School District and the process for selecting artists for public art projects. The constituent asked "How does the art selection jury process of AMC 7.40.010 et seq. comply with AS 35.27.020(f) requirement that artists: 'be selected by the superintendent of a school district in which a public school is built with the approval of the school board.' Under current MOA code neither the Superintendent of schools or the School Board has any power to approve the selection of artists for school art projects under 1% for art program."

The Ombudsman reviewed the relevant sections of municipal code and state statute. AS 35, Chapter 27 is the State Statute that applies to State of Alaska building and facilities, including schools. AMC 7.40 is the Municipal Code that applies to Municipality of Anchorage facilities, including the Anchorage School District. When the Alaska State Legislature enacted the public art program by adopting AS Title 35, Chapter 27, they

did not require local governments to implement a public arts program; the decision as to whether or not to implement a local public arts program is entirely up to individual local governments. AS 35, Chapter 27 covers State of Alaska buildings and facilities, it does not cover buildings and facilities constructed by political subdivisions of the State of Alaska, including the Municipality of Anchorage and the Anchorage School District.

2019-1247

An individual contacted the Ombudsman's Office regarding vehicles parking in the alley in front of her garage. The constituent stated that she lives behind a local market, and that between her property and the market is an alley that her garage is located on. The constituent stated that the Municipality had allowed three additional parking spaces for the market, which had created problems for her when she pulls in or out of her garage. She believed that removing the three parking spaces and turning them into a fire lane would resolve the issue.

The Ombudsman's Office reviewed the constituent's concerns, including researching the history of the market's parking lot and conducting multiple site visits. The northern border of the alleyway across from the constituent's property is already designated as a fire lane. There are signs in place that state "No Parking. Fire Lane. Tow-Away Zone." The three additional parking spaces that were allowed for the market are on their property and removing the parking spaces would not eliminate the constituent's problems in accessing her garage. The problem is vehicles that are parking in the fire lane. The best way to deal with the problem is through enforcement by the Anchorage Police Department (APD). The Ombudsman's Office contacted the APD, Traffic Unit Sergeant and referred the constituent to the APD, Traffic Unit, which includes the Anchorage Community Service officers.

2019-1409

An individual contacted the Ombudsman's Office, alleging that an Anchorage Police Department (APD) patrol vehicle ran a red light and struck her car on March 13, 2019. The constituent stated that she had not received a case number, and that no one from APD or the Risk Management Department (Risk) had contacted her.

The Ombudsman reviewed the constituent's concerns and contacted the APD and Risk to gather information regarding the constituent's concerns. The Ombudsman reviewed the police reports, and Risk's review of the incident (including the traffic light video footage). The Ombudsman determined that the constituent was not present when the accident occurred; her daughter was driving the vehicle. The APD vehicle approached a signalized intersection with its emergency lights and siren activated. The vehicle adhered to APD policy by "creeping" through the intersection. Vehicle traffic in all directions had stopped and yielded to the emergency vehicle. The constituent's daughter pulled out of a line of traffic, drove past the stopped vehicles, and entered the intersection where the vehicle she was driving struck the APD vehicle that had almost cleared the intersection. An APD supervisor was called to the scene and the constituent's daughter was issued a citation for driving without a valid driver's license. The daughter subsequently did not show up for her court appearance. An APD case number was provided to the daughter when she was issued the citation. Risk had decided not to pursue a claim against the constituent who owned the vehicle that her daughter was driving when it collided with the APD vehicle. The constituent was notified of the Ombudsman's findings.

2019 Public Outreach

In 2019 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 at www.muni.org/ombud.
- 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
 - 2019 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Holiday Community Wide Celebration
 - 2019 Day of Remembrance: Alaska Chapter of the Japanese American Citizens League
 - Women's March Anchorage
 - Bridge Builder's Meet the World in Anchorage 2019
 - Hmong American Veterans Memorial Day Celebration
 - 2019 Japanese Summer Festival
 - 2019 World Hajib Day Celebration
 - 3rd Annual Alaska Black Business Expo
 - Ida'ina Friendship Gathering
 - African American History Month Forums at the Fairview Rec Center
 - Leadership Anchorage 22
 - Senator Tom Begich/Representative Geran Tarr – Constituent Meeting
 - NAACP Anchorage Unit 1000
 - 4th Annual Diversity Community Health Awareness Day
 - YWCA Alaska's Stand Against Racism
 - Bridge Builders' 2019 Unity Gala
 - Identity, Inc. Board
 - 2019 Elizabeth Peratrovich Day
 - Asia-Pacific Heritage Month Celebration
 - 2019 Equality March & 2019 PrideFestival
 - 2019 Rice Pounding Festival
 - 2019 CSS/RAIS World Refugee Day Celebration
 - 2019 Black History Month Celebration
 - 2019 Project Homeless Connect
 - 2019 Anchorage City Wide Juneteenth Celebration
 - Alaska Native Heritage Day Celebration
 - 2019 Welcoming Anchorage – Welcoming Week Festivities

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 & MAY RAMIREZ-XIONG

It is our honor to serve the people of Anchorage as your Municipal Ombudsman and Deputy 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

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.		

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. _____

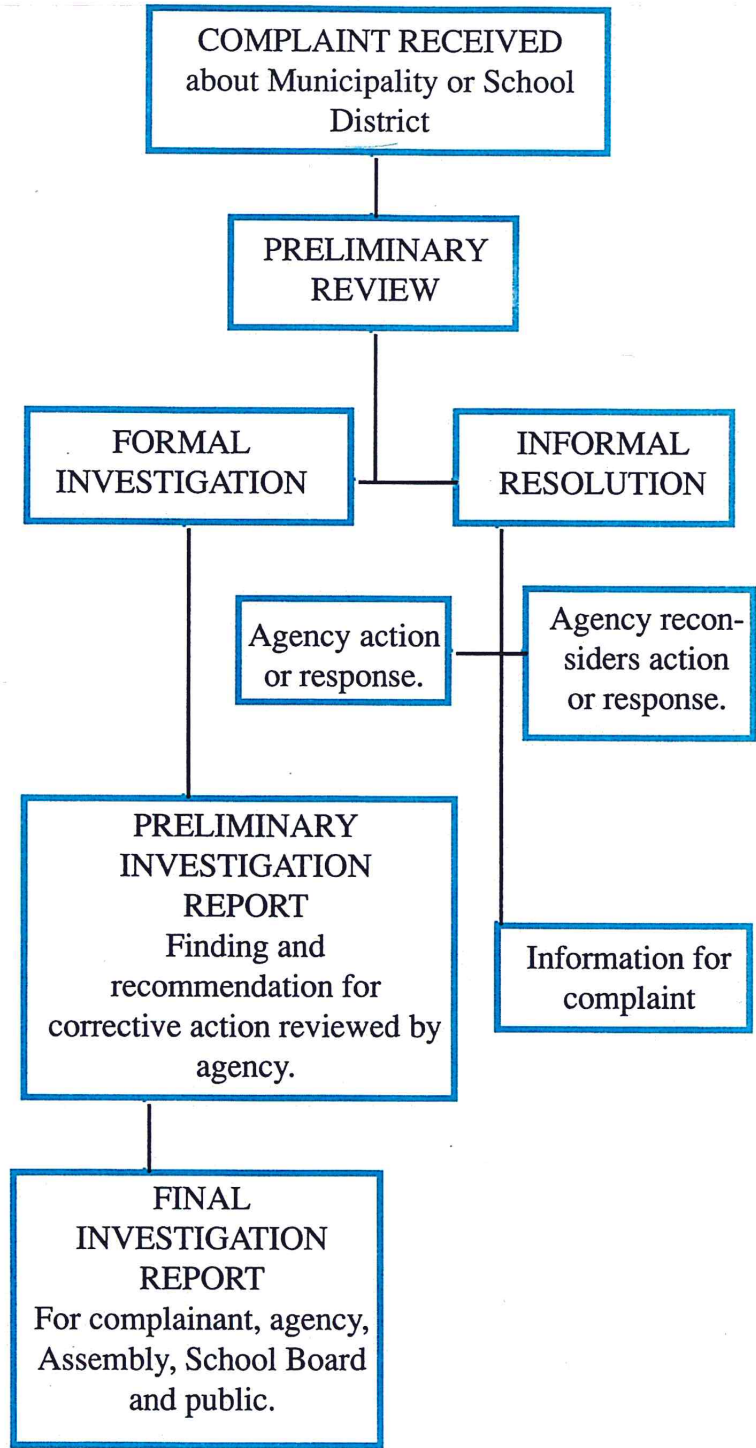
***IMPORTANT We will not give out your name without your consent. Do you give permission to use your name when talking to the agency?** **YES** **NO** Initial _____

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 _____

**COMPLAINT RESOLUTION
PROCESS**
Office of the Ombudsman, Municipality of Anchorage





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



**SPECIAL THANKS TO PIGGY, THE OMBUDSDOG
2008-2019**

FYI



MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE OMBUDSMAN

632 W 6th Avenue, Suite 100, Anchorage, AK 99501
343-4461 • ombud@muni.org



Street Maintenance: 343-8277

Code Enforcement: 343-4141

Potholes: 343-6363

Street Light Repair: 343-4557

Graffiti Busters: 343-4663

Animal Care & Control: 343-8122

Police Department: 786-8500

Fire Department: 267-4936

People Mover: 343-6543

Parks & Recreation: 343-4355

Mayor's Office: 343-7100

Municipal Manager: 343-7110

Clerk's Office: 343-4311

Equal Rights: 343-4342

Equal Opportunity: 343-4878

PLANNING: 343-7931

AWWU: 564-2700

Solid Waste: 343-6262

School District: 742-4000

APD Traffic Tip Line: 786-8949

State Ombudsman: 269-5290



Vote at Home Information



Secure Drop Box Locations:
muni.org/elections/dropbox

Frequently Asked Questions:
muni.org/electionsFAQ

**Anchorage Vote Center
Hours and Locations:**
muni.org/elections/AVC

Voter Hotline:
907-243-VOTE (8683)

Elections Info:
muni.org/elections

For More Information:

Web:
muni.org/elections

Facebook:
[@ANCMuniClerk](https://www.facebook.com/ANCMuniClerk)

Twitter:
[@AncMuniClerk](https://twitter.com/AncMuniClerk)

Call:
(907)243-VOTE(8683)

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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

Darrel W. Hess, Municipal Ombudsman
May Ramirez-Xiong, Deputy Ombudsman



May and Darrel



A special thank you to the Municipal Reprographics Team:
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"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