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# MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

## OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

### 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

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

— Seneca

Municipality of Anchorage, Office of the Ombudsman

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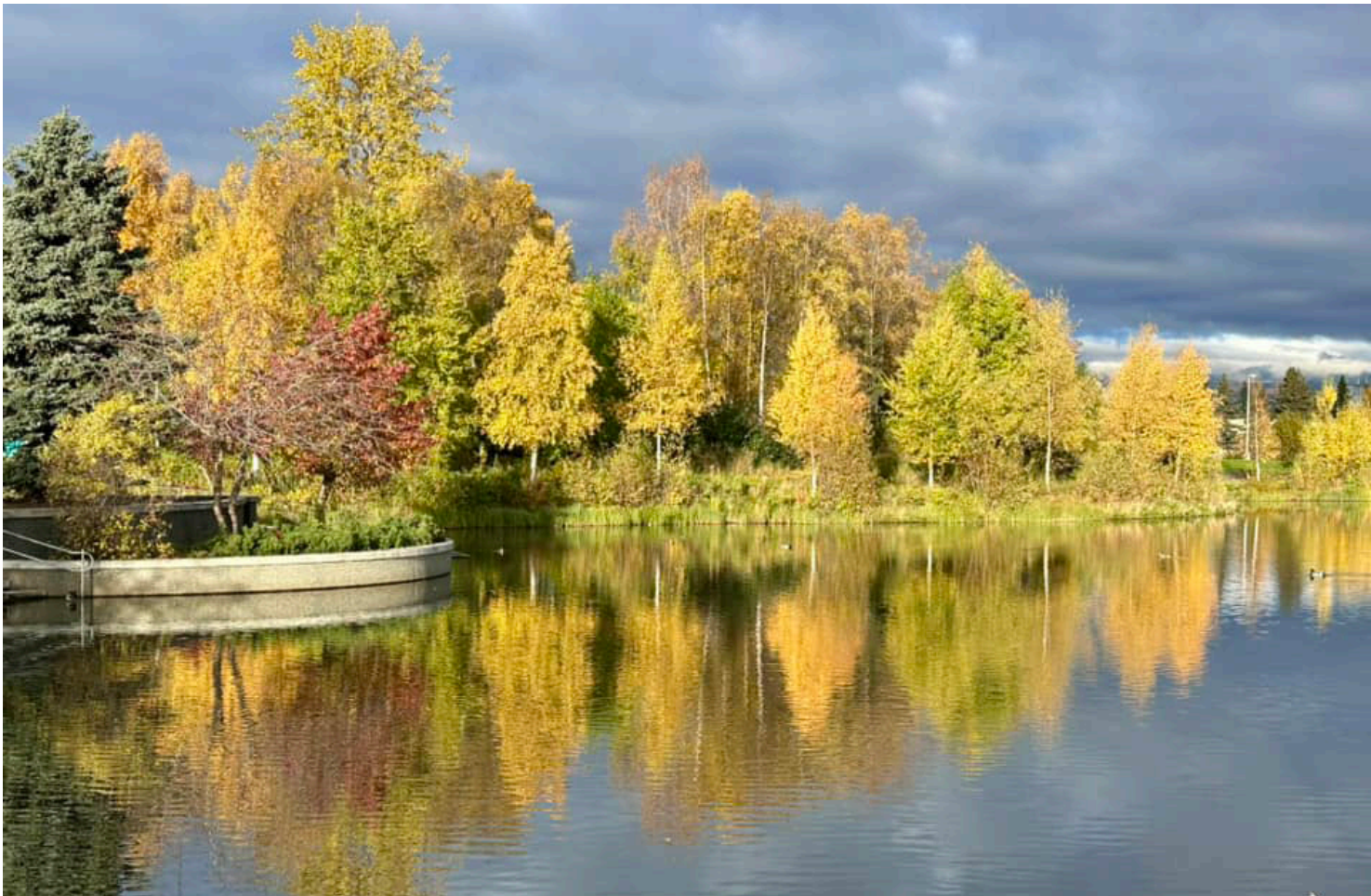


# *Dedication*

*The Anchorage Municipal Ombudsman's Office dedicates our 2024 Annual Report to the dedicated, visionary members of the Anchorage Charter Commission: Jane Angvik, Fred Chiei, Jr, Richard W. Fischer, Mary R. Frohne, Shari T. Holmes, Joe P. Josephson, Lisa Parker, Jim Parsons, Frank M. Reed, Bill Sheffield, Arliss Sturgulewski, and Executive Secretary Patricia M. Zantek.*





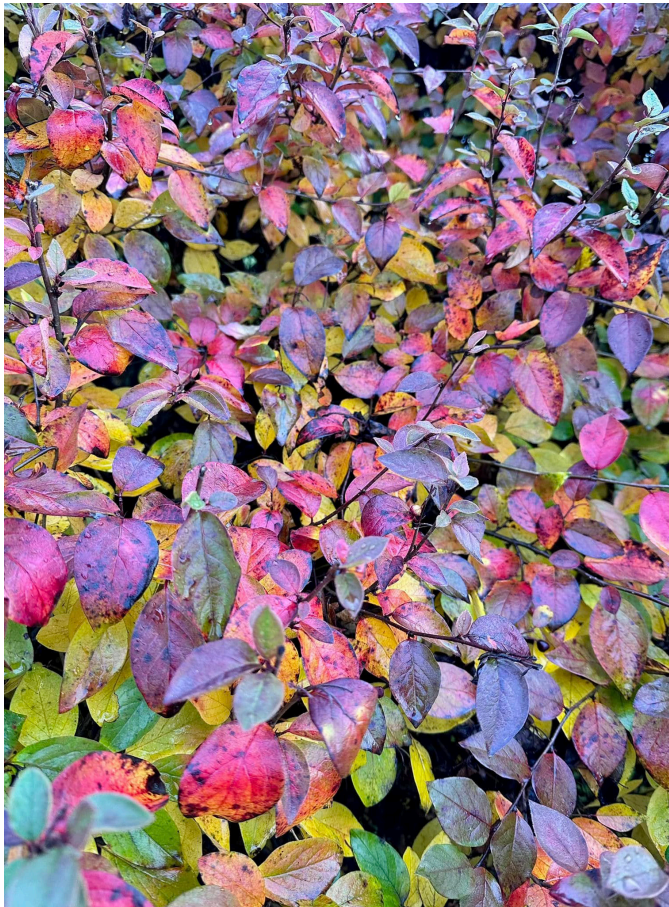




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June 25, 2025

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

As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the unification of the City of Anchorage and the Greater Anchorage Borough as the Municipality of Anchorage on September 16, 1975, we are pleased to present the 2024 Annual Report for the Office of the Ombudsman. This report explains how we fulfill our role as an independent, impartial office that provides information about municipal government, while investigating concerns regarding municipal offices, agencies, utilities, and employees, including the Anchorage School District.

In 2025, as we celebrate the 48th anniversary of the establishment of the Office of the Ombudsman, we are committed to continuing to serve the people of Anchorage, as we strive to make municipal government fairer and more reasonable. In 2024, we opened 233 new cases, made 725 referrals, and recorded 459 contacts, for a total of 1417 interactions with constituents. Behind those statistics are real people – individuals who needed assistance with navigating municipal government. It is our pleasure to serve, inform, and empower the public.

Sincerely,



Darrel W. Hess  
Municipal Ombudsman



May Ramirez-Xiong  
Deputy Ombudsman



Heather MacAlpine  
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 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 2024, the Ombudsman's Office provided information and referrals to 1,184 individuals and opened 233 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](http://www.muni.org/departments/assembly/ombudsman). Complaints can be filed online through the Municipality's CityView Portal, at [www.muni.org/cityviewportal](http://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.

### **Office of the Municipal Ombudsman**

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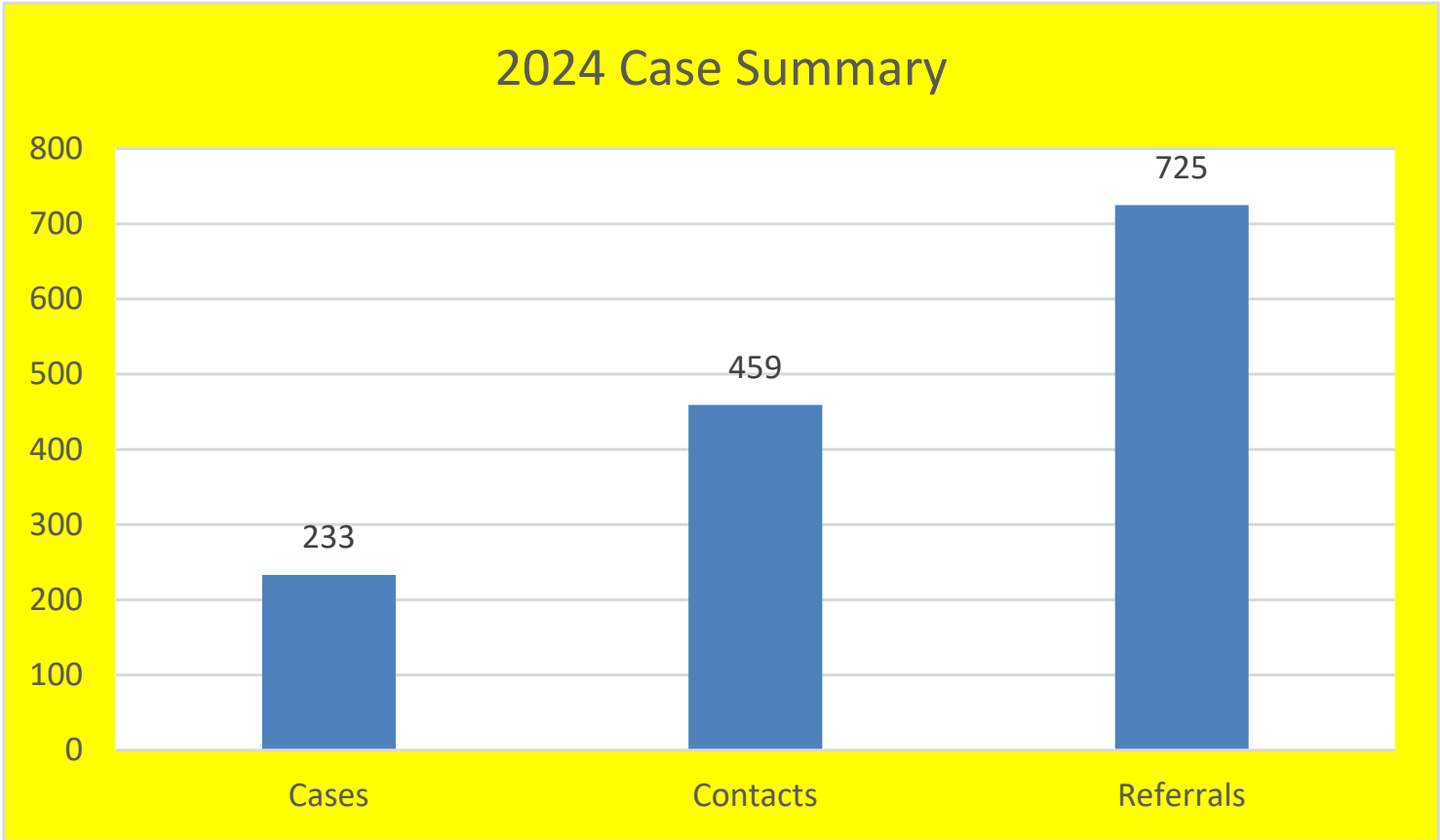
## STATISTICS

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 2024, 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. 2024 Processing Statistics**

2024 Processing Statistics	From Prior Year	New	Processed or Closed	Remaining Open
Cases	9	233	231	11
Contacts	0	459	459	0
Referrals	0	725	725	0
Total Inquiries	9	1417	1415	11

**Graph 1. 2024 Processing Statistics**

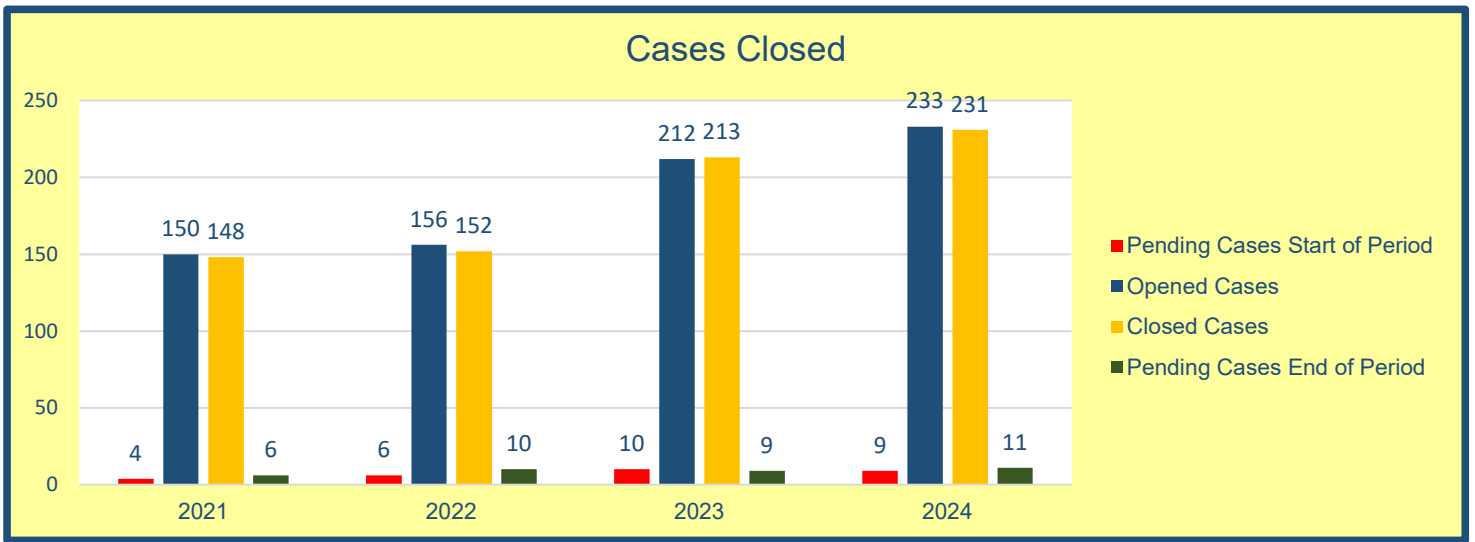




**Table 2. Case Closures and Pending Inventory from 2021-2024**

<b>Case Inventory</b>	<b>2021</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
Pending Cases Start of Period	4	6	10	9
Opened Cases	150	156	212	233
Closed Cases	148	152	213	231
Pending Cases End of Period	6	10	9	11

**Graph 2. Case Closures and Pending Inventory from 2021-2024**



Historically, the larger Municipal Departments and those with the greatest public contact generate the largest number of cases in the Ombudsman's Office. In 2024, Development Services (12.88%), the Police Department (11.16%), the Finance Department and Anchorage Health Department (tied at 9.01%), Maintenance & Operations (4.72%), and the Human Resources Department and Parks & Recreation (tied at 4.29%) ranked 1-5. (See Table 3 and Graph 3).

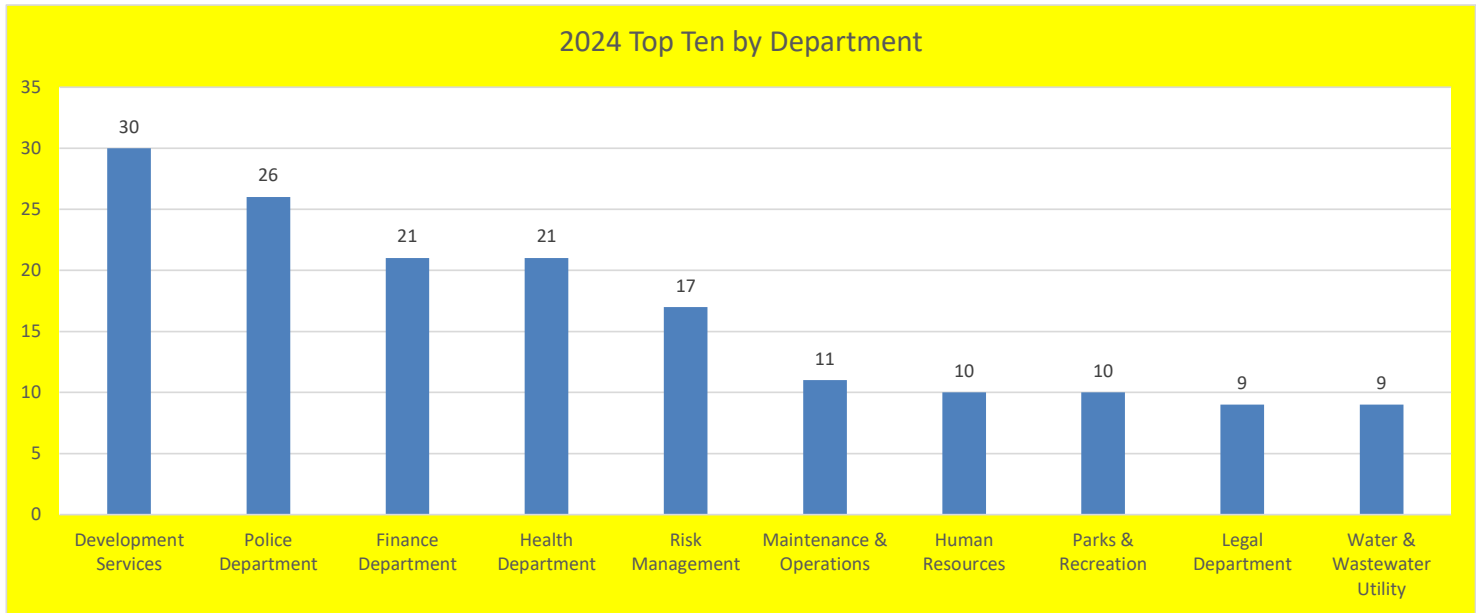




**Table 3. 2022-2024 Cases by Department**

<b>Department</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Anchorage Community Development Authority	3	1.92%	7	3.3%	2	0.86%
Assembly	4	2.56%	5	2.36%	7	3%
Development Services	21	13.46%	19	8.96%	30	12.88%
Eagle River/Chugiak Parks & Recreation	0	0%	0	0%	2	0.86%
Equal Rights Commission	0	0%	2	0.94%	4	1.72%
Finance Department	15	9.62%	15	7.08%	21	9.01%
Fire Department	3	1.92%	2	0.94%	6	2.58%
Girdwood Board of Supervisors	3	1.92%	1	0.47%	1	0.43%
Health Department	12	7.69%	22	10.38%	21	9.01%
Human Resources	0	0%	11	5.19%	10	4.29%
Information Technology	0	0%	4	1.89%	1	0.43%
Legal Department	2	1.28%	4	1.89%	9	3.86%
Library	5	3.21%	4	1.89%	2	0.86%
Maintenance & Operations	6	3.85%	15	7.08%	11	4.72%
Mayor's Office	6	3.85%	9	4.25%	4	1.72%
Merrill Field	1	0.64%	0	0%	0	0%
Municipal Manager	1	0.64%	1	0.47%	3	1.29%
Not Department Specific	7	4.49%	9	4.25%	4	1.72%
Office of Equity & Inclusion	2	1.28%	1	0.47%	1	0.43%
Office of Federal Compliance	0	0%	1	0.47%	1	0.43%
Office of Management & Budget	0	0%	0	0%	1	0.43%
Parks & Recreation	7	4.49%	10	4.72%	10	4.29%
Planning	5	3.21%	4	1.89%	4	1.72%
Planning, Development, and Public Works	2	1.28%	1	0.47%	0	0%
Police Department	21	13.46%	25	11.79%	26	11.16%
Project Management & Engineering	1	0.64%	1	0.47%	0	0%
Public Transportation	3	1.92%	6	2.83%	8	3.43%
Public Works Administration	1	0.64%	2	0.94%	1	0.43%
Purchasing Department	3	1.92%	5	2.36%	3	1.29%
Real Estate Department	4	2.56%	3	1.42%	3	1.29%
Risk Management	2	1.28%	6	2.83%	17	7.3%
School District	11	7.05%	10	4.72%	5	2.15%
Solid Waste Services	5	3.21%	3	1.42%	4	1.72%
Traffic Engineering	0	0%	2	0.94%	1	0.43%
Transportation Inspection	0	0%	0	0%	1	0.43%
Water & Wastewater Utility	0	0%	2	0.94%	9	3.86%
<b>All Departments</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Graph 3. 2024 Cases by Department (most frequent)**



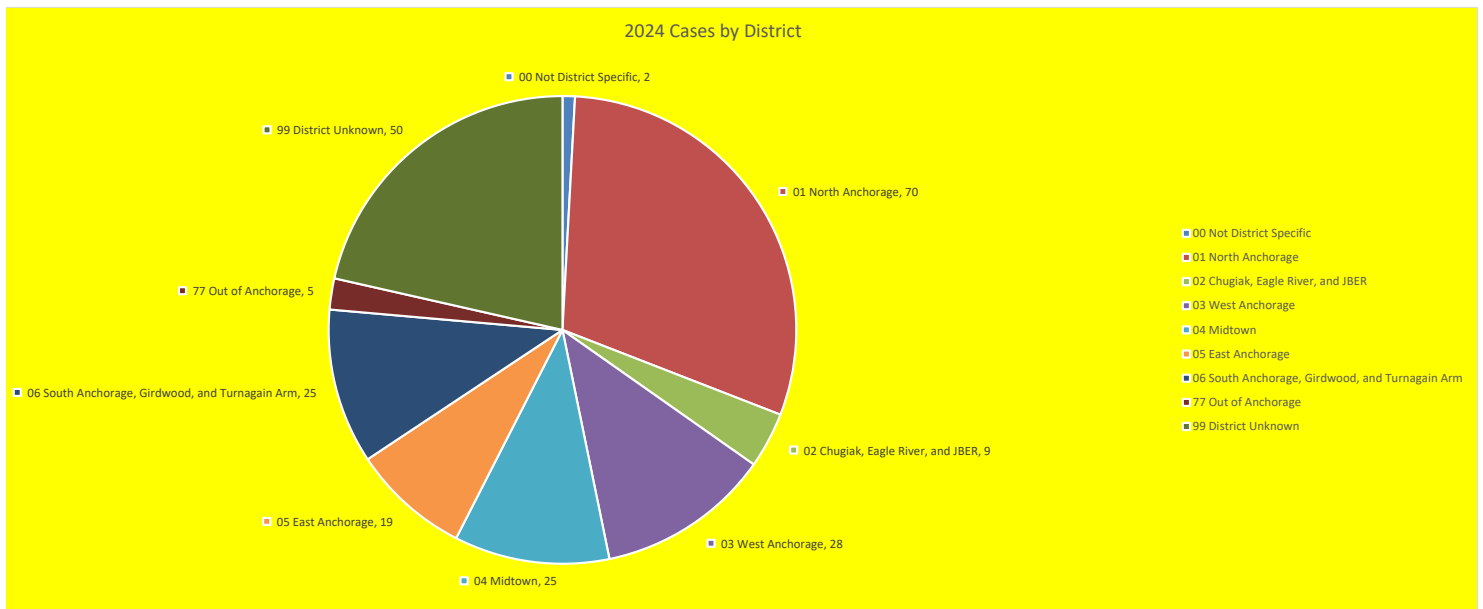


The Ombudsman's Office also tracks cases by Assembly District. These numbers are reflected in Table 4 and Graph 4.

**Table 4. Cases by Assembly District 2022-2024**

District No./Name	Cases 2022	Percent	Cases 2023	Percent	Cases 2024	Percent
00 Not District Specific	0	0	0	0	2	0.86
01 North Anchorage	43	27.56	77	36.32	70	30.04
02 Chugiak, Eagle River, and JBER	9	5.77	17	8.02	9	3.86
03 West Anchorage	16	10.26	26	12.26	28	12.02
04 Midtown	11	7.05	19	8.96	25	10.73
05 East Anchorage	21	13.46	16	7.55	19	8.15
06 South Anchorage, Girdwood, and Turnagain Arm	27	17.31	18	8.49	25	10.73
77 Out of Anchorage	1	0.64	3	1.42	5	2.15
99 District Unknown	28	17.95	36	16.98	50	21.46
<b>Total</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>100</b>

**Graph 4. Cases by Assembly District 2024**



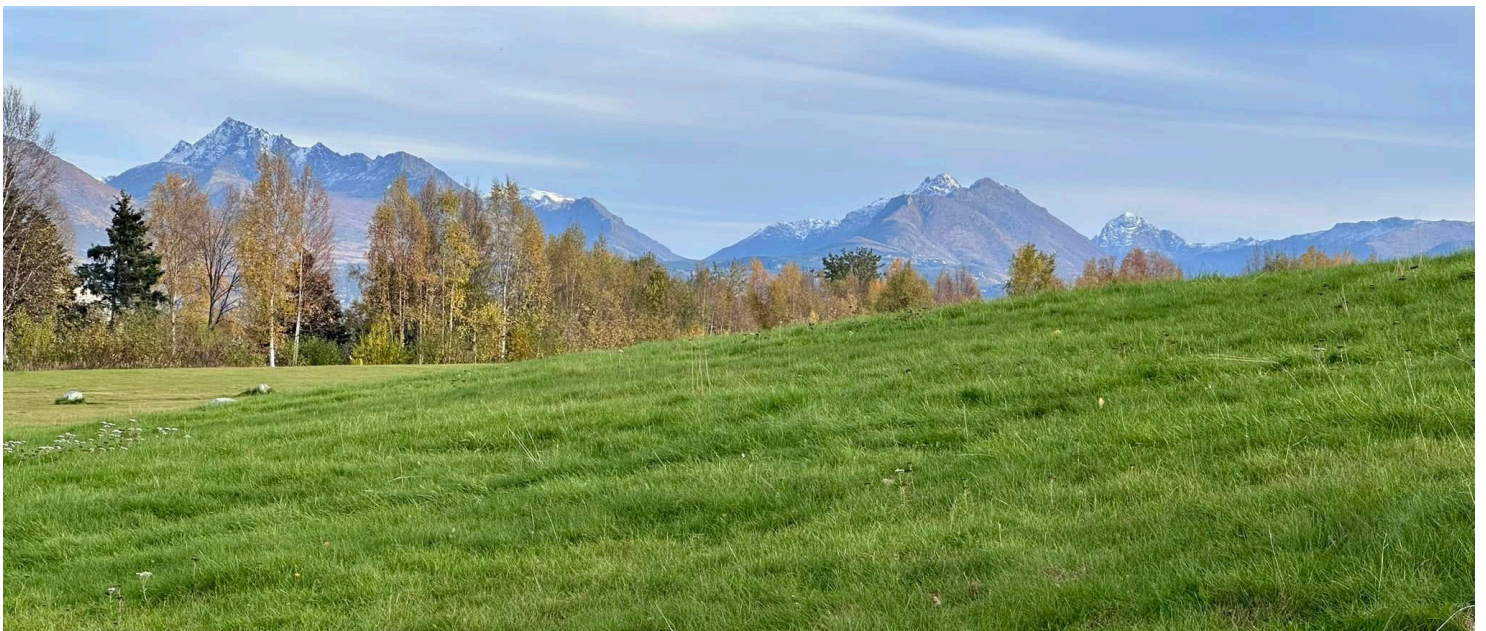
## 2024 CASE RESOLUTION SUMMARIES

In 2024, the Ombudsman's Office opened 233 cases, and processed or closed 213 (with 9 cases carried over from 2023). Below are summaries of some of our 2024 cases:

### **2024-0033**

An MOA employee contacted the Ombudsman, alleging that the Mayor's Office had ordered the City Hall security guards to close the public restrooms on the first floor of City Hall, so that homeless people could not use them. The employee further alleged that the guards were told not to allow homeless people to use the City Hall elevators to access restrooms on other floors. The complainant feared retaliation and requested to remain anonymous.

*The Ombudsman verified with the guards that they had been instructed to close the first-floor restrooms, and to not allow people who appeared to be homeless to access the City Hall elevators. The Ombudsman contacted the Municipal Attorney to express his concerns that not allowing constituents to access the restrooms and elevators in City Hall, because of their perceived homeless status, was unfair, unreasonable, and discriminatory. Subsequently, the Municipal Attorney notified the Ombudsman that she had reviewed the matter and that the restrooms would be re-opened for use by any constituent. Later that day, the guards informed the Ombudsman that the mayor had personally called them and told them to open the restrooms. While the Ombudsman was speaking with the guards, the mayor walked by and stated that " We took care of it", and the mayor apologized to the guards for putting them in a difficult position. A new policy was implemented whereby constituents could access the City Hall elevators, with the guards "swiping" their access cards for the constituents.*





2024-0078

A constituent contacted the Ombudsman's Office, alleging that the MOA Property Appraisal had removed the senior and residential exemptions for his property for the 2020-2022 tax years. The constituent believed that it was unfair to do so just because he had "temporarily" relocated to another property that he owns, and for which he believes that he qualified for the exemptions.

*The Ombudsman reviewed the relevant municipal codes and state statutes, spoke with Property Appraisal, and spoke with the constituent. The constituent acknowledged that the property where he received his property tax exemptions was not his primary residence for the 2020-2022 tax years, and that he filed for a PFD in those years, attesting under penalty of perjury, that the other property that he owns, where he was residing, was his primary residence for those years. The property where he had applied for tax exemptions could not also qualify as his primary residence for purposes of property tax exemptions. The codes and statutes are clear; you are only allowed a senior and residential property tax exemption for one property, and that property must be your primary residence.*

2024-0162

Multiple current and former MOA employees contacted the Ombudsman alleging inappropriate behavior by an MOA department director. The individuals alleged that the director had "yelled, cursed, and screamed at them" and stated that the director's behavior was "aggressive, intimidating, and disruptive". The employees alleged that the director had bullied and harassed them, including distributing penis shaped cookies in City Hall. They alleged that the director had created a hostile and toxic work environment. The Ombudsman ascertained that the employees had not filed complaints with the MOA Human Resources Department and referred them to HR to file complaints. Some of the employees filed complaints, while others did not, stating that they thought it would be a waste of time. The employees who filed with HR later contacted the Ombudsman, alleging that HR, Labor Relations had not taken their complaints seriously and had not investigated them. The Ombudsman believed that these allegations were an appropriate subject for review, and on his own motion, as allowed by AMC 2.60.110.B, he opened an investigation of the allegations.

*The Ombudsman investigated the allegations regarding the Human Resources Department, meeting with multiple MOA employees, interviewing HR staff, and reviewing HR files. Based on his investigation and the available evidence, the Ombudsman determined that HR had investigated all the employee complaints that were filed with them regarding the director's alleged*

*inappropriate behavior. HR investigated the allegations, substantiated the allegations, made recommendations, and action was taken for all the substantiated employee complaints. Unfortunately, because of the inadequate communication between HR and the complainants, many MOA employees, and members of the public, believed that HR had not investigated the employee complaints that had been filed with them regarding the director's alleged inappropriate behavior. Based on his investigation, the Ombudsman determined that this perception was incorrect. HR had investigated the complaints, had substantiated the complaints, and had made recommendations – it was up to the supervisor/director/agency head of the employee against whom a substantiated complaint is filed to accept and implement HR disciplinary recommendations. The MOA's employee disciplinary process leaves it up to supervisors/directors/agency heads whether to implement the recommended disciplinary action, reduce the severity of the recommended disciplinary action, or not to take any disciplinary action. A supervisor's decisions regarding disciplinary action can potentially be influenced by their personal relationship with the offending employee. In this instance, the lack of appropriate disciplinary action provided the transgressor with a sense of security and a belief that the rules didn't apply to them, which only emboldened and enabled them to continue their inappropriate behavior.*

*Based on the investigation of this case, the Municipal Ombudsman recommended:*

- 1. That HR conduct investigations using industry best practices including interviewing complainants, potential witnesses, and those accused of inappropriate behavior and providing complainants with complaint closure letters that 1) inform the complainant that their complaint has been investigated and closed, 2) whether their complaint was substantiated or not substantiated, 3) if recommendations were made, and 4) if any action was taken. The Administration accepted this recommendation.*
- 2. That HR, when an employee complaint is closed, provide employee complainants with information regarding compliance agencies, including informing them that the compliance agencies have deadlines for filing complaints. While not all employee complaints might fall under the jurisdiction of a compliance agency, employees should be provided with information regarding compliance agencies so that they can make an informed decision regarding whether to contact a compliance agency. HR/LR could develop a one-page informational flyer that could be included with complaint closure letters. Human Resources will notify a complainant of their handling options with fair employment practice agencies when the allegation directly or indirectly could be covered by those agencies. – The Ombudsman concurs that this option makes more sense than the Ombudsman's original recommendation.*



3. That HR provide information to all municipal employees at least quarterly regarding the Municipality's harassment and anti-bullying policies, including providing a list of compliance agencies that may be able to assist employees with their concerns and complaints, and informing MOA employees that compliance agencies have deadlines for filing complaints. The Administration concurred that it is essential that employees are informed of their rights. OEO and HR will continue to work together on this effort.

4. That information regarding filing complaints, with a link to Labor Relations' intranet page, should be placed on the front page of the Human Resources intranet page. The Labor Relations intranet page should prominently display information on how employees may file complaints and information regarding compliance agencies. Links to Labor Relations' online complaint form and a link to the "HR Department Assignments" document should be prominently displayed on Labor Relations' intranet page. The Administration accepted this recommendation.

5. That a link to MOA Policy & Procedure 40 – 14, 40 – 37, and 40 – 38 be placed on the Labor Relations' intranet page that contains information on filing MOA employee complaints. The Administration accepted this recommendation.

## 2024-0355

In March 2024, a constituent contacted the Ombudsman's Office alleging that, for several months, meetings of the MOA Arts Advisory Commission had not been publicly noticed, as required by the Alaska Open Meetings Act and AMC 1.25. The constituent stated that the meetings had not been publicly noticed since the Commission's October 2023 meeting. The constituent stated that the lack of public notice occurred while the Commission was receiving, processing, and reviewing applications for the Mayor's Arts Grants. The constituent expressed concerns regarding the lack of an open public process while the applications were being accepted, reviewed, and scored, before the Commission transmitted their recommendations to the mayor.

The Ombudsman's Office contacted the MOA employee who provided staff support to the Commission and determined that she was not informed that it was her responsibility to publicly notice the Commission meetings when she was tasked with providing staff support to the Commission. To address the lack of public notice for their meetings, the Commission held a special meeting to reconsider and vote on all the motions that were passed at the meetings that were not noticed. The Ombudsman's Office randomly checked other boards and commissions and determined that there was a systemic issue regarding public notice for meetings of MOA boards and commission. The Mayor's Office and Clerk's Office committed to collaborating on a solution.

## 2024-0386

A constituent contacted the Ombudsman, alleging that when he tried to check the MOA election results for the April 2024 municipal election, on muni.org at 8:15 pm on election night, muni.org was not working. The constituent also expressed concerns that the former MOA Information Technology Director, who left MOA employment several months earlier, was still listed on IT's webpage as the department director.

*The Ombudsman met with IT staff and determined that one of the MOA's two SharePoint servers that host www.muni.org encountered an internal error and stopped responding to visitors around 8:24 AM on April 2nd. Normal service resumed around 1:00 AM on April 3rd, following routine nightly maintenance. Most muni.org visitors were successfully redirected to the remaining functional server during the outage, but a few were not, likely due to the functional server experiencing higher-than-normal traffic the night of the election. IT's webpage was revised to list the Acting Director, not the former Director.*

## 2024-0398

An MOA employee contacted the Ombudsman's Office, questioning if a company owned by a former MOA employee being awarded an MOA contract for a project that the former employee worked on while an MOA employee violated the Ethics Code, if the employee left MOA employment less than 12 months ago. The complainant requested to remain anonymous.

*The Ombudsman's Office reviewed the Ethics Code (AMC 1.15) and met with the MOA's Ethics Officer. While the ethics code prevents a private company from hiring a former MOA employee who left MOA service less than 12 months ago to work on a project that they worked on as an MOA employee, the ethics code does not prohibit the MOA from awarding an MOA contract to a former employee within 12 months of their leaving employment with the MOA.*

## 2024-0467

A constituent contacted the Ombudsman's Office, alleging that they "were prevented from speaking to the Muni on this issue (rezoning of Lot 22, Shangri-La Subdivision). The Muni sent out a notice of public hearing for March 14th, 2024, regarding an application for variance from dimensional standards for Lot 22, Shangri-La subdivision (Plat 2002-118), Case 2024-0020. The hearing was later postponed until April 11th, 2024, and subsequently cancelled. The dimensional standards variation was circumvented by the Muni by changing the lot's zoning from R10 to R9. There was therefore no opportunity for public input or involvement in this case."



*The Deputy Ombudsman reviewed documents related to Zoning Board of Examiners & Appeals Case 2024-0020, including the relevant codes, and met with MOA staff. Case 2024-0020 was withdrawn, as there was no need for a variance. Before the case had been withdrawn, the public had the opportunity to submit comments online or by responding to the mailers that were sent out in accordance with AMC 21.03.020H. 121 public hearing notices were mailed on February 2, 2024. The case was withdrawn on April 4, 2024, prior to the scheduled public hearing on April 11, 2024. At the time that the request for a variance was submitted, R-10 setbacks were applied (25' side setbacks), and the petitioner was seeking to encroach 10' into the setback. Upon further investigation, MOA staff determined that the lot was a non-conforming R-10 lot, subject to R-9 standards (15' side setbacks), due to the average slope of the lot, per AMC 21.04.020P.2.a. This negated the need for a variance, as the proposed single-family residence complied with the R-9, 15' side setback requirements.*

## **2024-0796**

A constituent emailed the Ombudsman regarding his desire to receive a pardon for a 1995 MOA assault case. The constituent stated that the State of Alaska would not grant him a pardon because it was an MOA case.

*The Ombudsman's Office met with the Municipal Prosecutor and reviewed the relevant state statutes. An MOA criminal case "belongs" to the MOA while it is open - the MOA can dismiss the case only while it is open. Once the case is closed, it is with the State - the MOA cannot issue a pardon. In Alaska, pardons are a prerogative that rests with the State of Alaska. The constituent could request that the court reopen his case, which would allow the MOA to request that it be dismissed. The constituent could also request that the court expunge his conviction.*

## **2024-0930**

A former Anchorage School District substitute teacher contacted the Ombudsman's Office, alleging that he was wrongfully terminated after being forced to share with ASD staff his concerns about a "terrible incident" that allegedly happened to him. The constituent stated that he was uncomfortable sharing what happened, but the school principal had told him that he would not be able to continue working at the school if he did not share information regarding the incident. The constituent stated that he initially contacted the school about any resources that could assist him, but instead of helping, the school terminated his position as a substitute teacher. The constituent stated that the ASD failed to respond to his requests for information regarding his termination as a substitute teacher. The constituent requested the opportunity to appeal his termination.

*The Deputy Ombudsman reviewed the matter and determined that the constituent was terminated as an ASD substitute teacher after he was issued a "no trespass" notice by the ASD, related to an incident on school grounds, which was responded to by the Anchorage Police Department. The "ASD Human Resources: Substitute Handbook And Absence Management Guide," under the "Removal From the Substitute Roster," Section 3 states, "A substitute may be removed from employment with the Anchorage School District after three occurrences of reported poor/inappropriate performance, or a single major incident of poor/inappropriate performance." There is no appeal process for substitute teacher terminations; however, there is an appeal process for the trespass. The constituent was provided with information concerning the trespass appeal process. The Ombudsman's Office determined that the ASD's handling of the constituent's case conformed to ASD policies and MOA codes.*

## 2024-1057

A constituent contacted the Ombudsman's Office regarding how the Anchorage Equal Rights Commission staff had responded to his concerns when he contacted them. His concerns were related to his employment with a local nonprofit. He alleged that he was being discriminated against in the workplace, when staff used derogatory language regarding his sexual orientation. The constituent believed that his employer did not fully understand that, while the Alaska State Commission for Human Rights may have informed the employer that they no longer investigate discrimination complaints related to sexual orientation, the Anchorage Equal Rights Commission (AERC) does. The constituent alleged that when he asked the AERC to provide information to his employer in hopes of rectifying his situation and changing the perspectives of management at his place of employment, the AERC staff told him that they were informed by the "Chief of Staff" to "not spend any more money on outreach for LGBTQ folks." The constituent alleged that AERC staff had informed him that they would not be contacting his employer to provide any information or training regarding Anchorage Title 5 – Equal Rights.

*The Deputy Ombudsman reviewed the matter, meeting with the AERC staff member who had spoken with the constituent. The Deputy Ombudsman determined that the AERC investigator's response was based on a statement that was contained in the AERC Executive Director's monthly report to the Commissioners. Due to excessive and unreasonable expenditure of MOA funds for AERC outreach materials using an MOA purchasing card, the Executive Director had been informed that no additional MOA funds could be expended on outreach materials. However, this limitation did not apply to training and presentations by AERC staff related to the AERC's role and mission under Anchorage Title 5 – Equal Rights. AERC staff confirmed that they would provide a presentation and/or training to the complainant's employer, if requested.*



## 2024-1275

A former Anchorage resident, who had retired and moved out-of-state, contacted the Ombudsman's Office, stating that she and her husband own a 9-plex in Anchorage that they are trying to sell. She stated that they cannot sell the property because of two open MOA permits that they need to close out. She was concerned that the cost of closing the permits would be prohibitive and greatly reduce the amount of money that they will clear on the sale of the property.

*The Ombudsman reviewed the relevant documents and codes and met with MOA staff. The Ombudsman determined that closing the two open permits would not be difficult or costly. The real issue was that the previous owner of the property had converted a 7-plex into a 9-plex, without obtaining the required permits and inspections. The 7-plex had been a legal nonconforming use, due to it being constructed when the area was outside of the boundaries of the City of Anchorage. The previous owner and the real estate agent at the time, failed to disclose to the constituent and her husband that the property had been converted without permits, and that a 9-plex was not allowed in the zoning district. The constituent was advised that no person or official at the MOA could just "fix" the problem. She and her husband needed to convert the 2 added apartments back to a garage or follow the process in code that was required to make the property compliant with code.*

## 2024-1315

A constituent emailed the MOA Clerk's Office, alleging that the Anchorage Police Department had posted a photo of her and her former partner on the department's Facebook page. Her former partner was a wanted accused felon. The constituent also alleged APD had posted the photo on "alaska most wanted". The constituent demanded that the photos be removed. The Clerk's Office forwarded the email to the Ombudsman's Office and the Municipal Attorney's Office.

*The Ombudsman's Office investigated the matter, reviewing the relevant social media pages, and meeting with APD. The Ombudsman's Office determined that "Alaska Most Wanted" is a private Facebook page, that is not affiliated with the MOA or APD. The Ombudsman's Office determined that the photo had not been posted on APD's Facebook page. The Ombudsman contacted the constituent, who acknowledged that the issue involved the "wasilla/ matsu Facebook and Alaska Most wanted", not APD. The constituent was advised to contact the administrator of the "Alaska Most Wanted" FB page, to request that her photo be removed from the page.*

## **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, Anchorage's Home Rule Charter provides for a Municipal Ombudsman to act as an independent, impartial reviewer of citizen complaints.

## **FROM DARREL HESS, MAY RAMIREZ-XIONG, & HEATHER MacALPINE**

*It is our honor to serve the people of Anchorage as your Municipal Ombudsman, Deputy Ombudsman, and Associate 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 four 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		
<div><b>*It is important to try to resolve your issue with the agency's help before involving the Ombudsman.</b></div>		
Please provide names and contact information for people you have spoken with and what their response was to your complaint.		
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## 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? \_\_\_\_\_

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What do you want from the department? \_\_\_\_\_

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

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**\*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.

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What do you want the Ombudsman to do for you? \_\_\_\_\_

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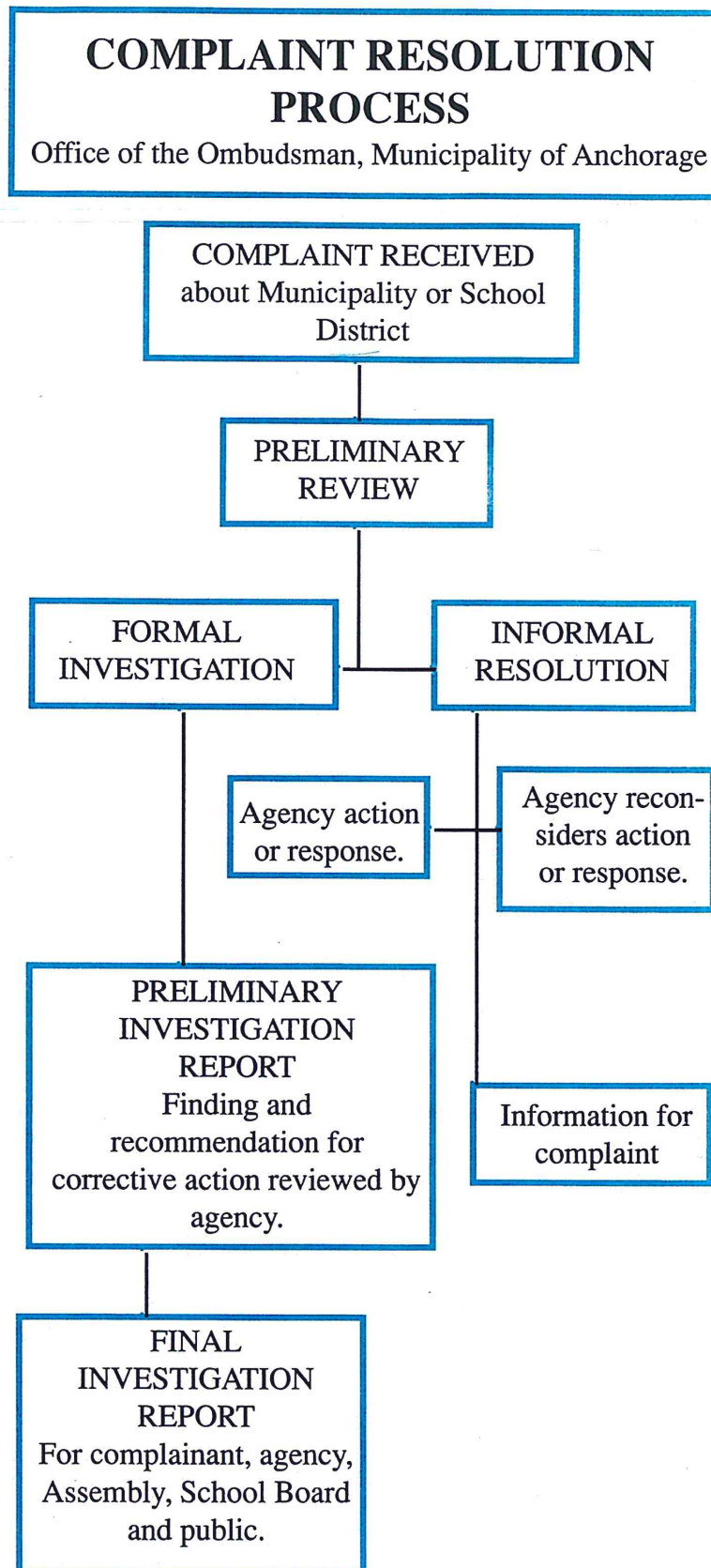
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Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_







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](mailto:OMBUD@muni.org).

In 2024 the Municipal Ombudsman's Office recognized Detective Troy Clerk of the Anchorage Police Department; Mike Radovan, Rich Dienes – Oehm, Bill Peterson, and Tana Klunder from Development Services; and Clinton Burton, Monty Hubble, Merad Nuxall, Ryan Smith, Jason Love, David Barcelona, David Osborn, and James Voeller from AWWU for their outstanding commitment to the Municipality and their "Above and Beyond" service.



Rich Dienes – Oehm



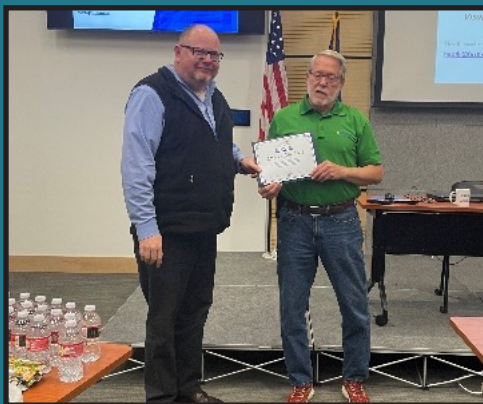
AWWU Evacuation Crew



Mike Radovan



Tana Klunder



Detective Troy Clark



Bill Peterson



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](http://www.facebook.com/WelcomingAnchorage)

On muni.org: [www.muni.org/departments/assembly/welcominganchorage](http://www.muni.org/departments/assembly/welcominganchorage)

Contact Welcoming Anchorage: [WelcomingAnchorage@muni.org](mailto:WelcomingAnchorage@muni.org)





**SPECIAL THANKS TO TIGGER,  
THE OMBUDSDOG**

**FYI**



# MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE OMBUDSMAN

632 W 6th Avenue, Suite 100, Anchorage, AK 99501  
343-4461 • [ombud@muni.org](mailto: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**

**Municipal Elections: 243-8683**

**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](https://muni.org/elections/dropbox)

**Frequently Asked Questions:**  
[muni.org/electionsFAQ](https://muni.org/electionsFAQ)

**Anchorage Vote Center  
Hours and Locations:**  
[muni.org/elections/AVC](https://muni.org/elections/AVC)

**Voter Hotline:**  
907-243-VOTE (8683)

**Elections Info:**  
[muni.org/elections](https://muni.org/elections)

### For More Information:

**Web:**  
[muni.org/elections](https://muni.org/elections)

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

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

**Call:**  
(907)243-VOTE(8683)



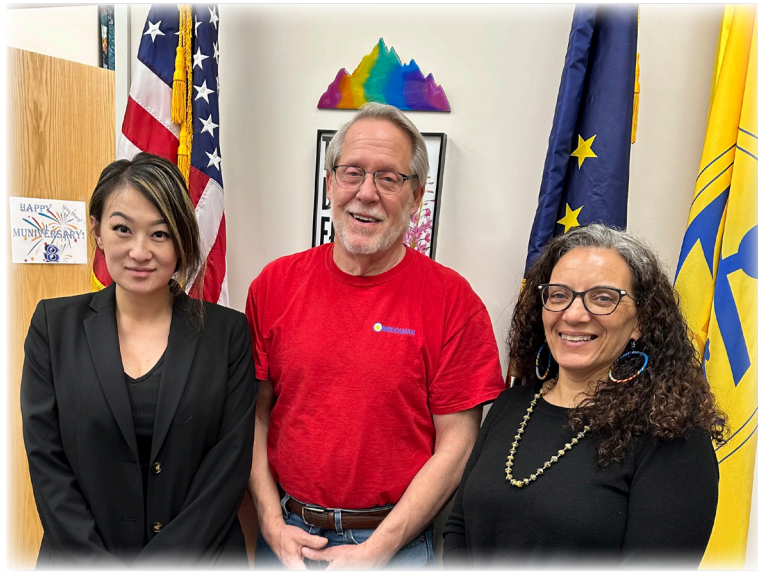
## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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

Darrel W. Hess, Municipal Ombudsman

May Ramirez-Xiong, Deputy Ombudsman

Heather MacAlpine, Associate Ombudsman



May, Darrel, and Heather



A special thank you to the Municipal Reprographics Team:

Reeve, Krista, Syd 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*



