

Chair Constant Report Archive: 2026

April 28, 2026

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Tonight's Agenda

Tonight we're going to adjust the agenda in a few different ways. We'll make some changes to the order of the recognitions resolutions and we'll take up the certification of the election after we complete the first quarter budget amendment. It's really not fair to the new Members to be asked to approve a half billion-dollar budget when they haven't had the benefit of spending the last year working on it. So we'll take up the certification of the election as the final action before this body dissolves and the new Assembly is empaneled.

Youth Representatives

Tonight will be full of goodbyes, but before we get caught up in the action, I want to recognize the final meeting of the current Youth Representative cohort. Over the past school year, these three young leaders (Kennedy Bowser of Chugiak High School, Gwyneth Eggleston of Bettye Davis East Anchorage High School, and Jacob Lavarias of West Anchorage High School) have brought thoughtful perspectives, energy, and a strong commitment to civic engagement in Anchorage.

One thing they did which was quite amazing is that they helped lead a voter registration drive in high school senior social studies classes and this year, we had resounding results. Over 300 high school students registered to vote before the municipal election and it's the most we ever had in that category of people to register to vote between February and March. And if an amendment to the budget passes later tonight, we will be setting up a high school civic leadership day, but we'll have more discussion about that later tonight. It's pretty exciting and that's built on the work of these three youth Representatives – thank you for your service to the Municipality.

As a reminder to anyone who has a high school student in their lives, the application for next year's cohort can be found at muni.org/assembly and applications are due by May 8, for ages 16-19.

April 14, 2026

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everybody and welcome to this regular meeting of the Anchorage Assembly.

CivicAnchor

I'm pretty excited – out in the lobby of the Library, we have our CivicAnchor program going on, which the Assembly has just launched. It's a new program and you can check it out in the Loussac Library atrium tonight. CivicAnchor's goal is to help the community

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understand local and Municipal issues, connect with neighbors, and be a direct part of solutions. You can learn more about it by visiting the display in the atrium or going to www.muni.org/civicanchor.

I want to thank the Assembly's Legislative Services Department for putting this program together – it will be a great opportunity for our community to learn more and get involved.

Alcohol Tax Report

Tonight on our agenda, we also have the alcohol tax report. We often hear from members of the community that they don't know where alcohol tax revenues are being spent. It's Item 10.F.1. on the agenda – the annual alcohol tax report. I encourage everybody to read the report and you can also view the recording of the presentation at the April 1st meeting of the Public Health and Safety Committee. The [Cheers Anchorage](#) website has a lot of details on where those revenues are being spent and the details are there in spades for anyone who wants to learn more.

Youth Representatives

Next, I want to share another reminder that applications are open for the 2026-2027 Anchorage Assembly Youth Representative position. The Assembly created the Youth Representative position in 2017 to ensure that young people have a voice in municipal decision-making and to encourage civic engagement among the next generation of community leaders. Students interested in applying can learn more about the position, eligibility requirements, and application process on the Assembly website: muni.org/youth. Applications must be submitted by May 8.

April 22 Special Meeting

Also, for the purpose of keeping our agenda as streamlined as possible on April 28th, when we take up the certification of the election, we're going to hold a special meeting next Wednesday, April 22 in this chamber, starting at 6pm. We're going to frontload a lot of work from this meeting to that special meeting so that when we get to that meeting on the 28th, we have as few items as necessary to get through, including the budget and some legislative items, and then the election certification

Elections

Next, I would like to provide an opportunity to the Municipal Clerk to brief us on the election. The 2026 elections are just about wrapped up, and although the Elections team and Elections Commission still have some big tasks ahead with the Public Session of Canvass, adjudication of challenged ballots, etc., it's almost done.

So, now I would like to say thank you to the Clerk, thank you to all of the Elections staff who have done an amazing job again of getting the ballots out, getting the notices out, getting the drop boxes out, getting the ballots back in, getting them all sorted, cured, counted, etc. Amazing job, so thank you. Next, I'm going to turn to the Clerk to give us a quick briefing on emerging matters.

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[View the Clerk's Briefing.](#)

Elstun Lausen

Before we begin, I would like to take a brief minute to recognize the passing of a dear friend Elstun Lausen, who was a lion in our community and the spouse of Harriet Drummond, who served on this body for many years. And so, I would just like to have a brief recognition here on a life well lived.

March 24, 2026

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening and welcome tonight to our regular meeting.

Upcoming Election

The first thing I'll start out with is we have an election happening - in fact it closes in fourteen days and approximately two and a half hours. On April 7th, that will be your last day to vote and once you've filled out your ballot and signed the declaration you can return your ballot envelope in one of three ways: you can drop it in one of 18 secure drop boxes within the Municipality, you can mail it using first class postage, or you can bring it to one of three Anchorage accessible voting centers.

If you haven't received your ballot, have questions, or need to look up the secure drop box or accessible voting center locations, go to muni.org/elections or call the voter hotline at 907-243-VOTE. Earlier is better - if you haven't gotten your ballot or some issue comes up, get to the voting staff soon as you can so you can get that resolved. I know that I received my BallotTrax notification today that not only was my ballot received but it will be counted. You can sign up at anchoragevotes.com if you want to get notifications of where your ballot is in the process.

2026-27 Anchorage Assembly Youth Representative

Next, today we open applications for our 2026-2027 Anchorage Assembly Youth Representative positions. The Assembly created the Youth Representative position in 2017 to ensure that young people have a voice in municipal decision making and to encourage civic engagement in the next generation of community leaders. Students that are interested in applying can learn more about the position eligibility requirements and application requirements at the Assembly website muni.org/Youth. Applications will be collected until May 8th 2026. This year's youth members Jacob Lavarius from West High School, Gwyneth Eggleston of East High, and Kennedy Bowser of Chugiak High school sponsored a resolution encouraging ASD to hold youth voter drives which ASD

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did in partnership with the League of Women Voters. I am so glad to report that the effort resulted in 321 eligible students registered to vote and by the Municipal election we'll have 321 new high school-aged voters on the roll.

Board of Equalization

Next, I want to talk about the Board of Equalization and highlight a few examples of what's great about our community. As you may have heard, we've had a high number of property appraisal appeals this year. Appeals are heard by the Board of Equalization which is comprised of private citizens and local professionals. It's not a Municipal staff person who decides on your appeal but a panel of your neighbors. The board reached out a few weeks ago to ask for help so the Assembly put out a call to recruit members. I am pleased to announce with the passage of our agenda tonight that we had a record number of applicants and if you approve them all we will have a full board as of tonight. I want to thank Anchorage Daily News for amplifying our request, board members, and I want to thank everyone who stepped up to serve. This is a great example of how our community comes together to solve problems and how people will step up to serve our community when asked. I anticipate we'll get a report sometime in early April if the department needs additional resources to tackle the number of appeals that we have but we're on the right track and Assembly Members at this time are not required to sit on the Board of Equalization.

Upcoming Meetings

Also I want to mention that if we have items that need to be continued tonight, unless there's very specifically a reason to continue them to the Meeting of April 14th, we may continue them to the Meeting of April 22nd which is a special meeting with the intent to funnel all final business to that meeting before the April 28th meeting so that the April 28th meeting can conclude with certification at a reasonable hour for the new elected Assembly Members. With that, I will conclude my report.

March 3, 2026

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everybody and welcome to our regular business meeting.

Homeless Encampments

The first thing I want to talk about tonight is something that just absolutely blew my mind last week, and I also want to celebrate the press conference that we had last week kicking off the second Healthy Spaces team. In the middle of that press conference, the Mayor said something that quite shocked me. The Mayor said that as of now, there are no encampments and I had to stop and think about what that meant, because I didn't know if I believed it. Not because I don't believe the Mayor, but because I needed to see it with my own eyes to believe it.

So I took myself for a drive across the Anchorage bowl. I went from Centennial Park to Taku Lake, including Northwood and every stop in between – Chester Creek Trail,

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Sullivan Arena, Campbell Creek Greenbelt, Russian Jack Springs, Valley of the Moon, Davis Park and Mountain View, rights away across the Municipality. And low and behold, I found, there are no major encampments in this town anywhere at this time.

Now this is significant because for as long as I have been involved in the public process through community councils in Fairview, I never would have believed that today would occur. That we literally have no tent city and no major encampments. I did find one location that had three tents, and the Health Spaces team and the HOPE team went out to engage with them and begin the process to help them find a place to go.

So, ultimately, what that means is that while isolated tents remain out there and our behavioral health gaps are going to persist until we have some support, the entrenched encampments that have long characterized the Municipality of Anchorage are a thing of the past for now. And I want to say thank you to the Mayor, thank you to the Administration, and I want to say thank you to all of the community providers who are part of the system that we've been developing for the last eight years to provide a place for people to go and to provide an opportunity for our neighbors to be comfortable in their public spaces.

I want to be careful to recognize the fact that some will say that it's just because it's a cold winter, but having been working on this issue for more than a decade, I can tell you that we've had some really cold winters where those camps persisted, so that is not enough to explain why we are here.

Why we are here is because we've expanded to year-round shelter, we've been working hard on the hotel to housing conversions, we've opened the facilities at 56th Avenue, and Linda's Place, and the Guest House is providing housing. We now have recovery housing coming online at Willow Commons. The Healthy Spaces team has now two teams, and they are working on rapid response. We've expanded the AFD and APD mobile behavioral health units – the Mobile Crisis Team and the Mobile Intervention Team. We also have been working hard with the Coalition to name each individual who is circling through our system, and we're seeing major investments in our behavioral health system in the Municipality, like Southcentral Foundation with their behavioral health crisis response facility at the corner of Tudor and Elmore, which promises to provide key services that we need to continue this.

So, it isn't a single strategy that has brought us here today. It's not enforcement alone, it's not housing alone, it's not treatment alone. The difference is a policy choice to coordinate the system, to pair public safety and outreach, shelter access and housing, behavioral health investments together with a broad community network of support.

I'd also like to thank our friends in the Legislature and the Governor. In 2024, the legislature provided us \$4M to help us stabilize our shelter system, so that we could provide year-round shelter, which is now online. That is the promise we will see as we move into the spring, that will help reduce the impacts when people do start leaving the shelters, which is an inevitable part of the summer. The goal now being that we will be

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assertive and on the front foot – ten toes down, I think they call it – in the process to make sure people aren't allowed to establish large and unsafe camps within our community.

And so, I want the record to reflect right now that for the first time in my memory, we have no tent city, we have no major encampment in the municipality. And that is worth celebrating with all of the people who made that happen. If Members of the public want more information on this topic, you can go to ancgov.info/FOCUS-Homelessness and the Mayor's strategy at muni.org called [Turning the Tide](#).

ASD Budget

Tonight, we are introducing the Anchorage School District budget under Item 10.G.7. on the agenda tonight for a public hearing on March 24th. Since the budget document is so large, we've posted it on our website for those of you who want to view it.

It can be found at muni.org/assembly under About in the upper menu bar. Select Government to Government Relations and go to the [Anchorage School District section](#), where you will find it listed as the ASD FY2027 Proposed Budget. It is also on ASD's website and will be in the March 24 agenda packet.

Elections

As we get closer to the April municipal election, I want to continue to share some reminders about deadlines and voting.

- March 8th is the last day to register to vote for the April 7th election
- Ballots will be mailed out on March 17
- If you are traveling during the election, there are several options available so you can still vote:
 - You can apply to vote at a temporary address- the form must be turned in by March 31
 - You can also apply to vote by email, fax, or by Secure Document Portal
 - If you are in town, we encourage you to drop your ballot in one of the secure dropboxes.

It's not too late to sign up for [Ballottrax](#). You can sign up at anchoragevotes.com to get text, voicemail or email alerts on the status of your ballot, including when it's mailed out, when it's delivered and when it's counted across the machine. It's a great tool and I encourage you to sign up now so you're all set before the ballots are mailed.

All of the forms and other election information can be found at muni.org/elections or you can call the Voter Hotline at 907-243-VOTE.

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February 17, 2026

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everybody and welcome to our regular business meeting.

Recent Events

I would like to follow on with what the Mayor just discussed about the Nordstrom Building. We are going to ask that the item be set for public hearing at the second meeting in March so that there can be a more open and formal discussion with the downtown community council at their meeting on March 4th. If any members of the public have thoughts about the project, please attend the Downtown Community Council meeting. Having been briefed by both parties involved in this, I'm pretty excited to hear about the housing proposals that are being put together and the commercial proposals that are being worked out right now. This is a foot forward toward the revitalization of downtown and I want to make sure that anyone who has concerns will show up in person so they can learn more, either at the Downtown Community Council meeting or when this returns to us in March.

Allie Hartman - Top 40 Under 40 Award

Next, I would like to note that the Assembly's Communications Director Allie Hartman was named this week as one of the Alaska Journal of Commerce's Class of 2026 Top Forty Under 40. The Assembly is very lucky to have her on our team. Congratulations Allie.

The Assembly's efforts to communicate our work on an ongoing basis is really complemented by the work of that office. They've been putting together briefings on how the budget works, how assessments work, how tax levies work, and helping to get out sponsor messages relating to important legislative projects. We're definitely lucky to have so many great young leaders in our community and I congratulate Allie and all 40 of the awardees this year. We have an alumni or two on this dais.

Alaska Municipal League Meeting

You'll notice a few of Members absent from the dais and calling into the meeting tonight because a number of Assembly Members are attending the Alaska Municipal League conference in Juneau this week. We're grateful for their participation in our meeting tonight when they've been working really hard down in Juneau to get the message of our local governments across to the legislature. The conference gathers local government officials from across the state to learn about and advocate for local government issues. Anchorage was a founding member of the Alaska Municipal League and works closely with the League to advocate for Anchorage and local control issues. The Members will also be meeting with Legislators to discuss the Anchorage legislative program and Anchorage priorities. To those Members, I wish you safe travels and productive meetings, and thank you for your participation tonight.

49th Anniversary of the Ombudsman

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This weekend marks the 49th anniversary of the Office of the Ombudsman. For those of you unfamiliar with the Ombudsman, they are responsible for resolving conflicts and complaints between constituents and local government, including the Municipality of Anchorage and the Anchorage School District. With their 49th anniversary, the office has a goal this year to build more connections and share how the office works so they can improve their services to the community. I encourage everyone to learn more about the Ombudsman's Office and see how they may be of service to you. And happy anniversary to the Office of the Ombudsman!

Elections

As we near the spring municipal election, I wanted to share some reminders about deadlines and voting.

- March 8th is the last day to register to vote for the April 7th election
- Ballots will be mailed out on March 17
- If you are traveling during the election, there are several options available so you can still vote:
 - You can apply to vote at a temporary address- the form must be turned in by March 31
 - You can also apply to vote by email, fax, or by Secure Document Portal
 - If you are in town, we encourage you to drop your ballot in one of the secure dropboxes.

Once you've voted, Anchorage offers a way to track your ballot called Ballottrax. We'd love to have you sign up for that. You can sign up at anchoragevotes.com to get text, voicemail or email alerts on the status of your ballot, including when it's mailed out, when it's delivered and when it's counted across the machine. It's a great tool and I encourage you to sign up now so you're all set before the ballots are mailed.

All of the forms and other election information can be found at muni.org/elections or you can call the Voter Hotline at 907-243-VOTE.

City Nerd Nite

City Nerd Nite is coming up again. It will be held on Thursday, February 26th from 6-9pm at the Seed Lab. It is part of the Anchorage Design Week festivities, and the theme is "Imagining Our Winter City." Seven locals will each have seven minutes to share their bright ideas and warm takes on Anchorage's future as a winter city. Tickets are available and they will sell out, so visit muni.org/Assembly to get yours.

February 3rd Meeting Recording

I'd like to note that at our last meeting, something very unusual happened. We had a breakdown of our system in which the recording stopped – the whole system seized – and for the first time I can recall in the nine years that I've served, we lost approximately one minute of our record. And so, that is regrettable and it's something we don't want to repeat, so we've established a new recording system here that is separate from our

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online streaming system, so we'll at least always have a backup of the full audio of the recordings so that the public doesn't lose access to important public records that they have a right so. So, again, we lost about one minute and ten seconds of total video feed and we've come up with a solution to ensure that it doesn't happen again

Mardis Gras

Finally, on a personal note, I am of Cajun descent. My father was 100% Cajun and my family has lived in Louisiana for hundreds of years and they came down from Acadia in the northeast of the continent, and today is Mardi Gras, or Fat Tuesday. So I want to tell everyone to celebrate - laissez les bons temps rouler. Tomorrow is Ash Wednesday and we all have to get back to being serious, so we're going to have fun here tonight.

February 3, 2026

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everybody and welcome to our regular business meeting.

Property Appraisals

One of the topics we'll be talking about tonight is property appraisals – one of the hot topics of recent weeks, as it is almost every year at this time with the green cards out and the appeal period open.

I wanted to share that the Assembly had a very informative worksession last Friday with the Administration on this year's property appraisals. A lot of information and pretty technical, but the bottom line is that we are in the process now and the Assembly's role is in the role of the appellate body, which we have referred off to the Board of Equalization to do on our behalf.

In that worksession, we learned that the Property Appraisal Division can often resolve issues before the appeal stage, and that the appeal deposit will is always refunded if you just attend your hearing or notify the Division in advance that you plan to drop your appeal. Historically, numbers of people signed up for appeals and then didn't show at their hearings, causing the Board of Equalization to spend a lot of unnecessary time and resources. So the appeal fee is fully refundable, except in cases where you don't show up – even if you lose your appeal, you will get that money back.

So, please, if you do feel that your assessment is inaccurate, call the division and file your appeal before the 11th of February. A link to a recording of that meeting, as well as other information on property appraisals and taxes can be found on the [Assembly's Budget and Taxes webpage](#).

Youth Voter Drive

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As many of you have seen, we have Youth Representatives that join us on the dais for each of these meetings to contribute the youth perspective to the Assembly's work. Each year, the youth representatives choose an issue to work on, and this year, Kennedy Bowser, Jacob Lavarias and Gwyneth Eggleston are working on a youth voter registration drive. This work builds upon the work of last year's cohort.

Tonight, you will see their resolution kicking off the youth voter registration drive and we will register Jacob and Gwyneth to vote in their first election, which happens on April 7th. A reminder that if you will be 18 by April 7, you can register to vote even if you're only 17 now. Ballots packages will be mailed out March 17. And, if there are any members of the public here tonight who are 18 or will be 18 by April 7, and would like to register to vote here tonight – you can join us.

January 27, 2026

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome to our regular business meeting.

Property Appraisals

As the Municipal Manager mentioned, the big topic of the week is the property assessments. We've heard from a number of folks about seeing some big increases in values this year. First of all, if you believe your assessment is incorrect, there is a process in place with the Assessor's Office to make appeals. There is no charge to call their office to do an informal review. The deadline to file an appeal is February 11. More info at muni.org/pa.

I'm told by the Property Appraisal Division that the appeal deadline is set by state law of thirty days. If you get a new green card if your property is reassessed, the thirty day clock starts when those are sent.

Second, I want to say thank you to the Assessor's Office and the Property Appraisal Division. It's hard work and it happens all at once and mistakes do happen. So this process of correction is built into our system, and is in fact why the state law provides thirty days after the cards go out for the appeal process, because everyone realizes that government is run by actual people and not machines.

So, I just want to say thank you to the department for their work and for their responsiveness when hearing from a number of us about properties that clearly had some error in their assessments.

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Despite what is being said, they are professionals who are deeply dedicated to the success of our community and have a goal to do assessments fairly, accurately and transparently. They recently refined their process model to better align with the International Association of Assessing Officers standards, in following with recent changes to state law, and while there might be some bumps along the way, these improvements will make our assessments fairer over time.

Now there has been some conversation about the difference in assessed value and its relation to taxation. Those two things are slightly different. The levy that gets set at the end of the year is multiplied by your value and that's how we get to the tax rate, but at this point, the assessment process is really doing a comparison of your share of the total municipal cost, not how much you will pay. That is an April question.

So, the bottom line is that housing prices are increasing across the municipality, and across the country. Until we build more housing and stabilize home prices, more people will continue to see your assessments rise each year. However, a rise in your home value does not necessarily mean a corresponding increase in your taxes. And that may be a conversation where we go a little deeper in a future worksession or Budget and Finance Committee or Budget Advisory Commission meeting. These are places where the public who are wanting more information can follow along.

If you are interested in being part of the appeals process, we are always recruiting for Board of Equalization experience. So I would be remiss if I didn't mention that. If you have some property or legal experience, I hope you consider making an application to serve on the Board of Equalization. Those who serve sit on three-member panels who sit in judgement on appeals made after the department has done their job to review. To learn more or apply, send an email to the Municipal Clerk's Office at wwmasmc@anchorageak.gov. We would love to have you serve.

Both the Mayor and Assembly have put out fact sheets and more information on this topic, so I encourage you to go to muni.org to look at these and learn more about how property assessments and taxation work.

Elections in April

The next big issue for us tonight is finalizing the propositions that will go on the ballot in the upcoming April 7th election.

We have a full slate of bond proposals to consider tonight in the 14s on the agenda. If you're here to testify on one of those items, you'll see a Clerk's Note at the top of the 14s that reflects my intent to begin taking public testimony on bond and ballot proposals as soon as possible after 6 p.m. The other big deadline this week is that the filing period for candidates closes this Friday, January 31 at 5pm.

Once the propositions and candidate lists are finalized, the elections will be in full swing. The last day to register to vote is March 8. A reminder that if you will be 18 by April 7,

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you can register to vote even if you're only 17 now. Ballots packages will be mailed out March 17. This year the last day to vote will be April 7 at 8pm.

You can find election information at muni.org/elections.

Next Meeting

Finally, a note that due to the way the calendar falls this year, the next Assembly meeting will be next week, February 3rd and we won't have our typical two-week break between meetings, so you'll note that anything introduced tonight can't be heard next week because they won't meet the public notice timeline, so they will be heard at the February 17th meeting.

January 13, 2026

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome to the first Assembly meeting of the new year. Members, I'm sure you were grateful for the four-week interlude that we just had, and for the opportunity to spend some time with friends and family, away from this work. And now, we are back, so welcome.

Snow Plowing

I also want to echo what the Mayor had mentioned about snow removal. I have seen some of the maintenance challenges in this town, and the worst conditions that I continue to see are on facilities managed by other entities. It is really challenging that some of those main roads continue to be quite dangerous.

In fact, this morning, I had a friend reach out to me to say they saw a car flip over on C Street. But that said, last week I attended the Fairview community council meeting and it was quite remarkable to hear the positive gratitude coming from members of that community, which is a highly pedestrian neighborhood, who are grateful for the marked improvement in snow management in the district.

And so, my thanks also to the Maintenance and Operations team, Superintendent and everyone who is driving those plows and the equipment out there. Check out muni.org/plow to watch our amazing team do the work. Thank you again.

Martin Luther King Day Free Legal Help

Next week, we celebrate Martin Luther King Jr Day, which is a holiday on a Monday, but generally speaking, for many people, it is a day of service.

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I'd like to point folks who might need legal help to the Martin Luther King Day Free Legal Help clinic, which has been held for many years at the Mountain View Community Center. The clinic, held by the Alaska Bar Association will be on Monday, January 19th from 12-4pm. Local attorneys and legal associations offer free legal consultations for low to moderate income Alaskans on a first come, first served basis. It's civil law – they don't do criminal law consultations.

If you have limited financial resources and are struggling with an issue with your landlord, child support, your place of employment, or any other issue that may have a legal aspect, I strongly encourage you to attend this event and get the support you need.

And to the attorneys of our community, I thank you for providing this valuable service and if you haven't signed up to help, contact the Bar Association to see how you can get involved.

Elections in April

Also of importance to the Municipality and its people in April is the election. And in fact, this Friday, the election season begins in earnest when the filing period opens for candidates. The filing period will be open through January 31 at 5pm

This year the last day to vote will be April 7th. Ballots go out in March and over the next two meetings, we'll be reviewing the proposals for what will go on the ballot for bonds, levies and potential charter amendments. The final date for action on those items will be our next meeting on January 27th. I encourage you to read over the bond proposals in the 10.G. section of the agenda and email your Members or testify at the January 27 meeting. Those items will go along with six Assembly seats that will be on the ballot.

Youth Voter Registration

Also, as we near the elections, I want to make a special pitch to high school seniors in town. Many seniors will be 18 in time to vote in our upcoming municipal election, so I highly encourage you to register and vote. Even if you are 17 now, as long as you turn 18 on or before election day, which is April 7, you can register to vote.

Our Youth Representatives and Election team are working on a voter drive to get eligible teens registered to vote this spring, so if you know of someone who recently turned 18, or turns 18 before April 7, please help us get the word out to them.

You can learn more about registering to vote and find other election information at muni.org/elections.

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December 16, 2025

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Laid on the Table Items

We generally have a policy to be pretty restrictive of laid on the table items, but at this point, we've asked the Administration to do as much as possible to get critical, time-sensitive items to us tonight because we don't want to have to exercise the worst option which is meeting next Tuesday at noon for a special meeting if, in fact, any time critical items arise that have to be passed before the end of the year. We don't have any items on that list and we would hope to keep no items on that list so we don't have to convene one more time before the end of the year. Hopefully this is it.

Solstice this Weekend

I will note that the Solstice is almost upon us, and I'm grateful that the light will start to come back. I'll join the Mayor in recommending folks come out and celebrate the Parks Department's annual Winter Solstice festival at Cuddy Park this Friday, December 19th 5PM to 8PM, free with activities like ice skating in a photo booth with Santa's reindeer as well as cocoa by the fire. I encourage everyone to get out and enjoy our uniquely Alaskan solstice experience.

Looking to the Calendar

As this is the final meeting of the year due to the way the calendar falls, our next meeting won't be for 4 weeks, as the mayor noted. I can't remember a time when we had 4 weeks between meeting so please take your time and enjoy it. You've earned it.

Thanks to the hard work of the Municipal Manager, the department heads, Clerk's Office, and everyone else to get our year-end materials all squared away early, hopefully we don't need that special meeting.

Year End Reflections

Finally, happy New Year! As the New Year approaches. I want to reflect a bit on where we've comments community over the past year. We have had challenges. We have turned those challenges into opportunities.

I think upon our friends from Western Alaska who joined our community from the tropical storm, Halong, and then our school district. How the city has taken on the challenge of having year-round shelter in supporting people. How we as a city supported furloughed workers providing as many opportunities and benefits for them to have continuity in their life. And also, of course, the kindness that just exists in our community. That happens every day and every small way.

This Assembly has taken on some pretty complex questions. The question about camping in public and the laws around that. Dealing with challenges of homelessness

and improving our response. Public safety challenges in our town.

Of course, wrestling with the question of how we address our financial situation as costs increase but revenues do not. As we've learned over the past year, nobody is coming to save us. Our future will be determined by those who love this community and its people.

And it's challenging. Over the 9 years I've been on this body, we have been forced to find efficiencies and kind of engage in the process of picking up the slack where others have lost their ability to fund or their willingness to fund their responsibilities in our town. And we have done it but the challenges increase. We've had to work to support each other. And we continue to do so.

So, I encourage you to join one of the many holiday festivities being offered around town and take time to connect with your neighbors and celebrate the what it means to be part of this really special community at this really special time of year.

And to my colleagues, I am glad and look forward to us getting through our agenda tonight because once we're done, hopefully it's holiday season for the rest of the year.

December 2, 2025

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome to our regular business meeting. Welcome back after the Thanksgiving break.

Election Ballot Deadline

The first thing to note is that, as members of the public have been communicating, we do have a number of tax and revenue proposals that are circulating at this time, but nothing has yet been passed by the body.

What that signals is that we are coming to the end of the year, and that means we are on the verge of our April 2026 municipal election deadlines. The January 13 regular meeting is the last day to introduce ordinances containing propositions and the January 27 meeting is the final deadline for the Assembly to hold public hearings and approve propositions for the ballot on April 8.

The Assembly and Administration are currently working through several potential revenue proposals, as well as the slate of annual bond propositions to put before the voters in April. The next few meetings will have a lot of activity on these topics, right through the second meeting in January. If you have thoughts on these topics, you can testify at the public hearings or submit your comments to the Assembly at assembly@anchorageak.gov

City Nerd Nite

This Thursday evening is the next edition of City Nerd Nite. The event will take place at King Street Brewing from 6-8pm with the theme of “Getting down to Business.” The event will feature 7 speakers giving 7-minute presentations on their perspectives, takeaways, and ideas about doing business in Anchorage.

City Nerd Nites are a fun and informal way to learn more about our local government and I encourage you to attend. Event information can be found at muni.org/assembly.

Alaska Municipal League Conference

Also, the annual Alaska Municipal League Conference is next week, where leaders from local governments across Alaska will convene to share knowledge and connections to help run our local communities. Affiliate organizations like the Alaska Association of Municipal Clerks will also be meeting next week. I highly recommend and encourage Assembly Members to attend the conference next Wednesday and Thursday – the agenda has some highly relevant topics like housing, fiscal planning and disaster preparedness.

Municipal Seal

I also would like to note that a few weeks ago, I introduced an ordinance and survey to consider updating the Municipal seal. Through the process of our 50th anniversary celebrations, and also through the downtown wayfinding project that has happened over the last couple of years, there’s been some interest and excitement in looking at our seal, and asking ourselves – do we want to evolve that seal at our 50th anniversary for the next 50 years, or for the future.

This question will be properly before us at our December 16 meeting, but right now there is a survey where you can provide comments on the various options that have been presented. There are five options and one is maintaining the seal as it is today.

The online survey runs through December 16 in advance of the ordinance coming back before the Assembly at that evening’s meeting. You can find the seal proposals and a link to the survey at muni.org/assembly in the [News section](#) and you can also see some great coverage in the [Anchorage Daily News](#).

November 18, 2025

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

2026 Budget

The big ticket item on our agenda tonight is the budget. We will work through our budget process tonight until we are done. I want to thank everyone who has testified or submitted comments to the Assembly – your input helps us make better decisions and we appreciate the time folks have taken to inform us of your priorities for the budget. I

also want to thank the Administration and Assembly Members for very thoughtful conversation on the budget and potential amendments. We are facing some tough budget decisions in the next few years and it's going to take all of us working together to figure it out.

I would note that I added an AIM document into your packets tonight that is associated to all of the revenue legislation that is before us. It is a study from the city of Washington D.C. that has been done annually since 1997 that compares the taxation burdens between the largest city in every state. Since 1997, in almost every category, Anchorage has come in as the lowest tax burden jurisdiction in America. So I encourage everyone to look through that report as we consider new revenue as part of the conversation.

I do look forward to a productive meeting tonight where we wrap up the budget so we can move forward with the good work of the Municipality.

MOA 50th Anniversary

I also want to note that last Friday, we held the final celebration event of the 50th anniversary of the Municipality at the Anchorage Museum. We gathered with current and former Mayors, Assembly Members, Youth Representatives and School Board Members.

It was really heartening to see people of all stripes come together, putting politics aside and having a great evening celebrating, and actually looking into the civics, of our community through the Civics Fair that was in the main lobby of the Museum.

Not only was it a time of celebration, it was an opportunity to imagine what we can become in our next fifty years. As I said then, and I'll say now because I believe it – our best days are still ahead of us.

November 4, 2025

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Western Alaska Evacuation

I'll start by celebrating the fact that Anchorage was able to be part of a response to the crisis in Western Alaska. The way that our residents came together to support the individuals who came and find shelter for everyone so quickly was so admirable. About 700 people have relocated from the YK Delta to Anchorage and it is expected they will be here a year or longer until they can safely return home

We continue to welcome them to our community and I thank everyone who has worked so hard to make their stay as comfortable as possible, and it's great to see that the youth were enrolled so quickly in ASD and have received such a warm welcome in our schools.

South Korea and Japan Visit

The Mayor and I visited our sister cities in Korea and Japan and I'm sad that our mayor was not able to attend the Korea part of our trip, but she had to stay here to respond to the emergency. I went to Korea for the first time, and I was absolutely marveled by their port infrastructure. We were able to tour the Port of Incheon and see where Alaska's number one trading partner in Korea transfers seafood, ore and metal from Alaska into the global energy economy. And it's worth noting that the Governor's gasoline proposal that appears to be making progress at this time, will likely see a steel supply coming through the Port of Busan. So, it was really great to meet with the individuals who are part of that conversation and see firsthand the extraordinary economic activity that is happening over there, and to explore the possibility of a friendship city with the City of Busan.

MOA 50th Anniversary

Next, at the end of this week on Friday, we will be celebrating formally the 50th anniversary of the Municipality. Not only is this a time of celebration, it's an opportunity to imagine what we can become in our next fifty years – what does the future hold for Anchorage? Our best days are still ahead.

This Friday, November 7 from 6-9PM at the Anchorage Museum, we'll be turning the focus to our future. The free admission event features:

- A civics fair with municipal departments and local organizations – where you can learn more about what is going on in your community and how to get involved
- An Anchorage history lecture by David Reamer and Dena'ina Elnena Exhibition opening remarks by Aaron Leggett, Museum Senior Curator and President of the Native Village Eklutna
- A recognition of former Mayors, Assembly Members and School Board Members

We have more information at muni.org/50 where you can also read the histories of local groups and municipal departments and find activities for the whole family. As you learn more about our history, you'll see that it only takes one person to make a difference. Imagine what we can become when we join together. My hope is that this celebration of our past sparks inspiration and new conversations about our future.

Budget

Tonight is the second and final public hearing on the budget. For those of you here to testify, we anticipate testimony will be held after the dinner break. The budget items are 14.A-14.G on the agenda. There have already been a number of worksessions on the budget that have been highly informative – you can find a record of those meetings at muni.org/watchnow

This Friday at City Hall, the Assembly will have a worksession to go over our proposed budget amendments and the public is welcome to watch that worksession in person or online. I encourage you to learn more and get engaged in the budget by visiting the [Assembly's Budget and Taxes page](#).

Tax Reform Proposals

Finally, there have been a number of new tax reform proposals introduced and at least one more on the way.

The three tax proposals submitted by Assembly members will be before us on the Nov. 18 agenda and the information on each proposal is available on the [Assembly Tax Reform page](#) on the Assembly's website.

October 21, 2025

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Western Alaska Evacuation

I'll start with the Western Alaska Evacuation. I'm grateful to the Municipality, I'm grateful to our friends at Southcentral Foundation, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, the Alaska National Guard, the Governor and the state response, the School District and everyone who has been working to get people here and get them safe. We are here, we are ready for this response and to the people who have been evacuated, I want to say – you are welcome here! Thank you to everyone who has been part of that.

I did have the opportunity to visit one of the shelters today and I got a tour with the United Cajun Navy, which is one of the response groups that deploys to events like this and provides resources and support. My father is cajun and they come from very close to where my people are from and so this was a great opportunity to meet with them and see some of the things they brought to individuals within the shelter.

Thank you again to all of the emergency workers in the Municipality and the Administration to meet this moment. We don't yet know all the ways this will impact our community, but what I know that the people of Anchorage always step up for our neighbors, just as they step up for us when things go wrong here. We will all do our best to welcome and support the evacuees and make their time in Anchorage as comfortable as possible.

We are still waiting for our delegation to impress upon the executive branch in Washington to do their duty and declare this emergency so the funding can flow to support the individuals in their time of need. So, we're looking to you Senators Murkowski and Sullivan to land this plane

Civic Discourse

Next, I want to talk about a radio show I did this last week with Mr. Goecker from Eagle River. I want to acknowledge that in these trying times when the political discourse is coarsening and the heat that comes off the debate is not light, but is instead a threat, it is incumbent upon leaders in civic roles to model and demonstrate that though we might not agree on this or that issue, one thing we can agree to do is work together civilly to get the work done that the people need and to model for people that we can disagree passionately, but continue to do the work of building a community. So I want to thank Member Goecker for the time on Alaska Public Media and I look forward to our second edition of that discussion when we go on the radio show of a former member of this body. It was well received by lots of members of our community and was well worth the time.

Budget

So finally, the big item on our agenda tonight is the budget with the first public hearing of the budget. The code provides that we shall have two public hearings on the budget, so we will have one tonight and again at our next meeting on November 4th. For those of you here to testify, we anticipate testimony will be held after the dinner break. The budget items are 14.A-14.G on the agenda.

There have already been a number of worksessions on the budget that have been highly informative. I encourage you to learn more and get engaged in the budget by visiting the [Assembly's Budget and Taxes page](#).

October 7, 2025

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

2026 MOA Budget

The big item before us this fall is the 2026 Municipal budget. The Mayor's team worked diligently on the budget behind the scenes this summer and through the fall. Now it's before the Assembly and public for review. The budget documents are being introduced tonight and there are several ways the public can be involved:

- First, you can watch the September 12 worksession on the 2026 budget projections. The Mayor and her team did an excellent job of laying out the challenges ahead with the muni budget. You can find the link to that recording on the [Assembly's Budget and Taxes page](#).
- The public is also welcome to view online or attend the Assembly's budget worksessions in October and November. It's always interesting to hear from each municipal department on their challenges and goals for the upcoming year.
- Finally, your voice is welcome in the process. You can email the Assembly with your thoughts on the budget at any time and there are at least two public hearings schedule – one on October 21 and November 4.

All of this information and tips for how to follow the budget can be found on the [Assembly's Budget and Taxes](#) page.

50th Anniversary of the Municipality

I've been pleased to see so much participation in the 50th Anniversary of the Municipality. There have been really fun events, activities and reflections on our history, who we are as a community and what lays ahead in our future.

I encourage you to visit muni.org/50 to get the maps for the Hidden Gems and Neighborhood Time Machine scavenger hunts and to read stories of the history of community groups and leaders who've been working in our community for the last fifty years. The celebration will conclude at First Friday at the Museum on November 7th.

Parks and Rec Haunted and Enchanted Trails

Finally, to end on a fun note, the Parks and Recreation Department is hosting the Haunted and Enchanted Trails event at Goose Lake on October 17th and 18th. You can get a fright on the Haunted Trail on Friday Night or embark on a magical adventure in the woods Saturday afternoon. They are also looking for volunteers to dress in costumes for both events. You can purchase tickets and sign up to volunteer at the [Muni Parks and Rec website](#).

September 23, 2025

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome to our regular business meeting. There are a number of things to talk about, so I will save the agenda items until later.

Project Homeless Connect

Tonight, I will note that today was Project Homeless Connect, which is an event organized by Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness and supported by many service providers and investors across the community. It's a one-day, one-stop resource fair connecting hundreds and hundreds of individuals experiencing homelessness, or on the verge, to vital resources, supplies, and gear — just in time for winter. I want thank the Coalition, providers and volunteers and everyone who has helped. If you were in downtown today around the Egan Center, you saw a line going around the corner. These lines are just so big and these challenges so great.

ASD Legislative Briefing

Last week a number of Assembly Members attended the School District's annual briefing to state legislators. The District shared some good news that bears repeating:

- The Legislature found a way, despite politics, to keep the BSA increase, which is going to bring a lot of quality and stability to our schools this year.
- With that last-minute infusion of stable funding, the District was able to fill 20 new teaching positions, restore tutoring for kids struggling with reading, and purchase critical instruction materials.
- Dr. Bryantt, the Superintendent, also countered the narrative in our community that our schools are failing and shared some examples of recent success:
 - Kindergarten and first grade students have had double-digit literacy gains for two years in a row
 - Math proficiency scores for 8th graders has gone up 5% on the state assessment
 - The AP test pass rate has soared across schools, with Eagle River High seeing an improvement from 55% in 2021 to 89% last year – it's extraordinary
 - Suspensions are down 20%

However, Dr. Bryantt shared that this is only a temporary reprieve. If the legislature doesn't do anything to counter rising costs of gas and inflation, we'll be back in the hole and facing deep cuts in the next couple years, but I want to thank our leadership in the community and all of the people who stood up to ensure our school district, and school districts across Alaska, have the funding they need to deliver for our youth.

Local Lens on Legislative Services

Tomorrow, the Assembly's Legislative Services Office will be presenting at the Federation of Community Council's Local Lens series. They'll share about their work and how to get more involved in the Assembly's work.

It's a virtual meeting on Zoom at 6pm tomorrow and you can sign up for the link on the Federation's website or [through the News section at muni.org/assembly](https://muni.org/assembly).

September 9, 2025

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome to our regular business meeting.

50th Anniversary of MOA

Our 50th Anniversary of the unification of the Municipality is now upon us, in fact, next week marks the actual date that the voters adopted the charter and we moved into our new government – 50 years ago.

So, last Friday, we kicked off the public celebration with a great event at Town Square Park at the Night Market. Thanks to Zaneta Stetsunova who has been organizing that great activation of the park all summer long and agreed to do one more week to support this. It was a great time - there were vendors, information booths, there was music,

there was dancing – a lot of celebration. And that was a nice thing for this city to be doing as we continue the challenging work of running this city and trying to make improvements with the limited resources available to us.

From now through November, we'll celebrate with events, activities and history stories. This weekend, I highly recommend the event this Saturday – a history lesson on historic Anchorage neighborhoods with David Reamer at the Beartooth. Tickets are free at the Beartooth ticket office.

You can see all of the activities listed at muni.org/50. This is a great opportunity to learn about our roots and begin envisioning the next 50 years, so I hope you find a way to become involved.

2026 Budget Season

This week, we start the process for the 2026 municipal budget at the Assembly – the Mayor's team has been working on it for a while. While studying a government budget might not sound like fun to everyone, I really encourage folks to follow the process and be involved – it's actually pretty interesting and informative about the state of the municipality.

It's important for members of the public to understand the budget process and be involved because really, our budget is a statement of our values and every year we challenge ourselves to be as efficient as possible with the resources we have, while facing the fact that the needs we have far outstrip the resources we have available to us. Every year, it is a challenging and interesting process.

If you don't have the time to read the budget, you can still testify or email the Assembly to tell us up about the municipal services you want to see prioritized for funding. We'll have a worksession this Friday where the Mayor's team will present the "120-day" memo, which is a 71-page memo which is the precedent for us to receive the full budget which details every financial aspect of the Municipality.

There are further worksessions in October and November, as well as opportunities for public testimony – these are all open to the public and also livestreamed and recorded. Learn more at the [Budget and Taxes section of our website](#).

Youth Representatives

Finally, I'd like to celebrate the fact that tonight, with the adoption of the consent agenda, we'll be bringing on three new Youth Representatives to the Assembly. They won't all serve at any given time, but occasionally all three will be here at the same time like they are tonight. All three are in the audience tonight and in a little while, we will swear them in.

I'd like to add a few thoughts. This project started many years ago with Mr. Rivera and Mr. Martinez several administrations back and its had a number of twists and turns that bring us to today. We've had a number of excellent youth representatives and we've

also faced some challenges and I'm grateful to the Mayor when she was Assembly Member, for helping us get squared away and standing up the program we have today.

So, tonight, I welcome Kennedy Bowser from Chugiak High School, Gwyneth Eggleston from East High and Jacob Lavarias from West High to spend the better part of the school year with us as they learn about our process. They are currently sitting in the audience, but we'll pull them up when we get to Item 10.D.2 and conduct their swearing in ceremony. Then they will join us up on the dais. All three will serve at tonight's meeting and then they will rotate for future meetings. So, welcome again Kennedy, Gwyneth and Jacob!

August 26, 2025

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome to our regular business meeting.

50th Anniversary of MOA

Tonight, we have the awesome fortune to kick off the 50th Anniversary of the unification of the Municipality celebration. It's an especially exciting night because we have with us former Assembly Members and Youth Representatives to begin the conversation of what the 50th anniversary means for our community – looking at the past, the present and the future. So, from now through November, we'll celebrate with events, activities and history stories. You can learn more at muni.org/50. This is a great opportunity to learn about our roots and begin envisioning the next 50 years, so I hope you will all find a way to become involved.

We start the celebration with a performance by Soul Society of Alaska, so when we do the anniversary resolution later tonight, we'll also get to enjoy some live music. This is just a small taster for their longer performance at the 50th Anniversary Night Market on Friday, September 5th at Town Square Park. Ed Washington will be performing as well and there will be food booths and vendors as well.

Town Square Park

Speaking of Town Square Park, I want to recognize all of the hard work this summer that has gone into improving this local treasure. I want to give thanks to the Parks and Recreation department for all of their work in beautifying the park. I also want to thank the Anchorage Downtown Partnership for their Thursday concerts and other events, and the Administration for making the park a priority, and finally, the voters for approving the bond to meaningfully improve and fix up the park. I also want to thank my friend Zaneta Stetsunova for starting the Friday Night Markets, which are a great addition to the downtown scene, bringing vibrancy and activation and vibrancy to the park all summer long on Friday nights.

If you haven't been downtown in a while or seen Town Square Park when it is full of people and activity, I really encourage you to come by the Night Market on September 5th to help us celebrate 50 years of the Municipality. It's energizing to see what the future holds for Town Square Park.

Annual MOA Employee Survey

For the municipal employees listening, I would like to note that we have the annual survey currently running – it kicked off yesterday and runs through September 15. It's really important to the Assembly to understand how employees are working and what their satisfaction is – what's working and what's not working- so we can help improve from the operations of the municipality from the legislative and budgetary side. The Mayor and her team have already implemented many things based on the feedback from the 2024 survey, so I hope municipal employees can feel confident that your input will be listened to and valued by both the Administration and the Assembly.

Assembly Work on Housing

As you can see on the agenda, the Municipality is working on a number of items to spur more housing development and get ahead of the crisis we've been facing where it's so hard for people to find an affordable place to live. We're getting some initial indications that the sum of this work is leading to more housing construction. In fact, we've heard from the Administration that multi-family housing permits have increased by at least double over the previous year.

We included a summary of that work and the initial results in our most recent Assembly newsletter. If you haven't received that yet, please sign up at muni.org/assembly and we'll send you regular communications about the business of the Assembly.

August 12, 2025

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome to our regular business meeting. Three quick updates tonight.

Assembly Youth Representative

First, last week the Assembly had the privilege of hosting a Meet and Greet with five of the ten remarkable young people who applied to serve as the Assembly Youth Representative. This was an impressive group – engaged, thoughtful, and full of ideas about our community. I want to thank Assembly Members who were able to attend, welcomed these young people to City Hall and engaged with them in the meet-and-greet.

I'll be selecting a small cohort next week to serve as the Youth Representatives, providing them with opportunities to learn together, share perspectives, and contribute meaningfully to our work. Orientation and training will begin later this month, with

swearing-in tentatively planned for either August 26 or September 9. The Vice Chair and I will share more details at the Rules Committee meeting on Thursday.

Website to Celebrate 50 Years of the Municipality

Next, the new [MOA50 page](#) is now live. It's the go-to spot for celebrating the 50th anniversary of Anchorage's unification and creation – with history, stories, events, and ways to get involved. I encourage you to check it out and share it with your friends and neighbors.

End of Summer

Finally, the end of summer is almost here. As we move into mid-August, we're feeling the close of Alaska's short but beautiful summer. The Alaska State Fair kicks off this week – a time for giant vegetables, music, and the last big gathering before the leaves turn. Students in the Anchorage School District head back to school soon, filling crosswalks, bike lanes, and bus stops once again. Let's all remember to do our part to slow down in school zones to keep our young people safe, cheer on our students and educators, and savor these last long evenings before the days grow shorter.

July 29, 2025

Vice Chair Brawley chaired the meeting and offered the following remarks.

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome to our regular business meeting. Chair Constant is unable to attend this meeting, so I am serving as Chair for the meeting and Assembly Member Rivera has been gracious to serve as Vice Chair, so thank you Mr. Rivera. I look forward to this opportunity to usher us through a productive meeting!

Downtown Safety

To begin, I want to acknowledge the shooting that happened downtown last week ago. My condolences go out to everyone who was affected by that incident. It must have been very scary for the people at the scene that night, but I'm glad to see APD increase their presence downtown on weekend evenings and I hope increasing downtown safety can be a long-term endeavor for all of us. This goes beyond any one bar, but has been a larger issue in Downtown for many years. Some of the problems downtown in the evenings obviously run counter to our goal to create a more vibrant, active downtown where people go to have fun. As an Assembly Member, I commit to reviewing the areas that we have control over in terms of safety and licensed establishments to see if there is work we can do to make our bars and downtown overall safer.

Downtown Growth

It is important to address the downtown safety issues because we are on the cusp of some great growth and vitality in our urban core. In their presentation at last month's

Community and Economic Development Committee meeting, we heard from the Anchorage Downtown Partnership pointed out a number of new businesses that have opened downtown recently and several new buildings and renovations, such as the Wild Birch and Hilton Hotel remodels, new housing developments, and a new office building now known as the Santos building.

And, last week we heard that the Block 41 project at the site of the former 4th Avenue Theater is set to begin construction for a mixed-use tower with retail and potential housing. After years of stagnant development downtown, it is great to see this revival and I'm hopeful that we are finally turning a corner on bringing downtown back to life and creating a vibrant hub for our community.

MOA Housing Development

Speaking of housing, if you didn't catch the ADN article a few weeks ago on housing development in Anchorage, I encourage you to go read it. In the discussions earlier this month on the camping ordinance, we heard from a lot of members of the public with great suggestions for things Anchorage should be doing to address homelessness and the cost of housing. So I'm pleased to report that after a lot of work in recent years, we've made significant progress on many of those ideas. It will take some years to see the results, but housing developers have been starting to announce new projects and expanded project that have been made possible thanks to recent code changes, tax incentives and other process improvements. In just the first six months of this year, the Municipality has permitted 146 residential units for projects with four or more units – that's a huge increase over the 79 that were issued for all of last year.

So, while things feel tough right now in the housing market right now, I'm cautiously optimistic that we're going to start seeing more affordable housing options for purchase and for rent in the next few years, and hopefully that helps us address our other problems like homelessness, outmigration, filling our workforce shortage, and making sure we have a community that folks can afford to live in.

Youth in Local Government

Next, I want to say congratulations and goodbye to the Assembly's summer intern Martin Karmun. It was great having him up here on the dais for the past few meetings to learn more about the inner functions of local government. And with the transition to fall, we'll soon be welcoming some new Assembly Youth Representatives to our meetings. We have a worksession on Friday, August 8th, where we'll be hearing from a few of the candidates from folks who applied and will determine who will be sitting in the youth representative seat on the dais this next year. It's great to have youth and young adults involved in our processes and sharing their perspectives.

Community Celebrations and Munification

Finally, I'll wrap up by saying the Municipality will soon kick-off the 50th anniversary celebration of the unification of the former city and borough governments into what we now know of as the Municipality of Anchorage. The exact date of the anniversary is September 16th and the Municipality and our partners will be hosting events between

September and November to commemorate the good, the bad and the wild of the formation of the Municipality. A website will be launching this week with events, activities, and history stories at www.muni.org/50.

July 15, 2025

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome to our regular business meeting.

I'd like to begin by pointing out that I'm joined on the dais by Assembly Intern Martin Karmun. He's been shadowing Assembly leadership this week and I've invited him to sit next to me and to get an up front experience for the meeting tonight.

Coeur D'Alene Firefighter Tragedy

I would like to start with a heartfelt moment of sorrow for once again having to report tragedy in this country, and that is the sabotage and shooting of firefighters near Coeur d' Alene, Idaho. This hits close to home for Alaskans because our firefighters are so important in our community. We count on them to save lives and protect properties. As I speak, hundreds of firefighters are working around the clock, across the state, to keep our communities safe from wildfires and from all manner of trouble. In fact, we saw a big fire on Ingra in my district last week.

It's pretty important that we are able to provide an environment that is safe for our first responders, and that includes our police who are also out there doing this hard work. So, I just wanted to take a moment to recognize the tragedy that occurred.

AO 2025-74 and Decorum at Meetings

Next, I'd like to speak briefly about AO 2025-74 and decorum at our meetings. Over the past few weeks, the Administration, the Assembly and the Community have been engaged in a pretty in depth conversation on camping in public spaces. We had almost 7 hours of testimony on the issue, over 100 people joined us, and I think it is fair to say that our community engaged in a very healthy, respectful debate. In fact, the Clerk was kind of filled with glee over the exercise of democracy that has been occurring in these chambers over the last few weeks.

We had a lot of people packed in Chambers to testify over several days, and we were able to hear from everyone who wanted to be heard, and hundreds also submitted written testimony. Despite the tough subject and strong feelings, for the most part, we were able to keep testimony and debate respectful and professional.

It can be hard for people to voice their thoughts in a big public forum, so the Assembly has been working to make public testimony more approachable. At our Rules meeting

last week, we discussed how to more quickly address audience members who cause disturbances, and what Assembly Members can do to make it more fair and welcoming for people who are testifying. It's always a work in progress, but I am committed, and I believe all of my peers on this dais, are committed to ensuring that everyone in our community who wants to speak can have their voice heard.

Also, after our meeting on Friday, there was a little bit of a tech glitch that took us through Monday morning to get the video recordings up on our website. I would note that the code, the law, requires that we record our meetings, but it does not in fact require that we instantaneously publish them. The reason it takes time is because the video has to be codified and reuploaded into the format that remains permanent. We've found that because we've moved to a high definition camera system, the video file was actually larger than the capacity of the server and the server stopped working. But our IT team, that is doing hard work to keep our meetings running, notified me today that in fact the server has been updated and has ample capacity now. So, I'm privileged to announce that we are able to provide to the public the video recording within hours of the meeting. I'm grateful that our team can get that information up as soon as possible so the public can see what is occurring in our chambers.

Municipal Prosecutor's Office

Next, I want to congratulate the Mayor, Municipal Attorney Eva Gardner, and of course Municipal Prosecutor Dennis Wheeler and everyone who has worked tirelessly over the past year to build back up the Municipal Prosecutor's Office. I hear a lot of concern from folks about public safety and I hear a lot of concerns about lawlessness in this town. The pandemic provided a real challenge because our courts shut down and our Prosecutor's Office thinned out to almost unfunctional. The good news is that our Prosecutor's Office is if not fully staffed, nearly fully staffed and functioning very well at this time. What that means is that where previous reporting had been that the Municipality and the State were not prosecuting DUIs, OUIs, and assaults even, those days are over and the reality now is that our prosecution system is working and people will be brought to justice through the Municipality. I'm grateful for that functioning again, because without the operation, the city is not going to be as safe and as vibrant a place as it should be.

Community Celebrations and Munification

Finally, I'll wrap up by saying that this was a big month of community celebrations, I want to celebrate our District 2 friends in Chugiak and Eagle River having a successful Bear Paw Festival last weekend.

I also want to share another big event coming up this fall. We're calling it Munification – the 50th anniversary of the unification of the former city and borough governments into the Municipality of Anchorage. The exact date of the anniversary is September 16th and the Municipality and our partners will be hosting events between September and November to commemorate the good, the bad and the wild of the formation of the Municipality. We'll have more to come soon at muni.org/assembly.

June 24, 2025

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome to our regular business meeting.

Assassination and Assassination Attempt on Minnesota Legislators

It is with a heavy heart that I start my remarks this week with reflection on a very dark occurrence in American history that took place a few weeks ago – the assassination of Minnesota State Representative Melissa Hortman and her husband Mark, and the assassination attempt of Minnesota State Senator John Hoffman and his wife Yvette.

We in this chamber are no strangers to extreme rhetoric and people who are frankly, quite scary, showing up at your home and acting in ways that are uncivil and unacceptable. We here in the Anchorage community do not stand with assassination or threats of violence.

Camp Abatement

Next, I want to speak about the camp abatement in Mountain View last week. I want to say thank you to the entire municipal infrastructure that stood up in defense of Mountain view. In a case that took far too long to abate – it was a 5 year problem, going back to 2021 – and the people of Mountain View had to pay the price of this city's inability to act. My gratitude to this administration for taking the heavy lift and getting that work done. The neighbors of Mountain View are deeply grateful to this administration.

Navy Week

On a lighter note this week last week we enjoyed Navy Week. We had members of the USS Anchorage, USS Alaska and the USS Ted Stevens pre-commissioning staff here in celebration of our solstice and Fleet Week. It was really amazing to see them here and to participate with them in a variety of activities, including music and the solstice event and a variety of other activities.

Opening of Wild Birch Hotel

I'd also like to celebrate that at the very, very edge of east downtown, a tax abatement policy that was established 12 years ago was implemented with the opening of the Wild Birch Hotel last week. This brings some new energy to the revitalization effort that has been spoken about by the people of Fairview for the last 20 years. It is with gratitude that we celebrate this new business, see hundreds of new people employed in the downtown and see a world-class hotel that in its interim before it became that hotel, provided shelter services for people in need.

Opening of the Equity Center

The mayor and I, and several members of the Assembly had a great opportunity to celebrate Juneteenth with the opening of the Equity Center with the Alaska Black Caucus. It will be a great place in this community to celebrate to educate, to innovate and to build community.

Summer Solstice is here

With the passing of summer solstice last weekend, we are now at the peak of summer and enjoying the longest days. I hope everyone got to do something special this weekend to commemorate the solstice.

Pride Parade

This weekend is the annual Pride Parade and we hope to see you out there when it starts downtown at 11:30am.

June 10, 2025

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome to our regular business meeting.

June Celebrations

June is a month of celebrations. There's a lot of trouble in the world and a lot of things going wrong in the world, but Anchorage is doing its best and we have a lot to celebrate.

So, Juneteenth kicks off this month and you are all invited. I hope to see you out there as we celebrate the African American history in our community. It's such an interesting time that there are forces out there that would try to make you feel like it is somehow a threat or somehow a negative to be celebrating the diversity in our community, but that is not this community – we are celebrating!

- Also, May 31 was the 20th Year Celebration for Asian American and Pacific Island Heritage Flag Day Month – congratulations on this significant anniversary!
- For the father's in the room, Father's Day is next Sunday
- Solstice weekend is June 20 and there are a number of community events to celebrate
- June 26 is the annual World Refugee Day Celebration at Grow North Farm. If you haven't been to that farm, you should check it out. It is amazing. We will be there celebrating the refugees of the world who are making the world a better place.

- June is Pride Month, with the focus of activities taking place June 23-29 and the big Pride Parade on Saturday, June 28, which the Mayor and members of the Assembly will be marching in.
- And Bear Paw Festival in Eagle River is just around the corner in July.

The season of celebrations is upon us! There are a variety of markets, festivals, open houses and sporting events all month – so I hope you do find a chance to be out there, especially when the sun is shining because winter is coming soon and we need to get outside while we can.

Update from Joint School Board Meeting

Last Friday, the Assembly held our quarterly joint meeting with the Anchorage School Board. I'll leave the report up to the Vice Chair in her committee reports since she chaired that meeting in my absence.

Federation of Community Council's Local Lens Series

Next, I want to point you to the Federation of Community Councils' Local Lens series. It's a great opportunity for the members of the public to understand the goings on in the community and the council system. Local Lens webinars invite experts to break down complex topics and let the community ask questions. You can participate live or watch the recordings afterwards.

Past topics have included zoning and building changes that have come before the Assembly and the next one on June 23 is on Neighborhood Resilience and wildfire preparedness. You can find more at communitycouncils.org. And for those of you interested in that topic of wildfire preparedness, AFD held an open house on May 19, the recording can be found on the Anchorage Fire Department's website.

May 20, 2025

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome to our regular business meeting.

Congratulations Graduates!

I'd like to start out by recognizing this is graduation season. This past week, we graduated 17 new cadets into the Anchorage Fire Department into probationary firefighters. So we have new and very excited individuals who are now providing services to our Municipality and getting training in the best fire department in the world. The Anchorage Police Department Academy graduation is next week and it's exciting that we have our first full class a number of years with another full class in coming this fall, which is helping us to get back to a position where we have full staff in both these critical public safety and EMS branches. One of last year's Assembly priorities was to develop the municipal workforce, so it's great to see all of our departments starting to fill

back up with staff over the past year. Having strong classes of first responders coming to work in our fire and police departments is important because public safety and emergency services are high priority in our community and success depends on having for a long train staff to carry out their missions.

It's also high school and college graduation season. The Anchorage School District is graduating this month 2,950 seniors from the high schools in the Municipality. And this spring, UAA graduated more than 950 students. So with that, to all of those individuals who are starting their careers or finishing their high school experience and their college expenses, I want to say congratulations and thank you for the commitments he'll be making to our community.

Happy Municipal Clerks' Week!

Also last week was Municipal Clerks' Week. We had a large number of recognition resolutions at our last meeting and we weren't able to fully recognize one important group. I'd like to do that now. Municipal Clerks' Week took place earlier in May. The Assembly couldn't do our work without having an extremely competent and well-organized Clerk's Office. From supporting our meetings to manage and public records and overseeing elections, their work ensures that the work of this body function smoothly. So thank you to our Clerk's Office.

Youth Member Application Now Open

Speaking of graduates, we had our youth members graduate off of our Assembly's body at our last meeting. And so now we are going to open the solicitation application for new youth representatives. We're recruiting openly right now. The application could be found at www.muni.org/assembly. The seats are open to youth ages 16 to 19 and applications are due next week on May 31st.

Memorial Day

Also, as the Mayor noted, Memorial Day is coming right up. And as we look forward to the long weekend, I'd like to remind our community of the annual Memorial Day event, "Anchorage Remembers," to be held at the Veterans Memorial on the Delaney Park Strip at 09:30AM on Memorial Day. I hope to see many of you there to honor the brave service members have given their lives in defense of our country.

Administrative Matters

Also tonight, members will note that you've received committee assignments on your desk, but mainly that's committee leadership. I think it's going to take a little bit of time for membership to kind of fill out into the committees and for new members to figure out where they want to serve. So this list is not set-in-stone, it's just so that the committees can have their leadership to begin organizing recruiting members and starting to do their business as well.

Tonight, item number 18 is a standing item on our agenda and its executive session. The Municipal Department of Law has requested that we consider the question of shall we convene into executive session over the dinner hour to provide us a briefing on

certain legal matters. So as we conclude the consent agenda, we will begin a conversation about that.

May 6, 2025

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome to our regular business meeting.

Tonight's Agenda

Tonight, I'd like to give a warm welcome to all the new members who are here for their first full meeting of the Anchorage Assembly. I'd like to specifically welcome Member Brawley in her first full meeting as Vice Chair.

To the new members, I will be going slow tonight, and I'll do my best to help you along, as will your neighbors on the dais, to ensure that you are up to speed on procedures. I know it probably won't be a real issue, but getting up to speed can be really challenging, so if you're unsure of anything, you can always ask point of information from me or talk to your neighbor to get clarification. We'll just work through it as we go. And it won't be long before everybody's up to speed.

Visit with U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary

This last week I took a very rapid trip to Washington, D.C., with a delegation from Anchorage and statewide that Senator Sullivan organized – the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness, the Balance of State Coalition, the Anchorage Affordable Housing and Land Trust and Cook for Housing Authority – to meet with HUD Secretary Scott Turner.

It was really great meeting. The highlight of the visit was that we're working on figuring out how to address the HUD funding formula, because the HUD funding formula disadvantages small states and Alaska very dramatically. It doesn't reward performance of your local continuum of cares, even though ours in Alaska are very successful in moving people from camps to housing. We have a 90% success rate of moving people out, but we have this continuous flow into the system which proves to be a challenging. And the formula doesn't award funds based on the severity of the issues, it's just a strict overall population-based formula.

And that issue has really disadvantaged us. The City of Houston receives funding at a level of approximately \$23,000 per homeless individuals that they support, and we receive less than \$2,000 per individual. So, it's no question why we continue to face what feels like an insurmountable challenge when the funding that should be supporting communities to address the specific challenge of homelessness is just a general welfare program for large cities and that's not an acceptable alternative.

The HUD secretary did make the commitment work really closely and to help work with us to set up a pilot program that will ensure that we don't have to wait many years to see a change. If we can come up with proposal and get it back to the secretary, they will work with us. The Secretary's staff reached out to me today, which was more than any outreach and from the previous secretaries, so I'm very and heartened that we're going to start to see some response out of D.C. Hopefully, before I leave this body.

Youth Representative Application

Also, for young members of the public, with the departure of our three youth members at the last meeting, we are now recruiting for next year's class. The application is now open and can be found at muni.org/assembly. The seats are open for youth ages 16-19 and applications are due May 31. So please get your applications in.

Seasonal Updates

As we approach summer, several municipal departments have some reminders:

- Solid Waste Services wants us all to be "Bear Aware" and secure our trash out of reach of bears and other wildlife, so we can ensure that our wildlife and community can continue to co-exist. They have [a great video with tips](#) (and I don't mind the fact that part of it was filmed in my neighborhood)
- Also, as we approach wildfire season, our Fire Department has been busy helping us all prepare to be safe. They are hosting a Town Hall here at Loussac Library on Monday, May 19 at 6:30pm and there is a community survey available and lots of tips on wildfire safety [on their website](#).

Now is the time for us all to prepare for a safe and fun summer.

City Nerd Nite

Finally, we're back with another [City Nerd Night](#) next Thursday, May 15. This time, the topic is "Hear Me Out" at King Street Brewing from 6-8pm. Locals have 7 minutes to talk about a topic they are passionate about and we hope to see you there.

April 22, 2025

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome to our regular business meeting.

Tonight's Agenda

Tonight, we have a quite a packed agenda and all manner of good things to happen. We've had a good rhythm of working through items at recent meetings, so I hope we're able to keep up that pace tonight. We plan to take up the budget as close to 6pm as possible and all the public hearing items will flow from there. Shortly, you'll hear from the

Vice Chair with a motion to change the order of the day to get through the items the outgoing members are interested in participating in before we take up the election certification sometime between 8 or 8:30pm. So, from an organizational perspective, we ask for some flexibility so we can get through everything in the order that is needed so that we can meet as many people's needs as possible for outgoing members, as we welcome our new members and their families to celebrate the certification and the swearing in.

Youth Representatives

Tonight is the last meeting for our three fantastic youth representatives Kynnedi Grady, Mika Bell and Bruno Bookman, who have all served admirably and have been great assets to this body.

We had a great tour last week to meet with the administration up in the Mayor's office, as well as our Fire Department, Police Department and Health Department. In the future as this program continues to evolve, we're going to do that part earlier and make sure that the Youth Reps coming forward have an opportunity also visit other municipal departments. I anticipate that there will be a few legislative items coming forward that the youth reps have worked on in the near future on how to shape the program in the future.

To the Youth Reps, we will greatly miss you. Thank you for all the work you've done. And hopefully we see you here in Chambers, and maybe some of you up here on the dais, in the future. We are going to begin recruiting for Youth Representative for 2025-26 school year, so keep your eye out for that on the Assembly web page for announcements from the Associate Ombudsman who has been stewarding of this program.

Passing of Former Assembly Member Tim Steele

I would also like to honor Tim Steele and note that the Assembly plans to take up some honoree action for him, but likely not until June to provide the family an opportunity to grieve, and then come forward to receive an honor for his service to this Municipality.

Port of Alaska

Next, I'd like to briefly talk about the Port of Alaska. This last week we took some momentous steps on the modernization of our Port. It's been years in the making and we arrived at a very substantial milestone last week with the approval of construction for Terminal one, as well as the financial arrangements to make it feasible.

That said, our work is not done. We as a body have a fiduciary responsibility to ensure construction is done in a manner that meets the financial goals the Municipality has set out. We'll continue to have conversations about how we might structure future oversight activities to ensure that the Port construction is delivered to meet the community's future needs. And while we share great excitement for this project, it's something that hopefully people in our community will never notice as the goal all along has been consistent and affordable delivery of goods without interruption through the Port. This is

critical because a 2024 economic study found that service disruptions of the Port would exceed 39 million dollars per week and economic damage to Alaska. With the work last week, we're one step closer to avoiding that potential future.

I want to congratulate everybody who worked on this project. I especially want to recognize both Municipal Manager Wendt Pearson and Chief Administrative Officer Falsey for your exceptional work in the last year to get this project before us. I also want to thank my colleague, friend and partner in this work, Assembly Vice Chair Meg Zaletel. Thank you for your leadership on this issue with this body.

Last Meeting for Outgoing Members.

This is it – the last meeting for our outgoing members. Thank you all for your service. I'll save my remarks for later on when we get to certification, but I do want to again acknowledge my gratitude to the Vice Chair for her service and leadership, as well as to members Sulte, Bronga and Littlefield who stepped up and have led the city over the last three years and more, and also to all the family members of outgoing Assembly Members who made all the sacrifices needed for your family member to participate in this very challenging and amazing work. That makes our community a better place. And to those new members coming in this week, we thank you and your families for your sacrifice that has just begun.

April 8, 2025

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome to our regular business meeting.

Tonight's Agenda

Tonight, we have a very long agenda and the culmination of some big projects that members have been working on for a long time. As this current Assembly body comes to a conclusion on April 22, lots will need to be taken care of. Tonight, Members should note any items that need to be done before the end of our business on April 22 and if we don't get through it all tonight or at the special meeting on April 16th, there may be a need for a Friday meeting. If we work efficiently tonight, we can hopefully avoid that need, but tentatively, a special meeting is scheduled for April 16th, but if we don't get it all done then, we may need to extend that meeting to Friday.

Anchorage Chamber of Commerce Presentation

Yesterday afternoon, I presented the Assembly's annual Progress Report to the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce and I shared our accomplishments from 2024 and our plans for the upcoming year. Our 2024 highlights include housing, Port of Alaska modernization, getting the Mobile Crisis Team to 24/7 service, and helping neighbors solve problems that vex them in their daily lives. In the year ahead, we'll be working on housing– cutting red tape, funding rental assistance and hotel conversions, tax

incentives to get the housing we need. We'll also work on Eklutna River restoration, fixing HUD issues and on and on.

The year ahead will be an interesting challenge as we continue to face uncertainty and chaos coming out of Washington. Thankfully the local government is strong and we will continue to be a steady hand on the till.

Elections

Last week, we concluded another successful Vote at Home operation. All ballots have been cast that are legally allowed to be counted and all things are going smoothly in the process. We maintained a high standard that Anchorage elections demands for its elections for transparency and access. Turnout was steady for an Assembly-year election – we're expecting about 62,000 ballots cast and 60 to 65 thousand ballots is average for a vote at home election with Assembly races.

The voters approved of all but two of the bonds and levies, which shows that Anchorage still believes in itself and wants to invest in making our community a better place to live. Certification and swearing in of new members is on 4/22, which is our next regular meeting. It will probably happen later in the evening after we take care of the budget and other matters.

Education Funding

Last week, the Assembly held a special meeting to approve the School District's Budget and I've said it before, but it was incredibly sobering to hear just how bad the school district's financial challenges are in light of years and years of reduced state funding. If the State isn't able to deliver adequate funding to our schools, we are going to see 558 positions eliminated next month, and that includes librarians, library assistants, nurses, counselors and principals, and cuts to activities, programs and electives like IGNITE, Special Education, Immersion, Summer School and Battle of the Books and the West High theatre program. All of this is on top of the need for higher classroom sizes that are being forced on our community.

The Assembly passed the budget, but this is really in the hands of the Alaska Legislature and the Governor to fix this enduring problem and get our schools back on track.

March 18, 2025

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome to our regular business meeting.

National League of Cities Conference

Last week, several of us attended the National League of Cities Congressional Conference in Washington D.C. and held meetings with the members of the Alaska delegation to Congress. I'll leave it to Member Brawley to address that topic in her committee report.

Elections

Last week, ballot packages were mailed to all qualified Anchorage Voters for the April 1, 2025 Regular Municipal Election.

If you haven't yet received your ballot, please call the Voter Hotline – that's 907-243-VOTE – to order a replacement ballot. The Accessible Voting Centers open next week if you would like to vote in person.

As I've said before, Anchorage has one of the best voting systems in the country and we can all be really proud of the transparency, accessibility and security of Anchorage elections. In the past year, the Election Team has added equipment to make it easier for people with disabilities to vote and has advised the State Legislature on ways the state can improve their elections.

To learn more about our local election, go to www.muni.org/elections.

Education Funding

Tonight, the Assembly will take up the hearing on the Anchorage School District budget. We have through April 3rd to pass the budget. As I mentioned last week, when it comes to this year's school budget, the Assembly's power is very limited.

Essentially, we can vote to approve the budget, approve it with reductions, or not approve it at all. If we don't approve the budget at our next meeting, it will go into effect anyway as an operation of code. The Alaska Constitution sets the maximum local contribution, and the Municipality invests the maximum allowed annually, so there's no way for us to increase the budget.

However, the Assembly has been hearing from a lot of people who have voiced their concerns and unhappiness with the School District's proposed budget. This budget is shocking and devastating to our community. It will be devastating if you participate in charter schools, if you participate in after school activities, if you participate in sports.

For those of you who are concerned about this, I encourage you to join the Assembly in contacting your legislators and the Governor and to keep the heat on them to increase school funding.

Special Assembly Meeting

Finally, I want to give everyone an early forewarning that we may have a need to add a special meeting to the Assembly calendar in the next few weeks. If we are not able to hold a vote on the School District budget tonight, we will hold a special meeting in the next few weeks, likely April 2nd, the last day we have statutorily to act on it. Additionally,

there are several big items that our current body has been working on that might not be dispensed with before the April 22nd meeting, so there could potentially be a second special meeting to wrap up projects.

March 4, 2025

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome to our regular business meeting.

It's a rare occurrence to have two Assembly Meetings scheduled on back-to-back Tuesdays, and I appreciate everyone's accommodating this schedule as we look forward to spring break.

Elections

Here in Anchorage, spring break is synonymous with our local elections season. This week, the MOA Elections Team is getting ready to receive tens of thousands of ballots for the April 1, 2025 Regular Municipal Election.

Ballot packages will be sent to all qualified Anchorage Voters next week on March 11 and the last day of voting is Tuesday, April 1. Secure drop boxes open on March 12 and Anchorage Vote Centers will open on March 25.

It's a big election with six Assembly seats, two school board seats, and many service area board seats on the ballot, as well as nine bond propositions, two levies and four service area propositions.

As I've said before, Anchorage has one of the best voting systems in the country and we can all be really proud of the transparency, accessibility and security of Anchorage elections. In the past year, the Election Team has added equipment to make it easier for people with disabilities to vote and has advised the State Legislature on ways the state can improve their elections.

Don't forget to sign up for Ballot Tracks – you can get text, email, or voicemail notifications when your ballot package is mailed out, when it is received by USPS if returning by mail, when it arrives at the Election Center, and if your ballot package is counted or if it requires curing.

To learn more about the elections and sign up for Ballot Tracks, go to muni.org/elections.

Anchorage School District Budget

Next, we have the introduction of the Anchorage School District budget tonight, which will be heard at our next meeting when the Assembly will take up the School District's

budget for approval. We've received comments from people in our community who are justifiably concerned about school funding. Our schools have been underfunded for a decade and our education system is truly suffering.

However, when it comes to this year's school budget, the Assembly's power is very limited. Essentially, we can vote to approve the budget, approve it with reductions, or not approve it at all. If we don't approve the budget at our next meeting, it will go into effect anyway as an operation of code.

As to increasing the budget, the Alaska Constitution sets the maximum local contribution, so the state caps the amount of funding local governments can contribute to school districts and the Municipality has invested the maximum allowed amount every year I've been on the body.

I say all of this to let school supporters know that while the Assembly cannot increase the school budget, we have been advocating to the Legislature for increased funding for many years, including it as a priority in our legislative program and issuing resolutions of support to the legislature. While we want to continue to hear from you on your concern for school funding, I also urge you to take this to the people who have the power on this issue – your legislators and especially the Governor.

Executive Appointments

Tonight, the body will consider confirming three Mayoral appointments for top leadership positions in the Municipality. We held confirmation hearings for those candidates on Friday, and you can watch the recordings on the MOA Meetings YouTube channel.

To the appointees, thank you for your time on Friday and thank you to you and your families for being here tonight. I intend to ask my colleagues to change the order of the day to take up the confirmations – items 10 D 1 thru 4 – as early in the meeting as possible.

February 25, 2025

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome to our regular business meeting.

Elections

I want to start with a reminder that the last day to register or update your voter registration for the upcoming municipal elections is this Sunday, March 2nd. You can register to vote by visiting the State of Alaska Division of Election online.

Yesterday, February 24, 2025, 1,385 ballot packaged were mailed to military and

overseas voters. On March 11, Municipal Elections will send out 204,493 ballot packages to all qualified Anchorage Voters. The last day of voting is Tuesday, April 1, with voting ending at 8:00 p.m. This election includes six Assembly seats, two school board seats, and many service area board seats, as well as nine bond propositions, two levies and four service area propositions.

Anchorage has one of the best voting systems in the country and we can all be really proud of the transparency, accessibility and security of Anchorage elections. In the past year, the Election Team has added equipment to make it easier for people with disabilities to vote and has advised the State Legislature on ways the state can improve their elections.

One of the tools Anchorage elections use to increase transparency and accessibility is Ballot Tracks. It's an amazing tool where you can get text, email, or voicemail notifications when your ballot package is mailed out, when it is received by USPS if returning by mail, when it arrives at the Election Center, and if your ballot package is counted or if it requires curing.

You can register to vote by visiting the State of Alaska Division of Election online and you can learn more about the elections and sign up for Ballot Tracks at muni.org/elections.

Federal Workers

Next, I want to extend my support to the federal workers who have lost their jobs in recent weeks. From working with municipal employees all these years, I know that public sector workers care deeply about their communities and often sacrifice opportunities for higher pay and advancement to do the important work of providing critical services to our communities.

The loss of this many jobs is a huge blow to the fabric of our community, our public health and safety, and our local economy. We now have hundreds of workers who will struggle to pay their rent and mortgages and will have less disposable income to spend on local businesses. And now we have critical jobs to deliver federal services, fight forest fires, and protect our community that will go unfilled. My heart goes out to those workers and their families during this difficult time.

For those workers who find themselves unemployed and have a passion for hard work and community service, I encourage you to visit muni.org to see the jobs we have open at the Municipality. We have a number of job openings and would welcome the wealth of experience and knowledge that former federal employees would bring to the job.

Assembly Annual Workplan

Tonight, we have before us the Assembly's Annual Workplan that the Assembly has put together in our recent Rules Committee meetings. Each year we go through this process to help us focus our workload on the most pressing issues for our community.

And while any member may introduce their own legislation at any time, and new issues come up throughout the year, you will see the majority of our work this year focused on the Assembly's 2025 priorities, which are: Housing Action; Energy, Infrastructure and Transportation; Public Health, Safety and Quality of Life; and Good Government.

An important note is that the project list in the workplan is a compilation of individual member priority projects and does not necessarily represent the priorities of all Assembly Members. By adopting the workplan, Members are committing to support their colleagues' pursuit of their priorities, but are not endorsing each individual project.

While the Members on this body have very different viewpoints and political backgrounds, we have found that by coming together to develop a workplan, we can find opportunities for collaboration in the areas that are most important to our community. Not every item in this plan will make it to adoption, but by creating a method for everyone's ideas to come forward, we enable this body to be more collaborative, more productive and more responsive to community needs.

The plan and more information on the Assembly's priorities and current projects can be found at muni.org/assembly.

Nerd Nite

Last week, the Assembly held another City Nerd Nite. This time it was on the topic of "Won't You Be My Neighbor?" in collaboration with Anchorage Design Week and featured seven locals talking about their neighborhood-related work. City Nerd Nites are a great way to make new connections, meet new people and learn more about local government and our community.

If you missed it, you can watch the 7-minute presentations on the MOA Meetings YouTube page.

February 11, 2025

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome to our regular business meeting.

Juneau Visit

A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to go to Juneau to advocate for Anchorage's legislative priorities, alongside Members Brawley and Johnson, and the Mayor and her team.

Our meetings with legislators went well and there is a lot of shared interest in the Municipality's priorities of:

- Adequate funding of snow removal on state roads
- Securing our energy future
- Stabilizing funding for public schools
- Restoring defined benefit pensions for public employees

We also had great conversations about building more housing, improving state elections, improving the state's mental health care system and addressing the threat of wildfires. I'm looking forward to working with the Anchorage delegation to the legislature over the coming session. For more information about what we're focused on this legislative session, visit www.muni.org/akleg.

Public Discourse

Next, as we grapple with the chaos and division coming out of our federal government, I'm heartened by the [findings of a recent study](#). An organization called More in Common recently released survey findings that indicate Americans want to foster a climate of understanding. Here's what stood out to me:

- Most Americans want to connect with neighbors, even if they supported different candidates.
- Most (61%) say they want their political perspectives understood by those different than them.
- 3 in 4 Americans (75%) are open to listening to those with different political views.

I think you can agree that these findings reflect what I see in Anchorage. While there is a national narrative that we are a country divided, when I look at our own community, and our municipal government, I see people putting their political differences aside to work for the common good.

The big issues we are grappling with, like housing scarcity, energy security, and affordable delivery of our goods through the Port are not Democratic or Republican issues, they are community issues. I'm proud to see our community coming together to develop creative solutions to our shared problems and I hope we can continue the spirit of cooperation no matter what happens on the federal level.

January 21, 2025

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome to our regular business meeting.

MLK Weekend

Yesterday I presented the Assembly Resolution recognizing Martin Luther King, Jr. Day to the Alaska Black Caucus at the Third Annual MLK Cultural Solidarity Celebration. As I was standing in the room, surrounded by people of all walks of life, I had the profound sense that, despite all that divides our country, Anchorage is coming together.

We each have a choice to build lasting and meaningful relationships, to respect and appreciate our neighbors, and to work together toward Martin Luther King Jr.'s vision of a beloved community. While everything happening on the national stage feels out of reach, this community is in our hands.

Which is why it's important to keep local government accessible to everyone who lives here.

Assembly Meetings in High Definition / Cancellation of GCI's Yukon TV

To that end, we have some big changes coming up for public municipal meetings held in the Assembly Chambers, beginning February 11.

After more than 40 years of recording in standard definition, municipal meetings in the Assembly Chambers will now be in high definition, providing a clearer view into the work of the Assembly and the boards that meet in Chambers. This investment reflects our commitment to transparency and accessibility, ensuring the public can engage with their local government with 21st Century technology.

Additionally, due to GCI's discontinuation of Yukon TV, the Municipality of Anchorage will no longer broadcast on Channel 9 after February 11. We encourage everyone to tune in by subscribing to the MOA Meetings YouTube Channel at youtube.com/@moameetings. This platform offers a convenient and user-friendly way to view live and archived municipal meetings anytime, anywhere.

January 7, 2025

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

First Meeting

This is the first meeting of the New Year and it's going to be a full agenda. Hopefully, we get through everything tonight, but if we don't, we will continue the meeting tomorrow evening, starting at 6pm, here in Assembly Chambers. I want to make sure we have ample time, so we don't have to rush through really important matters. With that said, my remarks tonight will be short so we can get to the work in front of us.

Assembly Meetings in High Definitions/Cancellation of GCI's Yukon TV

In regard to our meeting broadcasts, we have some big changes coming up for public municipal meetings held in the Assembly Chambers, beginning February 11.

After more than 40 years of recording in standard definition, municipal meetings in the Assembly Chambers will now be in high definition, providing a clearer view into the work of the Assembly and the boards that meet in Chambers. This investment reflects our commitment to transparency and accessibility, ensuring the public can engage with their local government with 21st Century technology.

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Martin Luther King Day Free Legal Help

Later this month, on January 20th, there is a community event that is near and dear to my heart. It is the Alaska Bar Association's MLK Free Legal Help Day. The event will take place at the Mountain View Boys and Girls Club on Monday, January 20th from 12-4pm, as well as locations across the state. This is where the Alaska Bar Association, Alaska Court System, Alaska Legal Services Corporation and local bar associations offer free legal consultation with volunteer attorneys to confidentially answer questions on Alaska-based civil legal issues for low to moderate income Alaskans attend a first come, first served basis.

The legal system is daunting to most of us, and for those with limited financial resources, it is even harder to access. If you have limited financial resources and are struggling with an issue with your landlord, child support, your place of employment or any other issue that you think may have a legal aspect, I strongly encourage you to attend this event and get the support you need and deserve. And to the attorneys of our community, I thank you for providing this valuable service and if you haven't signed up to help, contact the Bar Association to see how you can get involved.

Chair Constant Report Archive: 2024

December 17, 2024

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Chair Constant was out of town for the meeting and Vice Chair Zaletel provided the following remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome to our regular business meeting. Chair Constant is out of town this evening, so I am chairing the meeting tonight and Member Brawley will serve as Vice Chair.

Passing of MOA Employee

As the Mayor mentioned, this week we were saddened to hear of the loss of one of our own – Anchorage Health Department employee Lauren Cameron. She was well respected for her leadership in the Women, Infants, and Children program and will be greatly missed by all who knew her and benefited from her work. My condolences go to her partner, family and colleagues. This is a very difficult time for you and my heart goes out to you.

Project Anchorage

Now, turning to the business of the meeting, tonight we are taking up legislation for the Project Anchorage sales tax. Since this is a complex issue with many moving parts, I want to share some procedural information so members of the audience can better follow along. First, I recommend visiting the Assembly's Project Anchorage webpage at muni.org/ProjectAnchorage for project history and documents.

For background, AO 2024-105, an ordinance proposing a sales tax, was first introduced in October by Members Sulte and Rivera, and a draft substitute, or S-version, of that ordinance was shared by the sponsors at a worksession on December 6. I highly recommend that everyone watch the recordings of the two worksessions held on the Project Anchorage sales tax on December 6, as they provide some important background and discussion points.

Since those worksessions, the sponsors have finalized their S-version and several other members have put forward alternative S-versions, so there is now one original and five S-versions of AO 2024-105 that are on the agenda for tonight. As we move forward, it is conceivable that other S-versions are introduced, and it is very likely that changes will be made to the existing S-versions. To keep up with the changes, we'll give the S-version a new name. So, for instance, if a change is made to the S-1 version, it will then become AO 2024-105 (S-1-A).

We understand that this makes it difficult for the public to follow along, so our Legislative Services staff will keep muni.org/ProjectAnchorage up to date with the different versions

and sponsor statements to track the changes. Additionally, if you have already provided testimony on the original version, you will be allowed to testify again, as long as you keep your comments limited to the changes in the new versions.

I ask the public for your patience and understanding with the complexity of this process. This is a very consequential piece of legislation for our community with long-lasting effects, and Assembly Members are taking very seriously their role to hear public input and incorporate that feedback into the legislation.

Energy Retreat

Moving beyond Project Anchorage, I want to highlight the Assembly's Energy Retreat that was held a few weeks ago. The Assembly heard from an incredible range of experts on energy and infrastructure, including many talented municipal employees. The day was eye-opening and inspiring and certainly gave everyone in the room plenty of ideas for actions we can take to prepare the Municipality for the looming Cook Inlet gas shortage. If you missed the retreat, the video recordings and meeting materials can be found on the [Assembly's website](#) under the news items.

Year in Review

Next, since tonight is the last meeting of the year, I wanted to reflect a bit on the Assembly's work in 2024. We move at such a fast pace, and there's always something new demanding our attention, so we don't always take time to consider our accomplishments and see how our actions at each of the 24 regular meetings of the year add up to something bigger. This year we saw major advances in each of the Assembly's five priority areas:

- In Housing Action, we passed a slate of legislation aimed at cutting red tape to make it easier to build housing, and we also directed funding to reduce hurdles to rehab old buildings and reclaim abandoned buildings for housing.
- In Supporting the Municipal Workforce, we funded and supported the delivery of an annual employee survey (hopefully the first of many to come) and funded 280,000 dollars in new programs that benefit municipal employees and increase retention.
- For the Port Modernization, we determined design concepts for both terminals and developed a funding pathway for Terminal One construction by approving a tariff surcharge increase to supplement the Municipality's 500 million in grant funding.
- In our Fully Functional Municipal Services priority, we enhanced the security and efficiency of the ballot return process with our Title 28 Elections update and we funded the first year of an online bidding system for MOA contractors.
- And finally, in our Public Health, Safety and Quality of Life priority, we saw achievement of a long-time Assembly goal when we made the Mobile Crisis Team permanent in code and got to 24-7 funding for operations. We also made progress on developing options to restore the Eklutna River, including a landmark joint action with Native Village of Eklutna that went straight to the

Governor's Office. Out of everything we've accomplished this year, our work with NVE brings me the most pride.

The Assembly is in the process of developing a full list of our 2024 accomplishments and setting our 2025 priorities. That work will take place at our January Rules Committee and a 2025 workplan should be on the agenda for approval next February.

Thanks

Of course, I would be remiss to celebrate the Assembly's accomplishments without acknowledging all of the people who contribute toward achieving these goals. From the department directors who brief us at committee meetings and worksessions, to the municipal staff who help us research and create the legislation and budgets, to the community partners who bring us new ideas and innovative solutions, and the members of the public who hold us accountable by attending our meetings and sharing unique perspectives in testimony and emails – you are all critical to the Assembly's work.

We also owe a big thanks to the Mayor and her team. It's been great to have you rejoin the municipal team Madame Mayor and I thank you for your vision and leadership in advancing our shared goals to make our community an even better place.

And behind the scenes, I want to thank all of the municipal employees who keep our city running, keep us safe, and improve our quality of life through your service to our community.

Last, but not least, I want to thank the Assembly's staff team – the Municipal Clerk's Office, Assembly Counsel, Legislative Services and the Ombudsman's Office. We can't do what we do up here without you and I know all of the Members are grateful for your help.

I hope everyone enjoys this holiday break between Assembly meetings and I look forward to a productive and collaborative 2025!

December 3, 2024

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome to our regular business meeting.

Thanksgiving

I hope everyone enjoyed their Thanksgiving holiday, especially our municipal workers. Municipal staff work very hard to make our community a better place and make sure that essential services are delivered each and every day. I hope you each got some nice time with your families and friends and enjoyed a small break. And if you had to work on those days, we're grateful to you for your support of the municipality.

Port Modernization

My colleagues Vice Chair Zaletel and Member Johnson participated in an event a few weeks ago to celebrate the recent milestone of the Port Modernization Program. I'm sure they'll both have details to share, but I want to underscore how important the Port is for our community and how momentous it is that we've reached these milestones.

When the Assembly took up the Port as a priority many years ago, it was very messy. We didn't have a plan, we didn't know how much it would cost, and we couldn't get the different stakeholders into agreement on what was needed. Over the course of four mayoral administrations, the Assembly has been a steady force in ensuring the project continues to move forward upon the lines that we've agreed upon. Fast forward to today and we have plans and designs, we now have a Petroleum and Cement Terminal and a new administration building, we have over 500 million dollars in grants, and we have strong collaboration and agreement among stakeholders, and we're waiting for a 367 million dollar decision in the Court of Appeals. There is still a lot of work to be done, but we can see a path forward now and the future of the Port has never looked brighter.

Energy Retreat

Also, this Thursday the Assembly will be having a retreat to dig deeper into the issues of energy and infrastructure in the region. Every year or so, the Assembly holds a retreat to take time out of our typical fast pace to dive deeper into a particular topic and make room for dialog and collaboration with community partners.

This year, we wanted to make time for an emerging priority that is of extreme interest to our community and sure to be at the forefront of Assembly work in the coming years, and that is Anchorage's energy future. In recent years, we've been hearing more about the Cook Inlet gas shortage and how it will impact the cost and availability of energy in our community. And when energy costs go up, every cost goes up. At the retreat, the Assembly will hear from experts on the current state of the issue, as well as from municipal staff leaders on how the municipality is tackling this issue at home. It will be a great opportunity to learn how we can position the Municipality to take advantage of opportunities and be prepared for the challenges ahead. I have some optimism on the resources and people who are starting to tackle this issue on behalf of the municipality.

November 19, 2024

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

National League of Cities Conference

Last week a few of us attended the National League of Cities Conference in Tampa, Florida. The National League of Cities celebrates its 100th anniversary this year and works in partnership with cities and municipalities across the country to strengthen local leadership, drive innovation, and influence federal policies that impact us locally.

Anchorage has been a member since 1960 and has benefited from the organization's research, technical expertise, advocacy and opportunities to learn from other local governments. In fact, the ARPA funds the Municipality got from the federal government came to local governments because of the input of the National League of Cities.

Budget Season

Tonight, is the final action on the 2025 Municipal Budget with Items 11.C thru 11.I. Crafting a balanced budget that meets the diverse needs of our community is no simple task, especially in this era of decreasing state funds.

Despite receiving less funding from the state than in the past, the Municipality still needs to keep the lights on, the roads maintained, the libraries and public health clinic open, and the parks clean. We need to provide public safety during our times of need, and we also need to keep our economy running through speedy processing of development permits and business licenses.

Knowing how tight our municipal resources are stretched, I want to thank everyone who has worked to develop this budget, especially OMB Director Ona Brause and the Assembly's Finance Committee Chairs Meg Zaletel and Anna Brawley. I also want to thank all of the other staff and members who have worked so tirelessly on the budget, as well as members of the public who have testified and submitted comments. That careful review by staff and the feedback from the public are essential for crafting a responsible budget.

It has been a much more collaborative, transparent process this year and I look forward to our debate and vote on budget items later tonight.

Legislative Program

In light of the decreased state funding that I mentioned earlier, it's good to see the Assembly and Administration work together with the Anchorage delegation of the legislature to put together a strong legislative program for the 2025 session.

The draft program can be found in your meeting documents under item 10.B.5., although it will be postponed to the meeting of December 3rd, so that we have time to make final adjustments at a worksession this Friday. It is very important for Anchorage to present a united front and be strategic in our requests to the state legislature so that we can begin to build back more of that state support that we helped our city develop over our history.

#Thankorage

Finally, as we near the Thanksgiving season, I want to highlight the Assembly's "thankorage" gratitude project on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Threads. It's spelled T-h-a-n-k-o-r-a-g-e.

The social media project features neighbors from across the Municipality recognized by the Assembly through resolutions or awards. I encourage you to follow us on your platform of choice and meet the people who make Anchorage vibrant.

November 6, 2024

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome to our business meeting.

Budget Season

Tonight, we'll hold our second public hearings on the 2025 Municipal Budget: Items 14.A thru 14.G. Public participation in this process is vital. If you're here to testify on the budget—and I hope you are—please know we'll do our best to open the public hearings around 7:30pm.

After tonight, the next step in the budget process is a worksession this Friday from 10-12pm at City Hall, Suite 155, to review proposed budget revisions and tax levies, and if all goes according to schedule, we'll take up the budget for approval at the November 19th meeting.

More information on the budget is available on the Assembly's Budget and Taxes page at www.muni.org/assembly.

Housing Action

For the past several years, it's been a top Assembly priority to spur new housing development, and we made an even stronger commitment to that priority last year with the passage of our Housing Action Plan. In the year since, the Assembly eliminated single-family-only zoning, removed barriers to small multifamily housing, and established requirements for reporting short-term rental data. We've also done considerable work to engage community members and partners in discussions and work collaboratively to develop new and innovative solutions.

You may have noticed that there are several new housing proposals working their way through the Assembly process this fall and winter. I encourage you to go to the [Assembly's Housing Focus webpage](#) in our Priorities section to learn more about these proposals and get involved.

With the news last week that the average single-family home price in Anchorage jumped to \$524,000 this fall, we cannot afford to take our eyes off this goal. We cannot have a vibrant economy where workers thrive, young people have opportunities to grow, and elders have a comfortable place to age if we do not figure out this housing shortage crisis.

So, I want to applaud all of the Assembly Members, municipal staff, community councils, homebuilders and community partners who are working hard to come together and develop solutions. Keep up the good work.

ARPA Investments

Sometimes we dwell on what's wrong with our city without taking the time to celebrate all of the good things, so I wanted to bring everyone's attention to something positive that we can be proud of.

It's been two years since the Assembly invested 51 million dollars in federal relief funding into our community, and across the city, from Chugiak to Girdwood, we are seeing the positive results of those investments. The COVID relief money helped us get through the pandemic and it also gave us once-in-a-lifetime projects that will improve our quality of life for generations to come. We often talk about the Project 80s investments, but I think the ARPA projects will have an even greater impact on our community.

It's been exciting to see a lot of the projects completed this summer and fall.

The Chugach Mountain Bikers will soon complete the Coastal Trail Northern Extension in Chugiak, Providence opened (cut-une cunk-ah) Q'et'en Qenq'a for ages 55 and older experiencing homelessness with 45 permanent supportive housing units and 6 recuperative care units, and Cook Inlet Housing Authority opened the second phase of Ch'bala Corners II with affordable housing.

Just this week, the Municipality tore down an abandoned building in Mountain View to enable construction to begin on the new baseball facility in Lions Park, and the Alaska Black Caucus will hold a ribbon cutting for the new Equity Center. Construction on the Little Bears Daycare Center in Girdwood will begin next spring.

All of these projects received major investments from ARPA funds and probably would not have been possible otherwise. You can learn more at www.muni.org/recovery.

October 22, 2024

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome to our business meeting.

AFN

I also want to note we had AFN in town this week. It's very exciting to see people come from all over Alaska, from other parts of the country and some from around the world to be part of what is perhaps the most robust native gathering in the world.

The largest representative gathering of native peoples in the United States, it's an honor for Anchorage to welcome the Convention and bear witness to the inspiring work of the Federation to amplify Alaska Native voices in rooms where decisions are made.

General Election

I'd also note that the November 5 General Election is underway nationally and in the State of Alaska. Early voting is open, and the wave of voters turning out to our regional Elections Office and City Hall to cast their ballots has the civic heart of Downtown buzzing.

As one of two early voting locations, the polling location on the first floor of City Hall is open Monday through Friday starting this week through Monday, November 4. This is very important—the City Hall polling location will not be open on Election Day.

Make plans for how to cast your vote, whether it's at City Hall or 2525 Gambell Street—our regional Election Center.

Similarly, this body will not convene on Election Day during our regular Tuesday meeting time. Our next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 6—a rare Wednesday meeting—here in the Assembly Chambers.

You can learn more about the November 5 General Election and find polling locations at elections.alaska.gov. Get out and vote!

Budget Season

Election season rides alongside the municipal budget season, which means this is a busy time of year and, at the end of it all, our values are reflected in all levels of government.

Tonight, we'll hold our first public hearings on the 2025 Municipal Budget: Items 14.A thru 14.G. Public participation in this process is vital. If you're here to testify on the budget—and I hope you are—please know we'll do our best to open the public hearings around 8PM.

For those of you catching up with the process, it began two weeks ago when the Administration submitted the Mayor's proposed 2025 General Government operating and capital budgets and we held a very long and productive worksession to understand their vision.

We have another worksession coming up this Friday at 11am at City Hall, Suite 155, followed by the second public hearings at our November 6 meeting.

The schedule of worksessions and public hearings, along with more resources, are available on the Assembly's Budget and Taxes page at www.muni.org/assembly.

Youth Member

Finally, I'd like to welcome Mika Bell, who is serving during tonight's meeting as Youth Representative. Mika, welcome back. We welcome your questions and your contributions to the meeting—thank you for being here.

As a reminder, this academic year, three bright young people are serving as the Assembly Youth Member on rotation. The other two youth representatives are Kynnedi Grady and Bruno Bookman. You can learn more about the youth representatives on our website: www.muni.org/assembly.

October 8, 2024

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome to our business meeting.

Eklutna River Restoration

Last week, the Dunleavy Administration released their decision on the Final Fish and Wildlife Plan for the Eklutna River restoration and I am cautiously optimistic about the results, though there are lots of details that have to be sorted through. Unfortunately, the decision accepts the minority owners' Fish and Wildlife Plan that puts forward a portal valve option that leaves the last mile unwatered and leaves fifteen miles above the lake as unhealthy habitat, and really fails to meet the terms of the 1991 Agreement.

The good news in all of this is that the decision grants creates the requirement for further study of the pumped storage hydro concept and a path to achieving it, which has the prospect of allowing for fish passage for the whole length of the river, and also fifteen miles above the lake, while also protecting our drinking water and potentially increasing energy production and storage in the region. In the decision, the Dunleavy Administration requires the Minority Owners to enter good faith negotiations with the Municipality to move forward on the study of pumped storage hydro and other alternatives, and I sincerely hope that the Minority Owners will work collaboratively with the Municipality in pursuing this interesting option.

Non-Congregate Shelter

I would like to note that will likely have a special meeting next Tuesday during the lunch hour to address concerns relating to non-congregate shelter. We won't be seeing a proposal tonight because there are a number of questions about the potential winning bidder on the proposal.

Demboski Settlement

Also tonight, there was a motion to reconsider made on the question of the settlement with Amy Demboski and her legal claims, and because that motion was made in a timely manner, we will be taking up that question at the end of the consent agenda – the

question being the right to reconsider the previous vote. If the motion passes, we will enter into executive session tonight over the dinner break to have a more full discussion on the one we previously held.

Fire Prevention Month

Also, this is Fire Prevention Week across the country, so I want to shout out to our fire safety professionals who are out there making a difference, and to everyone in their personal lives who are working to make things safer – changing the batteries on their smoke alarms and making sure there is a perimeter around their house in case a fire comes. I'm looking forward to see the work of the fire prevention team at the Fire Department as they explore wildfire hazards with a state grant, and also urban fire challenges, especially as they relate to deteriorating properties.

Budget Season

Next, we are in the budget season and the Mayor and OMB Director released their draft budget last week, so the Assembly will be busy this month diving into the details of every department and every utility and enterprise. Between now and late November, there are several opportunities for the public to learn more and get engaged, starting with the first worksession on the budget – this Friday at 11am at City Hall, Suite 155. The schedule of worksessions and public hearings, along with more resources, are available on the [Assembly's Budget and Taxes page](#).

City Nerd Nite

The next City Nerd Nite is on Healthy Soils. Whether you're into turning garbage into gardens, boosting urban farms, or keeping our food system rooted in sustainability, we hope to see Thursday, October 17 at King St. Brewing Company. You can learn more at www.muni.org/assembly.

Youth Member

Finally, I'd like to welcome Kynnedi Grady, who is joining us tonight for their first meeting as the Youth Representative. Ms. Grady, since this is your first meeting, feel free to ask questions along the way if you need to. This academic year, three bright young people are serving as the Assembly Youth Member on rotation. The other two youth representatives are Mika Bell and Bruno Bookman.

September 24, 2024

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome to our regular business meeting.

Budget Season

We continue to move through the municipal budget process and there have been some good conversations with the Administration and departments on the Municipality's

funding needs for the upcoming year. The Mayor and OMB Director will release their draft budget next Wednesday, October 2 and I'm sure I can speak for all Assembly Members when I say that we're looking forward to diving into the details.

I say that a bit tongue in cheek, because I know that a giant budget binder can seem boring to some people, but I really encourage the community to get involved in the budget process, because this is where the public can really have its voice heard. As I've mentioned many times before, the budget is a reflection of our community's values and if you want to see better snow plowing, more services or less services, this is the time to speak up. There are many opportunities for the public to learn more and get engaged and you can get up to speed by checking out the Assembly's Budget and Taxes resources at www.muni.org/assembly.

Public Safety

I want to thank the Mayor for her recent announcement on her public safety program. It's obviously top of mind for our constituents, so I'm glad to see this new round of effort being put toward the problem. It was especially good to see a new lead Municipal Prosecutor and a new Wildland Fire Coordinator announced, as those have been two positions the Assembly has been watching closely and asking to be filled. Of course, it is also great to see efforts put towards outreach and support for people experiencing homelessness and a renewed commitment to improved snow removal.

Homelessness Plan

At the Housing and Homelessness Committee, we heard from the Mayor's Special Assistant on Homelessness and Health, Farina Brown, on the Municipality's plan to address homelessness. I'm sure more will be said during committee updates, but I just want to point out what an improvement it is for the Municipality to have a plan and goals to address homelessness that is rooted in data and collaboration. Although there has been a lot of great work in this area in recent years, the Municipality's lack of a plan for its share of the work has been a major holdup for making better progress. I am hopeful that with the Municipality as a full player and partner, with an organized and methodical approach for dealing with homelessness, we will finally see the progress our community has been begging for over the past three years.

City Nerd Nite

The next City Nerd Nite has been announced on the topic of Healthy Soils. Whether you're into turning garbage into gardens, boosting urban farms, or keeping our food system rooted in sustainability, we hope to see on Thursday, October 17 at King St. Brewing Company. You can learn more at muni.org/assembly

Joint School Board Meeting

This Friday is our next quarterly joint meeting with the Anchorage School Board at the ASD Education Center. I'll remind the body that Vice Chair Zaletel and I will be out for this meeting, so Member Brawley will serve as Chair and Member Martinez will serve as Vice Chair for that meeting.

Youth Member

Finally, I'd like to acknowledge that Youth Member Bruno Bookman is with us tonight. This academic year, three bright young people are serving as the Assembly Youth Member on one-month rotations. Next month, Mika Bell will join us and in November, we will welcome Kynnedi Grady.

September 10, 2024

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome to our business meeting.

Eklutna River Restoration

I will start with some good news. Last week, the Assembly approved its first joint resolution with the Native Village of Eklutna. We've had government to government relations with the Native Village of Eklutna for over three years, but this was our first official action together and it was very meaningful. We unanimously passed a [joint resolution](#) in support of exploration of pumped storage hydro (PSH) as an alternative for restoring and rewatering the entire Eklutna River to achieve the mitigation goal of the 1991 agreement. It was also very meaningful that Mayor LaFrance was the first Mayor to participate in our joint meetings with the Municipality and the Native Village of Eklutna, and it sent a strong message that the Municipality is united in our commitment to our partners in Eklutna.

Additionally, last week the Assembly approved the Administration's brief to the Governor on the Municipality's position on the Proposed Final Fish and Wildlife Plan for the Eklutna River. I want to thank Deputy Municipal Attorney Joe Busa for his excellent work on that brief, which was presented to the Governor's team yesterday. Good feedback is coming out that our message was well received and that it was a thoughtful discussion. We're hopeful for some positive next steps to result from that meeting.

Budget Season

We kicked off budget season last week with a review of the preliminary budget outlook, otherwise known as the 120-day memo, with OMB Director Brause and Mayor LaFrance. It was great to start off with such a collaborative approach between the Administration and Assembly.

From road equipment upgrades to increased public safety resources, the Municipality has a lot of needs and finite resources to meet those needs. We can be more effective and provide better service to our community when we have an open, collaborative process on the budget with the Assembly, the Administration and our community. I encourage community members to engage in the budget conversation now and make your voice heard on your priorities. You can learn more on the Assembly's Budget and Taxes section at www.muni.org/assembly.

Employee Survey

Also, to the employees of the Municipality, the 2024 Municipal employee survey closed and we had great participation. We had 1104 responses from current employees, 91 responses from former employees and 54 responses from past applicants who declined an MOA offer. This gives our third-party consultant Alera Group a lot of data to work with for their analysis and report on the survey. Alera will present an initial report to the Municipality on budget recommendations in mid-October and a final report on analysis of survey responses due in November. Both reports will be shared with municipal employees—with a sincere “thank you” to all who took time to respond.

Youth Member

Finally, tonight is the first meeting with one of our new cohort of youth representatives. I'd like to welcome Bruno Bookman who is serving as our youth representative at tonight's meeting, as well as Kynnedi Grady and Mika Bell, the other two youth representatives who will be joining us at future meetings.

August 27, 2024

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome to our business meeting.

Chitose Delegation Visit

I will start by recognizing that the Sister Cities Commission is hosting a delegation from Anchorage's oldest sister city relationship, the city of Chitose, Japan. They have been our sister city since 1969.

Located on the northernmost island in Japan, Hokkaido, Chitose is found in the Midwestern region of the island. Marked by mountains and rivers, the city's geography feels familiar to Anchorage, although Chitose is about one-third the size of Anchorage, population-wise. They even have a nice urban salmon stream right in their city.

This year marks 55 years of bridge building, and it's a meaningful occasion our community is honored to commemorate. We also have an event tomorrow – the Chitose Park Dedication Ceremony from 9-10am tomorrow, Wednesday, August 28 at Sand Lake Elementary School. Students from the school were instrumental in making this happen and it is very exciting that we can do the dedication while the Chitose delegation is here. I hope we have a strong show of support from our community as we welcome and honor our Sister City.

Budget Season

We will soon enter the budget season where the Administration and Assembly work together to craft the 2025 municipal budget, which includes the operating budget, the budgets for utilities and enterprises, and the capital projects we will request from the state legislature and include on bonds in the April election.

I'm looking forward to a collaborative process with our partners in the Administration, specifically the Office of Management and Budget. The budget is a reflection of our community's values – from the frequency of snow plowing, to emergency services response times, to the services provided by our Health Department, Parks and Libraries – where we decide to put our money speaks to who we are as a community.

Our first review of the budget comes with the Administration's preliminary plan that will be put forward in the 120-day memo. The Assembly will hold a worksession on the memo on Friday, September 6th at 2:10pm. I encourage community members to attend this and all of the sessions on the budget and to make your voice heard on your priorities as we move through the process. You can learn more on the Assembly's Budget and Taxes section at www.muni.org/assembly.

Nerd Nite

Also, this week, we have City Nerd Nite will be this Thursday, August 29th at 6pm at King Street Brewing. The topic is Water and covers talks like Water in a Winter City, Challenges of Water Infrastructure and Snow Melt. You can learn more at the Assembly's website, www.muni.org/Assembly.

Employee Survey

Finally, I want to remind our hardworking municipal employees that the 2024 Municipal employee survey closes in a few days – on Friday, August 30. The Assembly recognizes that recruiting and retaining a strong workforce is a critical need for the Municipality, so we made this one of our top priorities for 2024. This survey is one step in the Assembly's work to support the incoming Administration and municipal employees toward the goal of making the Municipality one of the best places in Anchorage to work.

August 13, 2024

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome to our business meeting.

Back to School

The Anchorage School District resumes classes this week, so please exercise extra caution when you are driving and watch out for students on the sidewalks and busses on the roads. Let's work together to keep our kids safe as we get used to new traffic patterns.

As most of you know, the School District is ushering in some big changes this year with staggered first days of school, new start times and the Academies model. I wish the students, families and school district the best of luck with these changes and I hope everyone has a great school year!

Employee Survey

To our hardworking municipal employees, I want to let you know that the 2024 MOA employee survey went live yesterday. The Assembly recognizes that recruiting and retaining a strong workforce is a critical need for the Municipality, so we made this one of our top priorities for 2024.

I thank Members Zaletel and Martinez for spearheading this project on the Assembly side and I also thank the staff from the Administration who have worked so hard to get this out. This survey is one step in the Assembly's work to support the incoming Administration and municipal employees toward the goal of making the Municipality one of the best places in Anchorage to work.

Chitose Delegation Visit

Later this month, the Sister Cities Commission will welcome a delegation from Anchorage's oldest sister city relationship, the city of Chitose, Japan.

Located on the northernmost island in Japan, Hokkaido, Chitose is found in the Midwestern region of the island. Marked by mountains and rivers, the city's geography feels familiar to Anchorage, although Chitose is about one-third the size of Anchorage, population-wise.

Chitose, Japan was Anchorage's first formalized sister city relationship, beginning in 1968. Anchorage School District's Japanese Immersion Program began in 1989 and helped students become functionally proficient in speaking, reading and writing both English and Japanese. With the support of Sand Lake Elementary School's Japanese Immersion Program and Chitose Elementary School, the two schools began a student exchange program in 1994 that continues to this day. That's why I'm proud to bring forward an ordinance on the agenda tonight to name Sand Lake Park in honor of our first sister city.

This year marks 55 years of bridge building, and it's a meaningful occasion our community is honored to commemorate. With appreciation to the Sister Cities Commission, I look forward to welcoming the delegation in celebration of the bridge we've built and will maintain for years to come.

Youth Representative

A few weeks ago, the Assembly had the opportunity to interview candidates for the Youth Representative position on the Assembly. We had 15 candidates overall, a big jump from last year. Candidates represented schools across the school district, as well as private and home schools. It was a very tough process to narrow it down from such a strong pool of candidates, but we interviewed three really strong candidates and had a great conversation with them. I'm pleased to announce that this year's Youth Representative will rotate between all three finalists. I've asked them all to join us today and am going to welcome them up front to introduce them.

- Mika Bell will be a 12th grader at Service High
- Bruno Bookman will be an 11th grader at West High
- Kynnedi Grady will be a 12th grader at Bartlett High

The team will receive an orientation in the coming weeks and once they are seated on the Assembly, they will join us for regular and special meetings and may also join committees and participate in work sessions and informal meetings. They will receive the same materials presented to Assembly members for regular and special meetings and give a "yes" or "no" preferential vote on each item up for a vote before the Assembly (with the exception of matters related to alcohol and marijuana).

Welcome to the Assembly! We look forward to serving with you.

Food for Thought and Nerd Nite

Finally, a few event reminders. We have a Food for Thought session next Friday, August 16th at City Hall. This month's topic is "Bounty in our Backyard! Celebrating food security and local urban agriculture." Food for Thought is a series of worksessions over the Friday lunch hour for the Assembly to welcome community partners to share good things happening in our community.

Also, the next City Nerd Nite will be on the topic of Water and will be held on August 29th at King Street Brewing. You can learn more about both of these events at the Assembly's website, www.muni.org/Assembly.

July 30, 2024

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome to our business meeting.

Crime Suppression Efforts

I'll start the report by thanking the federal, state and local law enforcement who conducted a major crime suppression effort across the municipality last week. There were 90 arrests, 19 felony warrants served, and 21 misdemeanor warrants served; 16 charged with felony crimes, and 47 charged with misdemeanors through the effort; 13 firearms were seized, some of which were stolen, as well as some pretty scary drugs. Many of these numbers may go up as additional search warrants are served this week. I'm really grateful to our local law enforcement, as well as our state and federal law enforcement for this interdiction and effort.

Finance Reporting

Next, I would like to say thank you SO much to Municipal Chief Fiscal Officer Alden Thern for delivering the financial audit for 2022. I want to thank the municipal staff and contractors who worked so diligently to get this project completed just in the very nick of time. For many of us, the term audit makes our eyes glaze over, but I want to stress how important this process is.

Millions of dollars in state and federal funding, and the Municipality's bond ratings were hanging in the balance. The completion of the audit allowed the Municipality to go to the bond market to sell \$147 million in bonds at a competitive 3.7 percent interest rate (a rate many people would love to get for their homes these days) and secure funding to carry out voter-approved projects to complete critical upgrades to our roads, parks and public facilities.

There were two bond rating reports that were issued. We heard a lot about the one in which we had a one step reduction in our bond rating, but there was another and it actually left our bond rating untouched and removed Anchorage from their watch list for further negative actions, which means there are third party analysts who are seeing that Anchorage is stabilizing and positioning itself financially going forward.

One thing I'd like to point out is that the S&P rating did state that the Municipality needs to get back to work on its Climate Action Plan if we are going to be ahead of the curve on negative actions related to climate impacts. That's not a progressive directive, that is the financial markets talking.

I'll end this part of the report by saying once again thank you to Alden Thern for sticking with us and getting us through this. On to 2023!

Transition Report

Other big news in recent weeks has been the Transition Report from former Mayor Bronson. The report shared some unsettling news about high staff vacancies and outdated equipment. Some of these problems were known to the Assembly and we have been working on solutions, but others had not previously been disclosed to us. Seeing many of these issues coming, the Assembly made 'supporting our Municipal workforce' and 'ensuring delivery of quality Municipal services' two of our top priorities in this year's workplan. We stand ready to help the new Administration to get our Municipality back on track so that people can once again come to expect and receive

high quality services from their local government. This Friday we'll be having a worksession where we'll be briefed from the new Administration on the outgoing Administration's transition report. I strongly suggest you tune in.

New Municipal Staff

Next, I'd like to thank the LaFrance Administration for bringing on new staff, many of whom are returning from past work with the municipality, as we see with Ms. Becky Windt Pearson, our Acting Municipal Manager who is standing for confirmation this evening. Many of us have worked with Ms. Windt Pearson in the past and have found her to be a strong advocate for the municipality's interests.

Additionally, we learned yesterday that Kim Waller will become our new Chief Equity Officer. She brings a wealth of experience in this field, most recently serving as the Senior Director of Diversity & Inclusion with The Foraker Group. She will have a lot of work in this new role, helping us get back to the work of digging into our equity practices and making sure this municipality is fair for everybody. I look forward to forging a new relationship between the Assembly and that office.

Youth Representative

Also, it is once again time to select the Assembly's Youth Representative. The selection responsibility falls to the Chair, but in following the process set out by my predecessor Mayor LaFrance, we will have a worksession this Friday so that the full Assembly can hear from five of the prospective candidates. We had 19 applicants this year, which was really amazing. A wealth of options and a terrible process to narrow. We had a lot of really talented young people apply and it was a very tough process to select the five to interview. I look forward to meeting them and hearing their ideas. The worksession will be this Friday from 11:50 to 12:50pm at City Hall in Suite 155.

Assembly Committee Restructuring

Finally, as I mentioned at the last meeting, we have restructured the Assembly Committees to help the Assembly operate more efficiently and help municipal departments and the community better engage with our work. The new committee list and committee memberships are listed on the Assembly's committee page at muni.org/assembly.

July 16, 2024

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome.

Welcome New Mayor and Staff

First, since this is the first Assembly meeting after the mayoral transition, I would like to welcome Mayor LaFrance and her staff to the dais. While there will be many late nights, tough decisions, and tensions in this room, I look forward to working collaboratively with all of you to solve our cities problems, to celebrate our successes, and find innovative ways to reach our shared goal of making Anchorage an even better place to live.

On the Assembly, we have a saying about “leaving it on the dais.” Sometimes things get heated up here and tense discussions cause frustration. However, once the meeting ends, we do our best to put all of that in the past, shake hands, ask about plans for the weekend, and leave knowing that we are all working our hardest to represent our constituents and do the best job for our city. I hope we can foster that relationship with you as well. We might disagree on some things, but there is always something we agree on that we can work on tomorrow.

I wish you the best of luck in your new roles and look forward to getting down to business.

Thank You to Kent Kohlhase

Mr. Kohlhase, recognizing that tonight is your last meeting as our Municipal Manager, I can't thank you enough for the service you have provided to our community. You took the helm during a very difficult and dark time for our community and you served with professionalism, honesty, integrity and a good sense of humor. You responded to calls and emails promptly, listened to the concerns of Assembly Members, helped us respond to our constituents' questions, and helped us develop solutions on our shared legislation. Sometimes it was heated, but we always managed to make it through to the next day to keep doing the work for the people, and that's a credit to your integrity. It's been a real pleasure working with you and I hope that we continue to get to work with you in some manner.

Assembly Committee Restructuring

This week we issued a new structuring of the Assembly Committees. Our hope is that this new structure helps the Assembly operate more efficiently and helps municipal departments and the community better engage with our work. Exact details will be shared when we launch a new committee webpage, which is coming very soon, but some of the big changes are as follows:

- We will have fewer committees will be “Committees-of-the-Whole” so that Members can serve on fewer committees and give more of their time to the ones they serve on
- The Health and Public Safety Committees will combine to become the Public Health and Safety Committee
- Infrastructure will be added to the Enterprise and Utilities Oversight Committee, and it will continue to be a committee of the whole

- The Ethics and Elections Committee will continue to oversee those functions, but will also add other municipal functions and become the Quality Municipal Services Committee

Additionally, we've done our best to match each municipal department with an Assembly Committee to ensure that departments have a clearly defined route to access the Assembly to bring ideas and concerns, and provide input on the issues affecting those departments. I will send a letter to the departments in the next few weeks outlining these changes and inviting them to participate in their corresponding committees.

Committee chairs, I encourage you to think creatively about how you want to interact with the departments, as well as the Boards and Commissions that fall under your committee's scope.

June 25, 2024

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome.

Mayoral Transition

To begin, I would like to address the Mayoral Transition. Mayor Bronson, tonight is your last meeting with us and I would like to thank you for everything you and your team have done to help prepare the incoming administration and ensure a smooth transition of power. You and I have certainly had our differences, but in the end, I think we agreed more than we disagreed, and I know that you love this city and care about its future and I want to wish you the best in your future endeavors.

For those of you who would like to attend the Inauguration of Mayor LaFrance, the ceremonial swearing-in and oath of office will occur next Monday, July 31 in Town Square at Noon. The Alaska Center for the Performing Arts will be a back-up location in case of rain.

Pride Parade

Speaking of upcoming events, the annual Pride Parade is taking place this Saturday, June 29 at 11:30am on the Park Strip. The Parade organizers invite us to join them "for a vibrant celebration of love, acceptance, and unity within the LGBTQ+ community. This parade is not just a display of solidarity; it's a testament to our resilience and diversity, reminding us of the progress we've made and the work that still lies ahead. As we gather together, let's reflect on our achievements, stand strong against any attempts to roll back our rights, and continue our journey towards a more inclusive and equitable society."

Boards and Commissions

As you may have noticed, the Assembly has been postponing Boards and Commission appointments over the past few months to allow the incoming Administration to have input and correct a few issues with boards and commissions. Tonight, there is an introduction of an ordinance to reinstate the Americans with Disabilities Act Advisory Committee with a public hearing on July 16. We will take this up as well as other Boards and Commissions issues at a worksession on July 12 from 1-2:30pm at City Hall, Suite 155.

June 11, 2024

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome.

80th Anniversary of D-DAY

Last week, the world commemorated the 80th anniversary of the D-Day landings along the Normandy coast during World War II. The historic D-day invasion was a turning point in World War II that eventually resulted in the liberation of Western Europe from the grip of Nazi Germany.

Unfortunately, today the term “Nazi” is often used casually as an insult to political rivals or people we don’t like, which minimizes the level of evil embodied in that movement. The Nazis used their laws and their military power to murder millions of innocent Jewish people, gay people, people with disabilities, and political opponents, and it took nearly the whole world coming together to stop it. Therefore, it’s important that we continue to recognize and revisit this history so that this terrible era is not watered down or forgotten over time.

As we reflect on the horrors of the past, it seems a fitting that tonight, we also recognize Juneteenth, Pride Month and World Refugee Day to honor and celebrate people who have suffered at the hands of wars, violence and discrimination.

Juneteenth Celebration

The annual Juneteenth Celebration, commemorating the end of slavery in the United States, will take place this weekend on the Park Strip and will be an opportunity to reflect and learn, and celebrate this moment in our history. On Monday, the Chamber of Commerce will host a special Juneteenth Make it Monday event, and then Wednesday, June 19th is the official holiday and all Municipal offices will be closed. We welcome our state colleagues this year in marking their first observance of the day as a state holiday. Once again, Anchorage is leading the way.

Pride Month

June is also Pride Month, and while it's a joyful time, it's also an important time to recognize the discrimination and hate toward LGBTQ+ individuals in the community, and transgender people in particular at this point in time. Unfortunately, our young people are often the target of this hatred. To the young people in our community who are questioning your identity or struggling with these issues, and feel alone, I want you to know that we see you and we value you. You are important members of our community and you have a place here. And to others in our community, I ask you to step up and support Anchorage's LGBTQ+ community during this challenging time and show that Anchorage is and will continue to be an accepting, collaborative and tolerant community. And be sure to attend the Annual Pride Parade on June 29th!

World Refugee Day

Also, on July 27 there will be an event at Grow North Farm to celebrate World Refugee Day. In 2023, Alaska welcomed more refugees than ever before, helping 452 individuals from such countries such as Afghanistan, Somalia, Ukraine and many more re-start their lives, many of whom have made Anchorage their home. I think this speaks well to our community. We are a welcoming place and we open our arms to people from around the world in their times of need.

My hope is that we can embody the spirit of openness and acceptance that takes place in our community every June and carry that into every month throughout the year.

Food for Thought

Next up, the Assembly is hosting a Food for Thought session this Friday, at 11:30am in Suite 155 at City Hall. I call it's "What's Good Anchorage?" Once a month, the Assembly invites community partners to the table for lunchtime sessions dedicated to amplifying the good work happening throughout the Municipality. This month we'll hear from organizations working to make Anchorage a more equitable and inclusive place.

Port of Alaska Modernization

I'd like to also echo the Mayor in celebrating the modernization of the Port. As you have probably heard by now, the Port of Alaska has begun the next stage of the modernization project – construction on the North Extension Stabilization. I want to thank Member Zaletel, Mayor Bronson, Mia Costello and Port staff for your work to overcome the last-minute hurdles and make sure this project stays on track and our grant funding remains secure. It is exciting to see the construction activity down at the Port.

Mayoral Transition

Finally, we are in the midst of a Mayoral Transition. At a special Assembly meeting on May 31st, the Assembly certified the Mayoral Runoff Election, and so tonight I would like to say congratulations and welcome to Mayor-Elect Suzanne LaFrance. We believe in the smooth transition of power in government and look forward to working with the new Mayor on the Assembly's priorities. For those of you who would like to give feedback to the Mayor-elect or apply for a job with the administration, I encourage you to visit the transition website at teamanchorage.com.

May 21, 2024

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome. As we prepare to enter into the Memorial Day weekend, I want give thanks and remember those who have died while in military service. And earlier this month, we recognized Peace Officers Memorial Day. I hope that while everyone enjoys their barbeques and hikes this weekend that you also take a moment to reflect on the sacrifices made by those who have given their lives in service to our country, and the family and friends they leave behind.

Elections

As you know, last week marked the end of the 2024 Municipal Election cycle. As the Elections Team works to process the final ballots and prepare the Mayoral Runoff Election for certification, I want to give kudos to the Elections Team for a an excellent job. It's a lot of work to pull off one election, let alone two within a few months, and they did so with professionalism, grace and precision.

I want to remind voters who received, or may receive, a cure letter in the mail, to cure their ballot verification discrepancies no later than May 29, at 4pm. If a ballot return envelope is missing a signature or if the signature can't be verified, within three business days election officials send a cure letter to the voter explaining the lack of a valid signature. Voters may cure their ballots by mailing back their cure letter, curing in person at the Election Canter, or by texting "Anchorage" to 28683 using TXT2Cure, a pro-voter initiative introduced during the 2024 Regular Municipal Election.

Next Wednesday, May 29, the Election Commission will meet and hold the Public Session of Canvass to adjudicate challenged ballots. Once that is complete, the certification of the Runoff Election will take place on Friday, May 31 and that will be the official conclusion of the 2024 elections.

Port of Alaska

Last Friday, the Enterprise and Utilities Oversight Committee held a very productive special meeting to review the next steps for the Don Young Port of Alaska Modernization Program. At this point, we appear to be on track for construction of Terminal One and we are now beginning the planning for Terminal Two.

It is really gratifying that after all of these years of problems with the Port Modernization, we are on the other side of those problems and have a path forward to success. I want to commend everyone who has been involved in this project, including Assembly Members, Port staff, multiple mayoral administrations, state legislators, multiple federal agencies, several consulting teams and the Port user groups. This community has come together and really worked hard to get this once-in-a-generation project on track.

We still have hard decisions ahead and it won't always be easy, but I'm confident we will continue to build on our track record of collaboration and transparency to see this project through to completion.

Assembly Branch Staff

On tonight's agenda, you'll see that the Assembly continues to prioritize building its own strong workforce to support the work of the Legislative Branch with the executive appointments of William Northrop, Election Administrator and Matthew Farina, Assembly Program and Budget Analyst. I'd like to welcome William and Matthew to our team and thank all of the Assembly staff for their work to keep the Assembly working effectively and efficiently.

Food for Thought

Finally, I'd like to announce the next Food for Thought session on Friday, June 14, where we'll hear from nonprofits working collaboratively to strengthen and increase access to services to underserved communities.

Food for Thought, or "what's good Anchorage?" is dedicated to amplifying the good work happening throughout the Municipality. The sessions offer Assembly members and the public a window into Anchorage's bright future and conversations to build positive, collaborative relationships. If you missed the previous sessions on Anchorage's Music Economy and efforts to house our most vulnerable neighbors in Anchorage, you can find the recordings on the Assembly's YouTube channel.

Southcentral Foundation Crisis Center

I also want to announce an exciting groundbreaking taking place this May 28th at 3pm for Southcentral Foundation's crisis stabilization center. This is much needed resource for our community and I encouraged you to learn more about the project.

May 7, 2024

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome.



Asian American & Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month

First, May is Asian American & Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month

AAPI represents those with roots and ancestry in the Pacific Islands, East Asia, South Asia and Southeast Asia, which contains at least 60 different ethnic groups with distinct cultures, histories, languages, and traditions. Roughly 47,000 people who trace their roots to Asia and the Pacific Islands have made Anchorage their home.

Alongside a resolution in recognition of the many contributions and achievements of Anchorage's Asian American and Pacific Islander residents, past, present, and future, the Assembly is proud to present digital artwork by local artist Rejoy Armamento, that you can find in the upcoming Assembly newsletter and a display in the Library lobby.

Quarter One Budget Revision

Next, I would like to give a huge thanks to Budget and Finance Committee Co-Chairs Meg Zaletel and Anna Brawley for leading us so thoughtfully through the first quarter budget revision, as well as the Legislative and Administration staff who helped them along the way.

It's unfortunate that the process around this budget has stirred up controversy, because it distracts from the fact that a lot of people worked very hard to develop a responsible budget operating in some difficult circumstances, without the completed 2022 Audit. They say that you can see a community's values in its budget and the recent budget revisions were very much in line with the Assembly's annual workplan and priorities. The budget revision was passed unanimously by the Assembly last week and clearly demonstrates that the Municipality values public safety, strengthening our municipal workforce, delivering quality municipal services, and improving quality of life in our community.

I hope that after tonight, we can move on from the politics surrounding this process and continue the work of keeping our city running.

Eklutna River Restoration

Last week the Project Owners Group submitted a Proposed Final Fish and Wildlife Program to the Governor over the objections and concerns of community members, the Native Village of Eklutna and the Anchorage Assembly. Although this process has been touted as open and transparent, it has been anything but. Instead, closed-door deals, carefully orchestrated public meetings and last-minute ballooning costs are what define the proposed plan.

For those of you wondering, what's next, now that the plan has been submitted to the Governor, the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service have 60 days to submit comments on the Proposed Final Fish and Wildlife Program. Once those comments are submitted, the Project Owners have 30 days to submit responses. After that, the Proposed Final Fish and Wildlife Program and accompanying

comments will be sent to the Alaska Energy Authority to compile a report and submit to Governor. The Governor has to October 2, 2024 to make a decision.

While the process is now in the hands of the Governor, in solidarity with our neighbors at the Native Village of Eklutna, we pledge to continue our pursuit to reclaim the Municipality's vote and develop a transparent solution that reflects the voices, needs and values of the residents of Anchorage.

MOA Elections

Now, to my final announcement about municipal elections for this election season. You should have all received your ballot in the mail for the Mayoral runoff election. Ballots must be returned by May 14, and as always, you'll have three options to return your ballot: by mail, into a dropbox, or to an Anchorage Vote Center. You can visit www.muni.org/elections to find more information and request a new ballot if you haven't received one.

April 23, 2024

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome.

Eklutna River Restoration

Last Friday, the Assembly held a worksession where we heard from the Native Village of Eklutna on their new alternative for the Draft Fish and Wildlife Program. The Native Village of Eklutna's alternative plan is a really elegant and intelligent solution and compromise that addresses the concerns of the electric utilities, protects our drinking water and maintains the energy source, while also developing a path forward to eventual restoration of the Eklutna River for all five species of salmon, as contemplated in the 1991 Agreement.

I know that for many following this issue, the legal matters have become overly complex, so I want to bring this back to the essence of the situation:

- For nearly a century, migration of Eklutna River salmon has been blocked by hydroelectric dams and impacted by water diversions that have badly degraded the condition of the river and uprooted the cultural traditions of the Dena'ina people of this area.
- We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to right this wrong and do something that benefits our entire community by restoring the Eklutna River.

- Two private electric companies are rushing to push their solution that has very little public support, that jeopardizes Anchorage's water rights for years to come, and puts Municipal taxpayers on the hook for an expensive solution that stops a mile short of full river restoration, and has no way for public officials to provide input on the solution.
- And instead of acting transparently and representing the people of Anchorage, Mayor Bronson is working with the electric companies behind closed doors on a deal that is not in the best interests of the people of the Municipality.
- I know it seems like the Assembly is getting into the weeds with legal maneuvers, but we are jumping through all of these hoops because it is SO important.
- In addition to advocating for the restoration of the Eklutna River, our community's water rights and property tax bills for years to come are on the line, and that is why we are fighting so hard to pause this project until we can all work together on a compromise that is transparent and beneficial for our community and our economy.

Anchorage Priorities in Juneau

Next, as the final days of the legislative session wind down, Assembly Members are busy working with the Administration behind the scenes to advocate for Anchorage's legislative requests. Specifically, the ask for \$4 million to fund operations of the 56th Avenue Shelter over the summer so we can avoid turning hundreds of people onto the streets after municipal funding runs out at the end of May.

We are also advocating for SB77, a bill that will give the Municipality more tools to incentive housing development and deal with blighted properties, and we are also advocating for full funding for the Community Assistance Program, one of the few remaining ways that the State funds local governments.

The Municipality received funding through the Senate's capital budget for some very important road, water, and park projects, so I am hopeful those remain in the budget and we can see ground breakings on those projects in the next year.

I encourage everyone to contact your state legislators to let them know the issues that are important to you for them to address with their remaining days in the 2024 legislative session.

MOA Elections

Next, municipal elections. With tonight's election certification, we will soon be in a runoff election for voters to elect our Mayor. Here are some items of note for the runoff election:

- Sign up for BallotTrax to get text or email updates on the status of your ballot: anchoragevotes.com. I love this feature—I get an update when my ballot is on its way to me, when it's been received at the MOA Election Center and when my signature has been verified, so I know my vote counts.

- Visit www.muni.org/elections to learn more about the MOA Election Center and find the resources you need, like links to register, track your ballot, tour the election center and more!
- Return your runoff ballot by May 14. As always, you'll have three options to return your ballot: by mail, into a dropbox, or to an Anchorage Vote Center.

Voting local hits close to home. This is where we can really make a difference for our businesses, our families, our neighborhoods, and our roads that we all rely upon.

Food for Thought

Finally, the Assembly has been engaging in a monthly session that we call Food for Thought, or what I like to call, What's Good Anchorage.

So often we focus on the issues that are challenging our community, but we don't spend enough time talking about the good things that are happening. And so, to that end, and on a positive note, we had a really good Food for Thought session last Friday on Housing Success Stories.

Our community focuses on the people we see living on the streets and in parks (and rightly so), but what we don't see are all of the people who are moving off the streets, or who never end up there in the first place because of important safety nets that our community has launched in the last few years to house our most vulnerable neighbors. Whether it's with the United Way, the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness, a small project at a community church, or the Alaska Housing Finance Corporation, people are working from the local to the state, and even the federal government to make sure we make a difference in our housing struggles.

We have some people and organizations doing incredible work and it's important to step back and celebrate that work. If you missed the session, you can find the recording on the Assembly's YouTube channel. I highly encourage you to watch this very uplifting session.

April 9, 2024

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome.

Congratulations to Chief Kerle

Chief Kerle, I'd like to thank you personally for your life of service to this Municipality. While I'm not so pleased about the abrupt departure, I know that Anchorage is a better community because of your service. We've seen a lot of very challenging times together, and you've seen many more than I've been around. And so, with that, I have much gratitude for your service.

And I do welcome the new appointee for Chief of Police, Captain Bianca Cross. As many know, Chief of Police is a tough job and it takes incredible fortitude to step into the role. I'm looking forward to reviewing the qualifications and experience of Ms. Cross and having some robust conversations about her positions and perspectives on the helm of our police force moving forward. It's a \$130M organization, it takes a lot of experience to lead, and I look forward to learning more about that experience.

Youth Representatives

Tonight is the last meeting for our youth representative, Jesse Tyrell and our alternate representative Jake Matthews. They have both served honorably over the past year and I thank them for their service. The job of youth representative is a lot of responsibility and requires long hours, including late into the night on school nights. Both Jesse and Jake put in a lot of hard work and did a great job representing the youth of Anchorage in our policy discussions at Assembly meetings, and they helped members and our community know more about issues and events of importance to our young people. We will all miss working with you but hope to see you in the future and we wish you the best in your future endeavors.

Recruitment is open for a youth representative for the 2024-25 school year and the position now includes a small stipend. You can visit the Youth Rep page on the Assembly website or go directly to ancgov.info/youthvoice for more information or to apply. The deadline for applications is April 30th.

Assembly Annual Progress Report

Yesterday, I had the opportunity to share the Assembly's Annual Progress Report at the Anchorage Chamber Make it Monday forum. The Assembly, with thanks to the Administration and our partners, saw progress in all of our 2023 priorities, including advancement of the Port of Alaska modernization, passage of several initiatives to spur housing development, expansion of the Fire Department Mobile Crisis Team and Police Department Mobile Intervention Team, passage of the "Open Checkbook" to create an online dashboard of municipal spending, and nearly one hundred percent recovery from FEMA of the funds we spent on the pandemic.

Our priorities in 2024 include continuing our work on Housing Action and the Port Modernization, as well as strengthening the municipal workforce, ensuring delivery of quality municipal services, and advancing public health, safety, and quality of life for all residents in our community.

You can learn more about the Assembly's 2024 priorities at muni.org/assembly.

State Legislative Request for Shelter

Over the past few months, the Mayor and Assembly have been working very hard to secure a targeted funding request to the State Legislature for \$4M to keep our shelter operating year-round. Our ask is that the State recognizes that homelessness is a statewide issue whose costs are disproportionately felt by Anchorage taxpayers and

residents. Without state funding, the Municipality would be forced to close the 56th Avenue shelter on May 31st because we do not have the resources to operate this facility year-round without making other cuts.

I want to thank Representative Josephson for bringing forward an amendment in the Finance Committee to add this funding to the budget, and to Representatives Coulombe, Galvin, Hannan, Ortiz and Edgmon for voting in favor of the amendment. We are thankful to the House Finance Committee for supporting this important ask that the State share the cost of a statewide problem. We are hopeful it will remain in the budget, but we know it has a long way to go – passage by the House, passage by the Senate, inclusion in the final FY25 budget, and then surviving any potential veto action by the Governor.

Also, a huge thanks to Assembly Member Anna Brawley, Chair of the Legislative Committee, who has been spearheading our efforts in Juneau.

MOA Elections

Finally, I want to highlight the exemplary work of the MOA Elections Team.

Our nonpartisan election officials are committed to making Anchorage the best place to vote-at-home, and they are doing a really good job. More than 70,000 residents returned their mailed ballot package by Election Day last week, making up over 95% of the ballots received at the MOA Election Center. Those remaining few came from the three Anchorage Vote Centers that open for the week before Election Day.

It takes a lot of hard work by a dedicated team of professionals to pull off secure, accessible elections—and they're about to do it all over again. Our Municipal Charter requires that our mayor be elected by at least 45% of the vote, plus one. If the election is certified by the Assembly on April 23rd, and I expect that it will, the elections team will kick off a runoff election for voters to elect our Mayor. Here's what to expect in a runoff election:

- Register to vote or update your registration by April 14. Even if you weren't registered for the Regular Election, you can register for the runoff.
- Sign up for BallotTrax to get text or email updates on the status of your ballot: anchoragevotes.com. I love this feature—I get an update when my ballot is on its way to me, when it's been received at the MOA Election Center and when my signature has been verified, so I know my vote counts.
- Visit www.muni.org/elections to learn more about the MOA Election Center and find the resources you need, like links to register, track your ballot, tour the election center and more!
- Return your runoff ballot by May 14. As always, you'll have three options to return your ballot: by mail, into a dropbox, or to an Anchorage Vote Center.

Voting local hits close to home. This is where we can really make a difference. Your local businesses, your families, your neighborhoods, your roads all rely on your voice in this election.

March 19, 2024

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome. Happy spring equinox! I hope everyone is enjoying and making good use of the growing daylight.

Washington D.C. Visit

Last week, Member Brawley and I visited Washington, D.C. to attend the National League of Cities annual conference and meet with our Congressional Delegation to discuss Anchorage priorities, namely the HUD funding formula for providing homelessness resources. Member Brawley and I were joined by the Congressional Delegation in a meeting with HUD leadership to continue to press our case that Anchorage and Alaska are getting left behind by HUD. We are continuing to make progress on this and keep the pressure on HUD to respond to our needs. I thank Senators Sullivan and Murkowski, and Representative Peltola for their leadership on this issue.

Alcohol Tax Strategic Plan

Now that we are several years into the new alcohol tax, the Assembly is conducting a strategic plan to help us better identify how to prioritize and fund work through the tax. A team has been going to community meetings and other gatherings to collect input from community members and they have a booth in the lobby tonight. I encourage you to visit the booth to learn more about the work and provide your input.

Food for Thought and We'll Be Back Soon

On Friday, we welcomed community partners – the Anchorage Folk Festival and Sundown Music Festival – for the first in our lunchtime worksession series “Food for Thought,” focused on the good things happening in our community, so that we in more creative conversations about our role as a legislative body and as a municipality in fostering what makes Anchorage vibrant.

Following the beat of that drum, I'm proud to announce that tonight, folks tuning into our meeting online and on TV will enjoy the launch of “We'll Be Back Soon,” a program featuring local music on our meeting broadcast when we break for intermission. The program is amplifying the work of 12 local musicians through 20 songs that reflect the broad range of tone, tenor and voice in our city. From laughter and love to heartbreak and grief, our community has been through a lot in the last few years. Music is a way to share in those feelings and find common ground. I hope you enjoy this new program.

Elections

And now, my final reminder about the upcoming election as today is the last meeting before the election. All ballots have now been mailed, so if you haven't received your ballot yet, you can call 907-243-VOTE or 8683 to request a new ballot. The last day to vote is Tuesday, April 2 at 8pm at any of the multiple drop boxes, accessible voting centers or through the mail, as long as it is stamped before 8pm. The mayor, several school board seats, service area board of supervisor seats and the open District 2 Chugiak-Eagle River Assembly seat will be on the ballot, as well as a proposed Charter amendment and several bond propositions.

I encourage you to sign up for Ballot Tracks, which is an amazing tool where you can sign up for text notifications of when your ballot leaves the mail house, when it is delivered to your home and when it arrives back at the Election Center. You can sign up at AnchorageVotes.com.

March 5, 2024

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome.

First, I want to say Godspeed to the Municipal Attorney who is flying to Washington, D.C. now to stand in for our illustrious former attorney Bob Owens in front of the Court of Claims in the Appeals Court on the question of the appeal by the federal government on the \$365M judgment from the Court of Claims on behalf of the Municipality. For those of you following the Port story, a very significant event happens this Friday in Washington D.C. and that is that the Appellate Court hears the appeal by the federal government against our victory in the Port settlement, which we hope they will sustain.

Food for Thought

I'm pleased to announce that the Assembly is launching "Food for Thought," a series of worksessions over the Friday lunch hour to take a step back from the timely business at hand and welcome community partners to our table to discuss the good things happening in our community. Often our focus is on things that are going wrong, and things that aren't working right, so I want to take some time to appreciate the many things that are going right.

The first session will be on March 15 at 11:30am and will focus on Anchorage's music economy. We'll hear from community partners organizing festivals and our opportunity to amplify local music.

Future sessions will include innovative new programs to house people who've long struggled with homelessness, and a presentation from a delegation who recently visited Oulu, Finland to learn about snow removal and non-motorized transportation ideas.

State Legislature

Next, onto Juneau and the State Legislature. Tonight, you'll see a number of resolutions of support on the agenda for bills in the state legislature. Issues like housing affordability, child care, and supporting families so that parents can remain in the workforce are critical to the future of Anchorage, and issues that the Municipality has done our best to address.

However, some issues are too big for local solutions and we need the state to step up and do their part to ensure the vitality of our economy, schools, workplaces and local communities. I want to thank our colleagues in Juneau, especially the Anchorage Delegation, for listening to the Municipality's concerns and working to find statewide solutions to some of our toughest problems.

Elections

Finally, my ongoing reminder about the upcoming election. Ballots will be mailed to voters on March 12, and the last day of voting is Tuesday, April 2 at 8pm at any of the multiple drop boxes, accessible voting centers or through the mail, as long as it is stamped before 8pm. The mayor, several school board seats, service area board of supervisor seats and the open District 2 Chugiak-Eagle River Assembly seat will be on the ballot, as well as a proposed Charter amendment and several bond propositions.

I encourage you to sign up for Ballot Tracks, which is an amazing tool where you can sign up for text notifications of when your ballot leaves the mail house, when it is delivered to your home and when it arrives back at the Election Center. You can sign up at [AnchorageVotes.com](https://www.AnchorageVotes.com).

February 27, 2024

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everyone and welcome.

Anchorage Priorities for the State Legislature

Last week, we had a delegation of Assembly Members and staff fly down to Juneau to take Anchorage's 2024 Legislative Program to the Legislature. I want to thank Members Brawley, Rivera, Johnson and Sulte, and staff member Brandi Heasley, for adding to your usual duties to represent the case for Anchorage to the state legislature.

The delegation pushed for the Municipality's top three priorities, which are the Port Modernization, increasing housing supply and addressing homelessness, and supporting mental and behavioral health needs. You can learn more about the top priorities, as well as other municipal and district priorities on the Assembly's website

from the “State Support” button at www.muni.org/assembly. I look forward to hearing more as the legislative session continues.

Eklutna River Restoration

The Eklutna Dam project has been in the news a lot lately, so I won't belabor the point, but I wanted to reiterate the Assembly's call to slow the process for at least two years to have a more transparent deliberation on the matter. There are serious unaddressed concerns about public use of funds, budget assumptions, effects on water supply, the engagement of important stakeholder like the Native Village of Eklutna, as well as the actual effectiveness of the plan in meeting the terms of the 1991 agreement.

As the Assembly said in a resolution we passed on February 2, the issues at play are too significant to our community to rush to judgment or exclude key stakeholders. The residents of the Municipality deserve a measured and comprehensive approach guided by respectful coordination to reach a solution that enjoys the broadest consensus possible among the affected parties.

Elections

Finally, I want to issue my regular reminder that the Municipality will hold a vote at home election this March and April. The last day to register or update your registration is this Sunday, March 3rd. On February 26th, Municipal Elections mailed out 909 ballot packages to military & overseas voters and on March 12, 2024, Municipal Elections will send out 206,727 ballot packages to all Anchorage Voters, including voters who are here in Anchorage and voters who are out-of-state for the election. The last day of voting is Tuesday, April 2. The mayor, several school board seats, service area board of supervisor seats and the open District 2 Chugiak-Eagle River Assembly seat will be on the ballot, as well as a proposed Charter amendment and several bond propositions.

Anchorage also utilizes an innovative tool called Ballot Tracks, which is an amazing tool where you can sign up for text notifications of when your ballot leaves the mail house, when it is delivered to your home and when it arrives back at the Election Center. You can sign up at AnchorageVotes.com.

February 13, 2024

Assembly Member Felix Rivera Chaired the 2/13 meeting and offered the following remarks:

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everybody and welcome.

Before we begin this evening, I want to take a moment to recognize the passing of a dear friend to the Municipality, Bob Owens. Mr. Owens has been with the Municipal

Attorney's Office for over eighteen years and played a critical role in many important municipal issues over those years. He always offered wise and thoughtful legal advice and was a true public servant to the people of Anchorage.

His passing has been quite a shock. I want to offer my condolences to his wife Suzanne, his family and friends, and the staff in the Municipal Attorney's Office who have lost a valuable colleague. We will do a longer recognition in the future when his family can be here, but for tonight, we've placed flowers on the dais in his memory.

Elections

Next, I want to issue a reminder that the Municipality will hold a vote at home election this March and April. The last day to register is March 3, ballot packages will be mailed to qualified voters on March 12 and the last day of voting is Tuesday, April 2. The mayor, several school board seats, service area board of supervisor seats and the open District 2 Chugiak-Eagle River Assembly seat will be on the ballot, as well as a proposed Charter amendment and several bond propositions.

Online Checkbook

An exciting new development this week was the launch of the Online Checkbook, an online record of municipal transactions. The Online Checkbook will update monthly, posting recent transactions, unaudited revenue and procured contracts with historic information dated back to 2018. This is a major milestone in the Assembly's effort to make our local government more transparent and accessible to the public.

I congratulate my colleague Chair Constant for seeing one of his top goal's to fruition and also thank Members Cross and Volland for your sponsorship of the legislation that created it. Finally, I want to recognize and thank the team at IT and Finance, especially Sandra Fern, Brendan Babb and Heather Holland, and the Assembly implementation team, Chair Constant, Member Brawley and former Budget Analyst Desirea Camacho, for their incredible hard work to pull this off in under a year.

Tonight's Meeting

To my fellow members, with several members absent from the meeting tonight, I ask that if there are any controversial or lengthy items on the agenda, we consider postponing to March so we can hold a worksession on the topic and have all of the members present to participate in debate and voting. Two items tonight fit this theme, items 14.B. AO 2024-14 (regarding right turns on red) and 14.F. AO 2023-94 (regarding Title 17 code on Animals) will be pushed to meetings in March, so if you are here for those items, the public hearings will not be heard tonight. At the request of the Mayor, I want to give the Clerk directions to add him as a sponsor to items 10.A.1. and 10.A.4, two honorary resolutions on the agenda tonight.

January 23, 2024

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everybody and welcome.

Elections

As you've hopefully heard by now, the Municipality of Anchorage will hold a vote at home election this March and April. I want to remind everyone of some important dates – candidate filings for Mayor, Assembly, School Board and Service Area Board of Supervisors close this Friday, January 26 at 5 pm. Candidates can register at the Clerk's Office between 9am- 3pm or at the Election Center between 8am and 5pm. The last day to register is March 3, ballot packages will be mailed to qualified voters on March 12 and the last day of voting is Tuesday, April 2.

The mayor, several school board seats, service area board of supervisor seats and the open District 2 Chugiak-Eagle River Assembly seat will be on the ballot, as well as a proposed Charter amendment and several bond propositions. The Assembly approved several items last week to put on the ballot and will review the remaining few items this evening.

As I've said before, local elections have a direct impact on our daily lives, including the efficiency of our snow plowing, the health of our parks, and the strength of our public safety, so I encourage everyone to follow the issues closely and vote by 8pm April 2nd.

Anchorage Requests to Legislature

The legislature convened in Juneau last week and with that, the Municipality submitted a legislative program with our 2024 requests to the Legislature. Late last year, the Anchorage Assembly worked alongside the Administration to develop shared legislative priorities, including focused capital asks, statutory recommendations and district-specific priorities.

The Municipality's top three priorities this session are the Port of Alaska Modernization Program, increasing housing supply and addressing homelessness, and supporting mental and behavioral health needs. You can learn more about the top priorities, as well as other municipal and district priorities on the [Assembly's website](#).

Property Valuation Notices

Next, it's that time of year when residents receive green valuation slips in the mail, detailing the Municipality's assessment of residents' property values. Property valuation is a public process, and property owners should be aware of their options to participate.

If a property owner believes that their property valuation was calculated in error, we invite their engagement in the appeal process. The deadline to appeal is February 12. If a property owner qualifies for an exemption that is not reflected in the property valuation, the property owner has until March 15 to file for the exemption.

You can learn more and check your property valuations online at www.property.muni.org.

January 9, 2024

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everybody and welcome. This is the first regular Assembly meeting of 2024. I hope everyone enjoyed the break and I'm glad you can be here tonight. We're starting the new year off with a bang and have a really packed agenda tonight. There are lots of people here for different agenda items, so we'll do our best to keep on track and move efficiently through all of the items we have to get done tonight.

Year in Review

I hope you saw last week's Assembly newsletter that contained a recap of our 2023 accomplishments. The Assembly, with thanks to the Administration and all of our partners saw progress in all of our 2023 priorities, including advancement of the Port of Alaska modernization, passage of several initiatives to spur housing development, expansion of the Fire Department Mobile Crisis Team and Police Department Mobile Intervention Team, passage of the "Open Checkbook" to create an online dashboard of municipal spending, and nearly one hundred percent recovery from FEMA of the funds we spent on the pandemic.

At our Rules Committee meeting this week, the Assembly will develop our work plan for 2024 and we'll release that to the public by next month so you can follow along with our work over the next year.

Elections

Next, with the beginning of a new year comes the beginning of a new election cycle. The Municipality of Anchorage will hold a vote at home election this March and April and the Mayor, several school board seats, and the open District 2 Chugiak-Eagle River Assembly seat will be on the ballot, as well as a proposed Charter amendment and several bond propositions.

Candidate filing opens this Friday, January 12 at 8:00 a.m. and closes on Friday, January 26 at 5:00 p.m. The Assembly will be approving the bond propositions over the next two meetings and the last day of voting is Tuesday, April 2. Local elections have a direct impact on our daily lives, including the efficiency of our snow plowing, the health of our parks, and the strength of our public safety, so I encourage everyone to follow the issues closely and vote by this April 2nd.

Chair Constant Report Archive: April 25- Dec 19, 2023

December 19, 2023

[View the recording of the remarks.](#)

Good evening everybody and welcome. This is the last regular Assembly meeting of 2023, so I would like to wish everyone happy holidays and a happy new year. I hope everyone has a restful and joyous break over the next few weeks.

It's a really packed agenda tonight and there are lots of people here for different agenda items, so we'll do our best to keep on track and move efficiently through all of the items we have to get done tonight.

On that note, I want to point out that the Assembly's Code of Conduct is posted on the front doors and throughout the room. This is a business meeting and we are here to do the work of the city. I ask for all of your help in creating a climate of respect in the Chambers. We surely don't agree on all of the issues, but in the end, we are all neighbors and working to make our community a better place.

Year in Review

Last week, the Assembly conducted our annual review and began setting our workplan for the upcoming year. As we reflect on the past year, I want to thank all of the Members for your incredibly hard work. It is clear that each and every one of you care deeply about your community and are committed to making it a better place.

But we can't do this work alone. I also want to extend thanks to the staff in the administration, our community partners, and the public for supporting the work of the Assembly and helping us craft legislation, fund important city services, and hold our local government to account.

Finally, I want to thank the families of Assembly Members and the Mayor's team. You didn't sign up for public service, and yet you make great sacrifices of time and effort to support your loved ones in their work to represent our community.

Election Code Update and Election Observer Handbook Update

An important item of note tonight is the annual update to our election code in Title 28 and the election observer's handbook. This is something that happens every year and is an important step in the process to make Anchorage the best Vote at Home jurisdiction in the United States. We strive to review each election, take feedback from the public, and hear from experts so we can strengthen our elections more each year. This year it took on an especially important function because we had to run through a process to follow through on the Ombudsman's report of tampering in the 2023 election. This step concludes that process in preparation for the 2024 election

Eklutna River

A few weeks ago, we held a joint worksession with the Native Village of Eklutna, the first ever in the history of our government-to-government relations. I thank the Native Village of Eklutna and Eklutna, Inc. for their informative and compelling presentations on why full restoration of the Eklutna River is such an important goal. The proposal that is currently before us from the owner's group leaves just a mile stretch between the lake and river unconnected. That's not river restoration. We can't just stop short of the last mile. Our meeting with the owner's group was productive and I am hopeful that we can get to a place of agreement in the near future and bridge that gap.

December 5, 2023

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everybody and welcome. I'm going to give my report and provide some time for a member of the delegation here from Houston, Texas to briefly speak to the community through the Chair's report.

Budget Vetoes

Later tonight, we'll take up budget vetoes on the agenda. There's been lots of back and forth about why and what, and I won't dig into the details right now, but suffice to say that will probably happen towards the middle of our meeting, depending on how efficiently we make our way through the consent agenda. It will either be just before or just after the dinner break.

Snow Removal

I'm glad to report that snow removal has become much more effective in the last week or two. The roads are getting cleared, there's still some ice that remains. The teams have been out full time and working really hard. I know that the conditions of our roads and snow removal continues to be of concern for a lot of people, I want to let folks know tomorrow, December 6th, from 12:40 p.m. to 2:10 pm in Room 155 at City Hall or streaming online, the Assembly's Enterprise and Utilities Committee will be holding a special meeting to debrief on the current status of snow removal. Mr. Mayor, I repeat my earlier offer that we stand by to help fund services as needed. I know there's an item on the agenda later tonight we'll be having a discussion about.

Eklutna River Restoration

Another big meeting happening this week is a joint work session between the Assembly and the Native Village of Eklutna Tribal Council this Thursday from 2 to 4 pm at City Hall. For many years, the Native Village of Eklutna and its partners have been working to restore the river.

We have an incredible opportunity to bring back a river fully to life that will be a true gem of our community. Not only is full restoration of the river the right thing to do to respect the vision of the people who've stewarded this land long before the municipality, and the dams that we put up, existed but it's also a huge economic potential with recreation and tourism opportunities in the area. Just imagine what it will be like when we've returned the fish to that stream and we have one of the most robust fisheries in the upper Cook Inlet right in our backyard.

Unfortunately, the owners group that controls the project doesn't quite share that vision and is pushing forward with a plan that restores about 11 of 12 miles of the river, but they don't go the last mile. I'm just hopeful that this work session will bring the parties closer together and make clear to the owners group how beneficial full restoration will be for our community. We're committed to the last mile.

HUD Funding for Housing and Homelessness

I had the fortune last week to be traveling to Washington DC to have conversation with our Congressional delegation about ongoing concerns about what I'm calling a funding crisis of homelessness services in our community. I had the unique opportunity to meet jointly with all of the staff of the whole delegation and we're getting on a single page

together, collectively, about the direction we're going to push. HUD has announced to us, after our resolution, after our letter, and Senator Sullivan has been working really hard to communicate the importance of this question to HUD leadership, that they have committed to publishing a new policy. It will require a public notice period nationally, so once we see the policy, and if we agree, we'll be working a statewide campaign to get Alaskans to communicate to HUD about why it's important that the services in Alaska be funded equitably with the rest of the country.

Visit from Houston Coalition for the Homeless

That said, this week our community is very fortunate to have a visit from the Houston Coalition for Homelessness. If you've been paying attention at all to the conversation in Anchorage, you've heard Houston, Texas has held up as a leading light in the country for developing a model that is proven to work, that gets people off the streets, based on permanent supportive housing with supports.

As you may have heard in recent years, Houston is a leader in solutions and, in fact, in the last two decades, they've lowered their homeless population by 64 percent, including a 17 percent reduction in 2022 alone. It has outperformed its neighbors in Texas and most of the country. They've done this through the work of the Coalition for Homeless coordinating 100 service providers to pull all in the same direction.

The exciting news is that Anchorage is following the same blueprint and has already laid much of the groundwork to see similar success. I look forward to learning more from Houston and I'm grateful for their visit. So now I would like to invite Mr. Marc Eichenbaum who is a special assistant to the Mayor of Houston to give us just a few minutes conversation with the Assembly and the broader community. So, welcome Mr. Eichenbaum.

*[Mr. Eichenbaum, City of Houston, Mayor's Office for Homelessness
Initiatives: www.houstontx.gov/homeless/]*

This week, our community is very lucky to have a visit from the Houston Coalition for the Homeless. As you may have heard, in recent years, Houston, Texas has become a leader in homelessness solutions. In just two decades, Houston lowered its homeless population by sixty-four percent, including a seventeen percent reduction in 2022. It has outperformed its neighbors in Texas and most of the country. They've done this through

the work of the Houston Coalition for the Homeless coordinating one hundred service providers to all pull in the same direction.

If you'd like to learn more, the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness is hosting a community conversation with the Houston visitors tomorrow from 6-7:30pm at the Marston Theatre next door. Space is limited, so you'll need to RSVP through the Coalition's website.

November 21, 2023

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everybody and welcome.

Snow Removal

First, I want to address the issue that's on everybody's mind, the topic of conversation in every coffee shop, and every part of this town. Speaking on behalf of Vice Chair Zaletel and myself, and I imagine the entire Assembly, we share concerns over the effectiveness of how the plows out went over the last couple of weeks, and that the core public services were difficult to deliver, including public transit, and our schools, which were closed. The people of Anchorage deserve better from us as a government.

Snow removal has been a major concern for the Assembly for the past few years. We've made budget amendments to give the Administration more funding to work with, we've held worksessions to get to the bottom of staffing and logistics issues, and we offer support in any way needed. And to that end, we're going to continue to do so.

Snow removal and road safety will continue to be top-of-mind as the Assembly considers the 2024 budget and considers what is needed to bolster snow removal in the future. Mayor Bronson, I hope you will support these efforts.

I want to stress that this is not, in any way, a reflection on the great municipal staff who have been putting in 18- and 20-hour days to get through all the neighborhoods as many times as needed. And I can tell you, firsthand, that when I receive a call from constituents, and they have concerns about a specific property, especially when people

are struggling with mobility issues, that our Municipal workers get out there within a day. We're trying to support you and get you the resources you need to do your jobs.

Warning on Roof Snow Loads

Next, I would say that, on that topic, the Building Official yesterday issued a warning about roof snow loads. Last year we had a series of roof collapses because of heavy snow loads. I want to make sure anybody who has one of these flat roof truss structures on one of their buildings, whether it's residential or commercial, make sure you're out there taking the snow off of it because the heavy wet snow that we've had is dangerous. This warning applies mostly to commercial buildings constructed prior to 1990, carports, and roofs subject to ice downing. But I encourage everybody to review the guidance. You'll find it on www.muni.org the [Development Services](#) website, to make sure that you're able to take care of the safety of the facilities, and the buildings that you live and work in.

ASD Closures

ASD closures were a real challenge this week. I want to stand in solidarity with the school district, their decision to keep the schools closed when they couldn't get students safely to school. I had the misfortune to witness a couple of school buses stuck, high-bermed on snow, and that is not a good condition. We have to do better. It's difficult on our kids and our communities. It's difficult on our parents. It's bad for the economy. We've heard too many stories of pedestrians who were forced to walk in the middle of streets and cars getting damaged from driving on our roads. Forcing kids into dangerous situations. It's easy to second guess the school district's decisions, but they made a decision that prioritized safety and I want them to know, I hear you and I support you.

Dwindling State Funding

My final words on the topic of snow removal, it's important that we get what we pay for. For years, the state budget has not kept pace with our needs as a community, and we're seeing clear results in the underspending that's coming into our community. In addition to not keeping up with competitive wages, the state has let their equipment go into decline and they simply are not equipped to meet the very basic needs, public safety responsibilities, to keep our roads clear and safe.

This further shifts the burden to the municipality and property taxpayers. I hope that what we've seen in the past few weeks empowers our state legislators to take action

when they meet in a few months to ensure that the state budget is sufficient to provide the resources necessary to ensure that the state roads and the municipality of Anchorage are cleared by the state.

The Municipality of Anchorage took resources off its neighborhood streets to clear the state's roads. While it's a good demonstration of working collaboratively with the state, the state is the deep pockets and, at this point, we need the state to do their job so that we can do ours.

Budget

Moving on to the Budget, tonight is the final public hearing and the night we take action on the 2024 municipal budget. I thank those of you who are here to testify – we'll hold that public hearing around 7pm and will likely vote on the budget at the conclusion of that hearing. It's been said many times, but the budget is a reflection of our city's values. If you want to see your roads plowed effectively and on time, then a balanced and realistic budget should be of concern to you. To follow along with the budget process and learn more, go to www.muni.org/assembly and click on the Budget and Taxes button at the top of the page. We'll be posting the documents that we review tonight on that page.

Conclusion

Finally, I would take a moment of privilege to speak to the people of the city of Wrangell, who've lost members of their community in a landslide. Alaska is, they say, the biggest small town in America. It's a big state, but we're all connected. Our thoughts are with you this week.

And also, happy Thanksgiving to everybody, however you celebrate or mark it.

November 7, 2023

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everybody and welcome.

Housing Action Week

Last week was Housing Action Week, a week-long initiative to get our community talking about housing, because our housing shortage crisis is an everyone problem. The

cynics in the community say “oh, one more convening to talk about housing, where's the action?” Well, I think that this was an action-oriented event. It was a week-long initiative to get our community talking about housing because the housing shortage crisis is really an everyone problem.

After a full week of programs by community organizations, including the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce, ACLU of Alaska, Alaska State Home Builders Association and NeighborWorks Alaska, the Assembly hosted the Community Housing Action Summit on Friday.

We welcomed neighbors, industry experts, municipal staff and special guest Charles Marohn for presentations on local market data, national best practices, and the Assembly's draft Housing Strategic Plan. The event was livestreamed on YouTube, and event materials, including the Draft Housing Strategic Plan, can be found at: www.AnchorageHousingAction.org.

During ACDA's presentation at the Housing Action Summit, Executive Director Mike Robbins reviewed a new report on incentives for market-rate attainable housing, which reviewed four case studies of western mountain cities that measurably resolved their housing shortage problems. The message is clear: the solution to our housing crisis isn't one big change, but a multitude of small changes in both policies and processes.

That means we're in it for the long haul. We've got lots of work ahead, and we can start by doing small things now. Start by reading the draft housing strategic plan, and provide comments to the Anchorage Assembly via email by Dec. 4.

I want to extend a sincere thank you to Members Felix Rivera and Anna Brawley for hosting the Friday Summit. To everyone who participated in Housing Action Week events, and to community partners who joined in the conversation, thank you. Let's keep talking—visit www.AnchorageHousingAction.org for more.

Funding for Housing

I'm glad to report that I'm going to be in D.C. at the end of the month and have been fortunate enough to schedule a joint meeting with members of our congressional delegation to continue the conversation about HUD funding and how we can address the inequity of funding, because in a lot of ways, the challenges we face are challenges of limited and unfair funding in addressing the issues relating to homelessness. The

local government cannot afford to be the only funder of the solutions we need in this town, because we are a regional and a national center for community in America and we need to have outside support.

Emergency Cold Weather Shelter Plan

I want to respond to a statement made to the media by the mayor recently that demonstrates, I think, one of the core challenges that we faced over the last, some, 20 months. He said, "I don't come up with these plans, I just set the policy." I just set the policy. I want the community to understand that this legislative body, the Assembly is actually the policy making body of the municipality, we set the policy, and the administration's job is to implement the policy. And so, we appear to have been struggling over who it is that sets the policy for the city, and I think at some point we will come together and be able to implement a plan that is effective. When everybody recognizes that, we as a community, have a policy of distributed resources of homeless services across the community in a way that does not create in one part of town a single location, that the neighbors in that part of town have to bear the burden for everyone else from across the city and the state.

The Assembly is happy to continue trying to work with the administration, and another thing that was said in the media was that the Assembly said to wait on implementing the plan. The Assembly never said wait on implementing the plan. What the Assembly said was let's wait to pass judgment on the effectiveness of the plan until it's been implemented so that we can course correct and fulfill the needs that are demonstrated that aren't fulfilled as we implement the plan. So it is, I believe, the hope of the Assembly that the administration, through the Health Department, will continue working hard to get all of those shelter beds full, to help us cross reference that list of individuals who are in need of shelter, and then set up the shelter services that we need to meet the need and continue the most important work, which is moving people from the streets and shelters into housing.

This fall, the Health Department presented a plan for emergency shelter that includes non-congregate shelter and congregate shelter at the 56th Avenue facility. The Assembly has appropriated the funds to make that possible, and if the plan is falling short and needs additional elements, whether that includes warming locations, or additional locations, we need to hear from the administration on their plan to implement the policy of the Assembly in this municipality. We will find the funds to make it possible.

Throughout the process, we've been doing our best to work with the administration, and I want to thank, again, the Health Department for their hard work and standing up the system, because it's barely two to three weeks old and we still have, what, 60 to 90 people in a shelter, the 56th Avenue shelter, that has capacity for up to 150. So, we're not up to speed there yet. But what we heard from the Mayor is that people don't want to be in congregate shelter. And so, we have to carefully consider how we set up shelters so that people will actually use it, because, for the last 25 years, we have seen people would rather camp out than be in a big shelter setting.

With that said, I'm really glad for the work that's happened. We are starting to move people. I look forward to when we get to full at that shelter and start to work on the process of opening, whatever the next steps are, as I have committed, I'll work with this Assembly to find the funds to operate the services that need to be in place to make sure that when people are struggling and suffering outside, they have a place to come in and get warm and be safe and engage on the path to housed.

Budget

Moving on to the Budget, tonight is the second and final public hearing for the 2024 municipal budget and I thank those of you who are here tonight to testify. We'll hold that public hearing around 8pm tonight. There will be a worksession this Thursday, November 9th to discuss potential budget amendments by members, and the Assembly will take up deliberations and likely vote on the budget at the November 21st Assembly meeting. You can learn more about the process at www.muni.org/assembly.

Veteran's Day

This week is Veteran's Day and we have a recognition for that later on the agenda, but in the meantime I want to thank all of the Veterans in our community for your service.

Vic Fischer Memorial

We acknowledge the passing of Vic Fischer at last week's meeting and I wanted to follow up and let people know that his friends and family are holding a memorial on Sunday November 12th at 4pm at the Hotel Captain Cook.

October 24, 2023

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everybody and welcome. This weekend wrapped up the Alaska Federations of Natives annual convention and the Elders and Youth conference. It's the largest gathering in the country of Alaska Native and Native American people, and if you didn't have an opportunity to visit, I'm sorry for you because it was truly one of the most amazing events you can get to in Alaska. In addition to bringing a lot of energy and excitement to our downtown, the events also infuse millions of dollars into our Anchorage economy. I want to reiterate my thanks to the Alaska Federation of Natives for providing Anchorage with this amazing opportunity to host again.

In Memoriam

Next, a significant event in Alaska and American history occurred. Before I begin, I want to take a moment to recognize the passing of Vic Fischer this weekend. In addition to being a critical influence on the shape of Alaska politics and governance, he was truly a great man. He was kind and thoughtful and while he always stood up for what he believed in, he never engaged in personal attacks on those who thought differently. For those of you who don't know, he was the last living delegate to the Alaska constitutional convention, which happened in 1955. My condolences to Jane Angvik, who served on this body, and Vic's four children, and all of his friends and family who are mourning his loss.

Emergency Cold Weather Shelter Plan

Over the past week, the Anchorage Health Department and its partners have been working hard to help people living in camps move into safe housing for the winter. Thanks to the hard work of Health Department staff and leadership from Housing & Homelessness Committee Chair Mr. Rivera, our city has a plan for providing emergency cold weather shelter before winter arrives.

I want to underscore how transformational it is for our community that we are finally establishing shelter opportunities that are congregate and non-congregate that are going to prevent warehousing people in mass shelters for the first time in years.

That is why it has been pretty disappointing to listen to the rhetoric coming from the Administration disparaging the plan and trying to move us back to a conversation of warehousing 1,000 people in a tent. Our community is in the effort of embarking on a new type of shelter plan, and this plan has not been fully implemented and yet we're here being driven to make changes to it before it's even had a chance to get stood up. It

feels like there is some gaslighting happening to the community in order to doom these efforts to failure.

We have heard the reports from ADN that there are 960 people signed up on a list who are seeking shelter. We do know that at least 120 of those individuals are currently sheltered, but would prefer to be in a hotel room. So, while we try to figure out what the accurate numbers are, I think there is great wisdom in letting the system be stood up and taking stock of the number of people who are unsheltered and finding a solution to meet their needs so we can fully implement the plan that we've been working on for so long.

We heard the report tonight from the Mayor Bronson's Chief of Staff that the mayor is continuing to argue that a one-thousand-person tent is the way to go. I want to speak a little bit to the history of this conversation. Back in June 2021, the Mayor came forward with a proposal to build a 1,000-person tent in East Anchorage. We went through a facilitation process between Mayor Bronson's team and members of the Assembly and in that process, the cost of the tent escalated to over \$25 million before magically starting to decrease based on calculations made by the Administration.

However, instead of bringing a comprehensive plan to the Assembly that included the budget and all costs, a contract was offered to a third-party contractor that had no ceiling to build as much as needed, at any expense, to achieve the mayor's goal of a thousand-person tent. The group spent hundreds of hours collaborating on that project and the Mayor never once stepped foot into the room to join the work. The final report from that project stated that "the Administration provided written responses to the Assembly's questions, but no formal plan." That's simply the reality. Stating that you want to build a tent is not a plan. The Mayor is supposed to be the expert in what the municipality's response should be to the homelessness services needed for emergency cold weather services and he continues to fail at bringing a feasible plan forward.

I'll end where I began. We should let the services be stood up and then we should find additional shelter as needed according to the plan. I again thank the Administration staff who've been working to create and stand up a plan, because it's not easy and it's pretty thankless, but it is working and you can see that there are fewer people out on the streets right now and we just need to continue that work.

Budget

Tonight is the first public hearing for the 2024 municipal budget and I thank those of you who are here tonight to testify. A second public hearing will be held on November 7th. The municipal budget affects everyone – from the number of books on the shelves at libraries and playgrounds in our parks, to the quality of the roads we drive on and the response times of emergency services, there are few things in our daily lives that aren't impacted by the municipal budget. There will be a worksession on November 9th to discuss potential budget amendments, and the Assembly will take up deliberations and likely vote on the budget at the November 21st Assembly meeting. You can learn more about the process at muni.org/assembly.

Housing Action Week

I want to give a final reminder that next week is Housing Action Week, culminating in the Community Housing Action Summit on Friday, November 3 at the UAA Student Union.

Housing Action Week brings together community organizations, policy makers and most importantly, our neighbors in a wide-reaching conversation about housing policy in Anchorage. I encourage everyone to participate in Housing Action Week. From the Make It Monday luncheon with the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce to Future Cities Family Fun at the Mountain View Library, and Nerd Nite at 49th State Brewing, there's something for everyone! Learn more about Housing Action Week and browse events at AnchorageHousingAction.org

October 10, 2023

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everybody and welcome. I'd like to recognize that yesterday was Indigenous People's Day and the first time the Municipality officially closed non-essential services to commemorate the holiday. In recognition and in celebration, I'm proud to present the digital artwork displayed today, commissioned from a local indigenous artist, Qaadax.

Indigenous Peoples' Day



“Dghelishla and Ch’chihi Ken (Mount Susitna)” by Qadaġ

Dghelishla, “little mountain” is the Dena’ina name for “Mt. Susitna” and south of the mountain is called “Ch’chihi Ken,” or “ridge where we cry.”

And next week, we will welcome the Alaska Federation of Natives convention, an event that brings a lot of energy to our city and we are grateful for the opportunity to host it.

Eklutna River Restoration Project

So this is an important time to talk about the Eklutna River. The Anchorage Assembly has been working for many years with the Native Village of Eklutna and other partners on the restoration of the Eklutna River. It's disappointing to learn in the past several weeks that the Project Owners group seems set on a solution that is in opposition to the expressed positions of the Native Village of Eklutna, the Anchorage Assembly, as well as federal Fish and Wildlife and other stakeholders.

Not only is full restoration of the river the right thing to do to respect the vision of the people who have stewarded this land long before the municipality and the dams that we put up existed, but it also has huge economic potential. As we heard at our meeting a few weeks ago with the Native Village of Eklutna, the council and Eklutna, Inc. have exciting plans to use the restoration of the river to develop recreation and tourism opportunities in the area. Just imagine what it will be like when the fish have returned

and we have one of the most robust fisheries in the Upper Cook Inlet right in our backyard.

That is why I'll be asking the Assembly to join with me in the coming weeks to support our partners in their years-long, generations-long, quest to restore the Eklutna River. The restoration project stemmed from a historical wrong and this is our opportunity to make a historic right. Anything short of full restoration is a continuation of the nearly century-long cultural and environmental neglect that we have all been working to overcome.

Meeting on Legislative Priorities

As leadership of the Assembly Legislative Committee, last week, Member Brawley and I met with the Anchorage Caucus of the legislature to update them on the Assembly's work and present our initial ideas for Anchorage's legislative priorities in 2024.

While the Municipality submits a program of priorities to our Anchorage legislators every year, this year, we are taking proactive, collaborative steps to bring these priorities to life. We look forward to working closely with the Anchorage Caucus to make strategic local investments during the 2024 session. I would like to thank Senator Kaufman and Representative Mears, for investing your time and energy in this partnership.

The Budget

Now, the budget. This week, the ADN Editorial Board decided to take me to task for calling the Mayor's budget a fantasy. I will offer just a couple of areas where the budget is still a fantasy:

- The Administration has presented to us a fact that they need, in 2024, to update SAP program to ensure our system continues to work with a \$3 million price tag. They knew this months ago, and yet it's not in the budget. So there's a \$3 million expense coming, but it's not accounted for.
- There was also a \$2.5 million legal settlement for a contract that was illegally authorized by the Administration. It was, on a temporary basis, paid out of construction funds intended to be used for addressing concerns related to homelessness this year. Instead, they were spent on a settlement. That settlement and its appropriation is actually not in the budget for 2024.

Those are just two examples. The Anchorage Daily News cited the fact that the Administration has been successful at overcoming issues related to not enough staff at the Municipality by outsourcing contracts. We learned at the last meeting that they knew the cost of the sleep-off center has tripled, and yet it's not in the budget. So a \$1

million, or so, is now a \$3 million expense, or so, but it's not all accounted for in the budget.

Like fantasy football versus actual NFL football, we have a budget process that is about to begin.

It's fitting to be looking towards 2024, as today's meeting is a major milestone for the 2024 budget cycle; items 10.G.3 through 10.G.6 represent the Mayor's proposed budget for next year.

Before we take action on the budget during our November 21 Regular Meeting, the Assembly will hold three worksessions. Our first is this Friday, October 13 from 11AM – 4PM, followed by another on Friday, October 27 and another on Thursday, November 9. When we are done, our budget will be a reflection of our values, so over the next few weeks, the Assembly will work to engage the public and set a budget for next year that reflects those values. There will be two public hearings on October 24 and November 7, and we welcome public comments submitted in writing online at www.muni.org/assembly.

Thank you to the Co-Chairs of the Budget & Finance Committee, Members Brawley and Zaletel, for lighting our way through this process. In the meantime, there is still much work to be done before the end of the year.

Mayor's Recent Comments on Shelter

You'll note that there have been items laid on the table

Next week, the Emergency Cold Weather Shelter plan for this winter will come into effect, providing housing, non-congregate shelter and services to roughly 500 people experiencing homelessness.

Health Department staff presented on their plan to provide emergency cold weather shelter during the 2023-2024 winter season late last month, with the intent to move clients from the encampment at 3rd & Ingra first, followed by camp abatement at Chanshtnu, Cuddy and Davis Parks.

The Administration has requested a special meeting this Thursday for the Assembly to take up the contracts for our partners joining in this year's plan.

Thanks to the hard work of Health Department staff and leadership from Housing & Homelessness Committee Chair Felix Rivera, our city has a plan for providing emergency cold weather shelter before winter arrives, for the first time in a long time.

The truth is, we are coming together on solutions that work for Anchorage: providing non-congregate shelter with services and supports, sheltering small groups in congregate settings when appropriate, and investing in housing first. That doesn't reflect the impact of rising interest rates in the last few months.

Housing Action Week

Anchorage's housing shortage crisis is an everyone problem. Last year, rents in Alaska jumped by more than 7% on average, the highest increase in more than a decade. The median single family home listing price in Anchorage rose 43% in only three years from \$311,000 in January 2020 to \$446,000 in May 2023, putting home ownership further out of reach.

There is a supply and demand imbalance; and we don't have enough housing options for everyone who wants to live here. Today, Assembly Leadership announced the event calendar for Housing Action Week, culminating in the Community Housing Action Summit on Friday, November 3 at the UAA Student Union.

Housing Action Week brings together community organizations, policy makers and most importantly, our neighbors in a wide-reaching conversation about housing policy in Anchorage. I encourage everyone to participate in Housing Action Week. From the Make It Monday luncheon with the Anchorage Chamber of Commerce to Future Cities Family Fun at the Mountain View Library, there's something for everyone! Learn more about Housing Action Week and browse events at **AnchorageHousingAction.org**.

Chair Constant Report Archive, 7/11 - 9/26/2023

September 26, 2023

[View the recording of the remarks.](#)

Good evening everybody and welcome.

Election Complaint Investigation

The Assembly is taking seriously allegations of threats to our election system. Regretfully, at our last meeting we had to authorize the issuance of subpoenas. Those subpoenas have been sent to a number of individuals with a command to attend the Assembly worksession this Friday at 11:15am. Our effort is an inquiry to ensure that when we get to the end of the year and we finalize the annual Title 28 code change, we are able to put in adequate safeguards to secure our elections against similar threats in the future.

Eklutna River Restoration Project

Next, I want to talk about the Eklutna River restoration project. The Anchorage Assembly has been working for many years with the Native Village of Eklutna and other partners on the restoration project, including passing resolutions of support in 2017 and 2022. It's disappointing to learn in the past several weeks that the Project Owners group seems set on a solution that is in opposition to the expressed positions of the Native Village of Eklutna, the Anchorage Assembly, as well as federal Fish and Wildlife and other stakeholders.

Not only is full restoration of the river the right thing to do to respect the vision of the people who have stewarded this land long before the municipality and the dams that we put up existed, but it also has huge economic potential. As we heard at our meeting a few weeks ago with the Native Village of Eklutna, the council and Eklutna, Inc. have exciting plans to use the restoration of the river to develop recreation and tourism opportunities in the area. Just imagine what it will be like when the fish have returned and we have one of the most robust fisheries in the Upper Cook Inlet right in our backyard.

That is why I'll be asking the Assembly to join with me in the coming weeks to weigh in on the draft fish and wildlife program that is set to be released in October 2023, and doing all that we can to support our partners in their years-long, generations-long, quest to restore the Eklutna River. The restoration project stemmed from a historical wrong and this is our opportunity to make a historic right. Anything short of full restoration is a continuation of the nearly century-long cultural and environmental neglect that we have all been working to overcome.

Emergency Cold Weather Sheltering Plan

Next up, we have the topic of the winter shelter. I am pleased to report that we had a very productive and collaborative meeting of the Housing and Homelessness Committee this week with the Administration and Assembly working together. I'll leave it to the committee leadership to report on the specifics, and we'll discuss funding more under item 14.A. on the agenda, but I just want to express my gratitude to everyone who is working hard to develop a series of viable solutions before the snow falls.

In that meeting last week, I walked away for the first time in several years feeling that we are all working together and getting close to develop a practical, humanitarian, and cost-effective solution. It's very encouraging and I look forward to continuing this positive and collaborative work.

On the topic of spending on housing and homelessness, it's been an interesting phenomenon – I've heard this number out in the community – the Assembly has spent \$160 million on shelter and doesn't have a shelter to show for it. It dawned on me that we haven't been able to effectively communicate the investments that the Assembly has made in both housing and shelter over the past three years so that the public can understand the progress and scope of where we are going. So, at this point, I am going to give the rest of my time to Ms. Clare Ross, the Legislative Services Director to give a report with some data we are posting on our website for the public.

[View the presentation.](#) View the [presentation materials.](#)

Thank you Ms. Ross for that report. I want to remind everyone that this information can be found on the Assembly's website in the Homelessness section. The bottom line for everybody – having information is better than not having information, so now you can see what we've appropriated for homelessness response, homeless prevention, housing and other opportunities. It's a very good tool for cutting through the noise and getting through the signal.

August 22, 2023

[View recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everybody and welcome.

As you all know now, Anchorage School District is back in session. It's been great to see all of the families celebrating their kids going back to school and the teachers back to the classrooms and also, for some of my friends, watching their newly graduated students leave the state to go off to college, which is a bittersweet moment.

Port of Alaska

Last week, how exciting was it that we had the honor of hosting U.S. Secretary Pete Buttigieg on his visit of the Port of Alaska? The Port staff did quite an amazing job, Mr. Jager in particular, of making our case to the Secretary and I feel confident that he walked away with a strong understanding of just how truly unique our Port is, its needs,

who it serves, and why it is so expensive. It was great to team up with the Mayor and the administration to promote this important project.

3rd Avenue Camp

Before we get to work tonight, I want to address the major concerns we have about what is taking place at what is growing down on 3rd Avenue. It is really disheartening to see the human misery and destruction that is occurring down there and I want to thank the APD and service providers who are doing their best to keep people safe and connect them to services, as well as the media, the artists, and the community members who are providing services and support. They are giving voice to the people who are trying to survive out there.

I am hopeful that the Administration directs the necessary funds that we have made available to additional policing to address crime and unsanitary conditions with more toilets and further support services, and that we can get the emergency shelter plan funded so we can move people off the streets in as safe and as healthy a manner as possible. The sooner we can start moving people out of the camp and into safer housing, the better.

Tudor/Elmore Shelter

On that note, tonight, we will be discussing a big item before us, the Tudor/Elmore proposed shelter. It came as quite a shock last week when we learned that the proposal requires taking funding from critical municipal services, what looks like funding that has already been spent, and other questionable fund sources to build his shelter.

Last week, we also learned that the Anchorage Health Department is putting together a cold weather emergency shelter plan that avoids concentrating all services into a single mass shelter, a situation we've seen fail time and time again in our community. Instead, their plan relies on small, scattered sites across the city that can potentially be funded with existing funds.

This is very exciting because the city is finally coming together on a solution that addresses both short and long-term needs. It is proven that housing, not warehousing, is the cheapest and most effective way to help people permanently beat the cycle of homelessness and I want to thank the Health Department for their out-of-the-box thinking, and for developing a realistic plan that we think is realistic for the year ahead.

This proposed approach for the upcoming winter shelter, paired with the work already being conducted under the Anchored Home Plan, such as turning hotels into affordable housing and opening living facilities for people with complex health needs, is how we are going to solve this problem once and for all.

Until we see more people safely housed, it's hard to celebrate, but we still need to recognize the progress we are making. The money that we have spent in the past few years has kept thousands of people from Eagle River to Girdwood from becoming homeless and has helped hundreds of people get off the streets and into housing. We need to keep following this proven approach and not get distracted by quick fixes that kick the can down the road.

I look forward to all of us coming together over the next month to get this plan funded and started, so we can get people out of the camps and into safe housing for the winter.

HOME Proposal

On that note of housing, developing more housing in Anchorage is one of the Assembly's top priorities. We previously had an agenda item to change the residential zoning throughout the municipality – item 13.A. on the agenda.

As you may have heard in the news, the sponsors of that item are going to ask the body to postpone it indefinitely and Members Zaletel and Volland will introduce a replacement proposal tonight called "Housing Opportunities in the Municipality for Everyone Initiative," the HOME initiative. A copy of their new ordinance proposal will be passed out tonight and you can also find a link to it on the Assembly's home page under the News section. They are asking for a public hearing on it at the September 26 Regular Assembly Meeting. So just to be clear, for those who are here for that item, the sponsors are planning to postpone it indefinitely.

August 8, 2023

[View recording](#) of remarks.

Good evening everybody and welcome.

Port of Alaska

I will start with the Port of Alaska. I want to celebrate the major step forward on the Port of Alaska modernization that we took at the last meeting. Those of us who have been on the Assembly for some years have been working for a long time to get this project back on track and it's rewarding to see all that has been accomplished.

I want to thank particularly the Port staff and the users who have been there every step of the way, as well as the Mayor and new Assembly Members who've joined the team more recently and have had to drink from the firehose to understand the issue. I also want to thank the Alaska legislature for their strong financial commitment and Senator Lisa Murkowski personally for her stalwart support. This once-in-a-generation project will be a legacy that we leave for the future and we can all be really proud once it's built.

Housing Investments

Next, as you may have seen in the news, we recently gathered to celebrate the new soon-to-open housing facility at the former Barratt Inn. In only a few short years since 2020, the Assembly has invested a lot of funding to provide assistance to keep renters and homeowners housed during the pandemic and to open up new housing facilities for extremely low-income people. Thanks to these investments of federal COVID relief funds and alcohol tax dollars, paired with private and nonprofit support, we've added 330 new units of low-income housing in the past two years and literally kept 60,000 people in their existing homes.

This unique work was recognized with the 2023 HUD Secretary's Award for Public-Philanthropic Partnerships, which recognizes "excellence in partnerships that have both transformed the relationships between the sectors and led to measurable benefits in housing and community development."

So, while our community continues to struggle with the issues on our streets and in our neighborhoods, and the effort to find a vision forward that we can share and all build towards, it's excellent to identify the fact that we have been putting new housing units online for people across the community and we are now working on figuring out solutions for a permanent, year-round low-barrier shelter. This is a reminder that when we work together, we can actually make a big difference.

Response to Mayor's Remarks in the Media

So, next, I want to address the Mayor's recent remarks in the media. Mr. Mayor, we want to thank you for taking the opportunity over the past few weeks to meet with the media,

and for the first time since you've been in office, really make an opportunity available to reporters to cover the work of the municipality from your perspective. But there are a few things that have to be clarified.

Emergency Shelter Plan

So, effectively you have said to the media that you are waiting for the Assembly to produce a shelter plan. You were quoted as saying, "that's a question for the Assembly, what are their plans for a shelter in the winter?" The source was an article titled "Two years into his tenure, Anchorage Mayor Bronson reflects on homeless policy, shelter plans and Assembly relationship" in Alaska Public Media. I want to make sure everyone understands that per Anchorage Municipal Code 16.120.010.B, it's not the Assembly's job to come up with a plan, it's the Mayor's. The Assembly's job is to set the policy and to approve the funding. Without a viable plan or a viable fund source, there's nothing for us to approve.

Port of Alaska

Another statement was made about the Port – you said "I took that project and the engineering and the designing and the building of it and kind of reassigned it to a different group, to an engineering firm actually that's built ports before. That would be Jacobs, and they've got a lot of experience. And that got us back on track, I think." The source was also the article titled "Two years into his tenure, Anchorage Mayor Bronson reflects on homeless policy, shelter plans and Assembly relationship" in Alaska Public Media. So, Jacobs Engineering has been on board as the Project Manager for the Port of Alaska project well before this Administration was sworn into office in July 2021. In fact, even before they became Jacobs, they were CH2MHill and they were working on this project with us as far back as 2014. And so, it would be great for the record to reflect the fact that while there has been great progress on the Port in recent years, the engineering has been managed by Jacobs prior to the Mayor taking office.

Funding for Hotel Conversions to Housing

Also, there seems to be some rewriting of history going on. Thankfully the public record exists. Here's what the facts have to say. The Mayor sometimes says he supports Housing First, and other times not, but at a press conference for the Barratt Inn opening as extremely low income housing, the Mayor said he has always supported these kinds of efforts. The record of these meetings shows that the Mayor actually vetoed the funding for this project. The Assembly funded the purchase of the hotel to convert to

housing with ARPA funds in summer of 2022 and this body had to override the Mayor's veto of the project to keep the investments in Housing First alive. This project was successful despite the efforts of the Administration.

Shelter Size

The Mayor also said it's the law that we have a big shelter. He said: "We've got to build a large shelter, because the law compels us to do that." That's in an article titled "In interview, Anchorage Mayor Bronson acknowledges some missteps, conveys confidence in reelection" in the Anchorage Daily News. Anchorage Municipal Code 16.120.020.D requires the MOA to provide emergency cold weather shelter. It does not have to be a large shelter, but I recognize that Mayor Bronson wants it to be. In fact, per AR 2018-167, As Amended, a resolution declaring a policy of dispersed placement in the Anchorage Bowl of services and programs for homeless persons, it's the policy of the municipality that small shelters be distributed across town. Concentrating all offsite impacts of shelter on a single neighborhood and group of neighbors has a history of problems. Just look at Centennial Park, Sullivan Arena, and now 3rd and Ingra.

There's a lot. I could continue, but I won't at this time. I just want to say that I am grateful Mr. Mayor that you are now engaging with the media and we are here and ready to work. And when the need arises, I will correct the record as necessary. But it's not the best way. The best way is what is happening now with the Administration staff who have demonstrated a clear and compelling desire to work with the Assembly. The tide is changing, let's move forward.

Federal Collaboration

I would also like to express that all three members of the Congressional delegation, Senator Murkowski, Senator Sullivan and Representative Peltola, this week sent a joint letter to U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Marcia Fudge. I again want to thank the senators and our congress member for taking a strong stand in helping us right the inequity that is happening with the funding streams that are coming into Alaska. We are so sorely under resourced compared to other jurisdictions with that same problem.

I will also say that we are very much looking forward to U.S. Secretary of Transportation Buttigieg coming to town. This is a conversation that has been happening between the Assembly and the Secretary's Office since 2021 when he was confirmed into the position.

Return to School

The last thing I will speak to is the return of Anchorage School District back to school. Teachers and students across the municipality will be filing in and education will once again be happening in our amazing school district. I want everyone to think about that when they are driving – slow down and make sure our neighborhoods are safe where kids are walking to school. And to all of the teachers and students who are coming back to school, we wish you the very best of years and hope you are able to get the most out of your education and educational experience.

July 25, 2023

[View recording](#) of remarks.

Good evening everybody and welcome. I hope you all got outside and enjoyed the that amazing summer weather over the past week.

Port of Alaska

First, I would like to speak about the Port of Alaska. You will see several items on the agenda tonight concerning the Port. After many years of work, we are nearing a major milestone in the modernization. Over the past few months, the Assembly has been meeting with Port officials and users to identify the best path forward for the design for Phase 2 and the funding structure to pay for it. We had an especially productive worksession last Friday and I believe we are very close to taking the next step in the solution. Whether we get there tonight, or if it takes a few more meetings, I am confident that we are on a good track. I thank everyone involved for the work you have put in to moving us forward on this once-in-a-generation project that will be a legacy that we give to the future of Anchorage and all of Alaska.

Residential Zoning Updates

Another big item on the agenda tonight, that has been the subject of much community conversation, is a discussion about residential zoning updates. This is a proposal to create a process to update Anchorage's residential zoning code. We've had some very informative worksessions on the topic and I look forward to the debate on the matter. Whether you agree with the proposal or not, it has been a valuable exercise to bring this topic up for public discussion. Anchorage is in the midst of a housing crisis and we need to act to ensure that people can afford to live here. Housing costs have soared and if

you haven't had to find a new place in the past two years, you will be shocked to see the prices. Anchorage's median home listing price jumped from \$311,000 in January 2020 to \$446,000 in May 2023 – that's almost a 50% increase in three years, and the rental market is following a similar path.

The Assembly is taking this matter very seriously and we are working on a number of initiatives to encourage affordable housing development. We will be hosting a public Housing summit this fall where we will share our work and gather feedback from the community. Details will be announced soon and I look forward to seeing you there.

Scofflaw Law

Another item that has been the subject of much discussion is the Scofflaw Law. The sponsor has informed me that this item will likely be continued to another night, so I want folks to know that when we get to the public hearing, it might be continued.

Golden Lion

Also before us, we have two items relating to the opening of the Golden Lion. This is an open conversation that has been before us for several years and it looks like we are getting close to a decision.

Elections

On a more somber note, the Assembly held a worksession last week to understand the circumstances surrounding an election complaint filed during the 2023 Regular Municipal Election. Nationwide there has been interference, misinformation, and disinformation surrounding elections that threaten the integrity of our elections. Now locally, the circumstances surrounding the complaint have raised concerns of partisan election interference by current and former appointees of the Municipality.

The Office of the Ombudsman is currently investigating the incident, and the Assembly is doing our due diligence as well. I would like to thank the Administration, in particular, Municipal Manager Kent Kohlhase and Chief of Staff Mario Bird for your cooperation and assistance in getting to the bottom of this matter. I know that the public is very concerned about this incident and I am committed to following this issue through so the public can be assured of the integrity of our local election system.

July 11, 2023

[View recording](#) of remarks.

Good evening everybody and welcome. I hope you all enjoyed a brief break from Assembly meetings and had a great 4th of July.

Meeting with Secretary Fudge

After our last regular assembly meeting, I had the opportunity to participate in a call with U.S. Senator Dan Sullivan and U.S. Housing and Urban Development Secretary Marcia Fudge. It was a great opportunity for the Senator and I to make the case to Secretary Fudge that Anchorage is in the midst of a severe homelessness crisis and we need increased federal funding and resources to be able to get out of it. I'm pleased to report that Secretary Fudge heard us loud and clear and committed to doing whatever is within her power to get much needed support to Anchorage.

As you may recall from a resolution that was unanimously approved by the Assembly and the Mayor back in May, Anchorage is missing out on considerable federal funding to address homelessness issue due to the outdated HUD Continuum of Care funding formula. Serving very similar numbers of people experiencing homelessness, Anchorage received \$4 million through the formula in 2022, while Fort Worth received \$16 million and Baltimore received \$26 million.

If Anchorage were to receive its fair share of federal funding, we could enact real solutions to get people housed and we wouldn't have to fight each other over scraps. I personally want to thank Senator Sullivan for taking this up as a personal cause on this issue, and I look forward to sharing further updates on this topic in the coming weeks.

A Note about the Golden Lion

I would note that the conversation about the Golden Lion is very welcome. This Assembly, at least some members, have been ready for this moment since August 2020. That said, it may take us a little longer to get to where we have the code and law requirements lined up to get to yes. I look forward to the conversation tonight. I know we're close, and that is edifying.

Clean Slate Strategy Update

Also I'd like to address the Clean Slate Strategy conversation we will take up tonight. I'd like to applaud our community and my colleagues, especially Member Rivera, for maintaining a laser focus on local solutions to solve homelessness in Anchorage. Despite our limited funding, we now have a mayor, an Assembly, nonprofits and a

majority of the community who want to solve this problem.

Tonight's agenda covers a number of items related to this shared goal:

- First, the Allowed Camps Community Task Force has submitted their final report to the body for acceptance into the record. The report details recommendations by roughly 60 community members that shape a community-driven vision for the implementation of allowed camps as an emergency sheltering solution.

The report is item 10.F.4 on tonight's agenda. I want to remind the public that the Assembly's acceptance of the report should not be confused with an endorsement. Rather, these recommendations will be an important part of the Assembly's future work to provide emergency shelter on the road to housing.

- We will be considering AO 2023-70(S), an ordinance to define allowed camps with required site and operational standards. We held a worksession about this proposal on June 29, and I look forward to tonight's conversation on the item, which is 11.C. on our agenda. There are a number of substitute versions in play.
- And, finally, the Administration has submitted several items to the Assembly related to opening the Golden Lion as low-income supportive housing. It's taken us a long time to get to this point, and—credit where credit is due—I appreciate the Administration working to get these proposals before us tonight.

That said, I want to remind my colleagues that our role is to be responsible stewards of public resources, and the devil is in the details. We need to take the time to understand the Administration's plan so we get this right.

All this to say, thanks in large part to Member Rivera's leadership, Anchorage is making good progress. Members of the public are invited to learn about this work and join in the conversation by visiting the Assembly website at muni.org/assembly and clicking "Homelessness."

Port of Alaska

Looking forward, the modernization of the Port of Alaska is a once-in-a-generation project, and if done properly, will be a legacy that we gift to future generations. We are nearing some major decision points and I urge the community to pay close attention to this issue over the next month. Two ordinances are on the July 25th agenda for public hearing – AO 2023-60 to approve the Basis-of-Design Concept that will govern the

Phase 2 concept for the cargo terminals, and AO 2023-34 to adopt Port of Alaska Terminal Tariff No. 10.0, which will help fund the renovations. The Assembly held worksessions on these topics on May 12 and June 9 and will have another round of worksessions on July 21. You can go to muni.org/worksessions to review the meeting documents and I look forward to delving into this topic further on July 25.

June 20, 2023

[View the recording](#) of the remarks.

Good evening everybody and welcome. Here we are – the summer solstice is upon us, the peak of our summer season. I hope you all had the opportunity, especially this past weekend, to get out and enjoy the amazing sunshine.

Juneteenth Celebration

And in particular, I hope you had the opportunity to take part in the Juneteenth celebrations that occurred in the community. The Park Strip was alive and festive with songs, chants, prayers, dances, vendors, social service providers, food, and most importantly, friends and family connecting on the topic of Juneteenth. It was an opportunity to reflect and learn, and celebrate this moment in our history. Along with a number of Assembly Members, I attended the Chamber of Commerce's special Juneteenth Make it Monday event yesterday and the organizers of all of these events have really gone above and beyond.

Pride Month

Also, as previously stated, this is Pride Month, and this is actually Pride Week in town. And while for a lot of us, it is a joyful time, it's also an important time to recognize that discrimination and hate toward the LGBTQ+ individuals in the community, and transgender people in particular, has increased nationwide and is bubbling up in our community as well. From attempts to remove books from our libraries to efforts to block transgender youth from sports, this movement is especially damaging to our youth. To the young people in our community who are questioning your identity or struggling with these issues, and feel alone, I want you to know that we see you and we value you. You are important members of our community and you have a place here. And to others in our community, I ask you to step up and support Anchorage's LGBTQ+ community during this challenging time and show that Anchorage is and will continue to be an accepting, collaborative and tolerant community.

Clean Slate Strategy Update

I'll briefly talk about the Clean Slate Strategy. Again, Mr. Rivera, I want to thank you for your lions work on this project. There has been a lot of progress made in the past few weeks on our work on homelessness, including the Housing and Homelessness Committee's release of site selection criteria for a new permanent, year-round low-barrier shelter, which is on the agenda later tonight. There is also lot of frustration in the community with the issue of homelessness and I get it. It's difficult to see so much suffering in our streets and so much disruption in our neighborhoods, and it makes us all angry, or it should, that this is happening. I want people to understand this is a very complex situation, and while there are so many great ideas out there, unfortunately, funding is limited and that hampers our ability to do the best we could.

The national housing and mental health crises are wreaking havoc in our communities, and there is little state or federal funding to help. Today, I was scheduled to, but it was delayed to Thursday, have a conversation with Senator Sullivan and HUD Secretary Marcia Fudge as we take the message of the inequities of our funding to Washington. We are trying to solve national problems with local funding and we can't do it alone.

With that said, I believe that we can solve this problem and we are on the right track. I want to thank Assembly Members for the hours and hours you have devoted to this issue, especially in the last two months. I also want to thank the Administration for helping us get a better understanding of the costs for shelter – we had a good presentation from the Health Department last week that provided for the first time a pretty measurable approach to how we're going to fund operations. It still needs work of course, but it was the first time we had a document that we can build on. Finally, I want to thank all of the community members who have volunteered, attended community meetings, and emailed ideas. This is a problem that will take all of us coming together to solve and I can see the work is happening. You can learn all about this work by going to our [Homelessness Focus](#) page.

Port of Alaska

Tonight, we have a couple of items relating to the Port of Alaska – probably our biggest existential challenge, right up there with homelessness. I am going to ask Members to consider postponing those items to July. I'm not comfortable that we make such substantial decisions without all of our members here and we are missing two of our members tonight. Everyone is scheduled to be back in July, and so, that's the request I will make tonight when we come to those items.

Clerk Appointment

Next, I am glad to announce that last week that I appointed as Acting Municipal Clerk, our former Municipal Election Administrator Jamie Heinz. We successfully conducted a nation-wide search and I'm pleased to announce that the best candidate is in fact one of our own. Jamie Heinz has over 12 years of clerk and election administration experience in Alaska, including the Municipality of Anchorage, the City of Kenai, and the Haines Borough. This appointment of course is subject to approval by the Assembly with a confirmation hearing worksession and a special meeting to follow on Friday, June 23.

At this time, I want to thank outgoing Municipal Clerk Barbara Jones for over twenty-four years of service to the Municipality. Barbara was recently recognized by the Assembly on the anniversary of her ten years as Municipal Clerk, so I won't belabor all of her accomplishments here, but her commitment to open, accessible, transparent and responsive local government has been critical for the functioning of this body and for the success of our Vote from Home election system. Barbara, I can't thank you enough for all that you have done, and I wish you the best in your retirement.

Vice Chair

Also tonight, to my left, you will see Member Kevin Cross from Eagle River serving in the role of Vice Chair. I want to welcome him and thank him, as well as Member Volland who served as Vice Chair at the last meeting, for stepping up to help keep the Assembly moving while Member Zaletel is out on leave. We have a very strong and collaborative body and it's great to see everyone working together and sharing in the leadership duties.

June 6, 2023

[View the recording of the remarks.](#)

Welcome and thank you for being here tonight.

Federal Relief Funds

As many of you have seen in the news, two of the groups that received allocations from the Municipality's federal relief funds are under investigation for misuse of those funds. I want to express my disappointment as it appears that those funds were not used as intended to meet critical community needs. I also wanted to urge the media and the community not to let the problems with these two groups, which at this point are just

allegations, overshadow the incredibly good work that came out of the federal relief funds and the hundreds of organizations who put that money to work to make our community a better place.

Over one hundred and eighty organizations received federal funds through the Municipality, and those organizations in turn funded grants, assistance and services that have served, and will continue to serve, thousands of people. Some of the things funded include millions of dollars of rental assistance to keep people in their homes during the pandemic as well as new low-income housing like the Guest House, Covenant House Lofts and Providence's supportive housing project. It also funded job training, the arts, and small business development. I thank all of the organizations who were good stewards of public trust and funds and helped our community get through a very difficult period. If you would like to learn more about projects funded by federal relief funds, go to the Assembly homepage, select the Recent Actions tab and look for the yellow Recovery button. That said, we look forward to the wheels of justice turning, and the Municipality conducting reviews and audits of the funds as they have been used in the community to ensure that they have met the standards that we applied when we made the funds available.

Juneteenth

Tonight we will recognize and celebrate Juneteenth. This is special this year because this will be the first year we celebrate Juneteenth as an official Municipal holiday – next Monday, June 19. I thank members Rivera and Zaletel and former member Quinn-Davidson for your hard work to develop this local acknowledgement for this important date in our nation's history. And I'm grateful to the Mayor for sending out an email that the municipality's offices will be closed on Monday June 19, so if you have important business to conduct, please address it on Friday June 16 or be prepared to wait until Tuesday June 20.

Pride Month

We will also be celebrating this June, Pride for Anchorage and we will have individuals from the community recognized later tonight. This year it is significant because of the very aggressive campaign across the country of legislation that is against LGBTQ people. It is amazing to witness the change in tenor in our country.

D-Day

I would like to recognize that today is the 74th anniversary of D-Day, the day in which 150,000 Allied troops stormed the shores of Normandy, which was probably the second most significant day in our efforts in the war, after Pearl Harbor, in which we changed the tide and were able to stop the threat of Nazis in Germany and really finalize the outcome of that war. I would like to honor those that lost their lives or who served on that day.

Clean Slate Town Halls

Now to the topic of the Clean Slate Town Halls and the funding of what has been called a navigation center. This navigation center, if you listen to the rhetoric is a miracle. It's a place where everything works for all people. It's a place where people are going to get sober. It's a place where people are going to find housing. It's a place where they're going to be reunited with their families. The one thing that this body has been waiting for is a plan that demonstrates how it is going to operate. Miracles take spreadsheets.

There was at one point a spreadsheet that came forward that demonstrated a portion of the costs, that showed the Navigation Center could hire a registered nurse for \$50,000 a year. The plans that we've seen to date aren't rational, don't make sense can't be demonstrated as factual or deliverable. Those of us who have served long enough on the body long remember the promise of SAP. SAP was a \$9 million dollar investment by the municipality that was going to change life for everyone. SAP is our management software in which people track their time and we are able to manage our contracts. \$105 million dollars later, we finally got to the point where it could work. The promise was \$9 million, the reality was a \$100 million. The plan for the navigation center started at four and then seven and then fourteen and then twenty-four million dollars. Now we have a request before us for \$7 million dollars that we know won't actually get us to the place where we have a tent built at Tudor and Elmore. All of this is in the context of the Assembly to have a series of Town Halls called the Clean Slate effort.

This weekend, the Assembly and the Anchorage Coalition to End Homelessness held three town halls on the Clean Slate Strategy to develop a community decision on a new permanent year-round low-barrier shelter. The sessions were live streamed and you can view the recordings on the Assembly's YouTube channel. I encourage everyone to watch one of the sessions to learn more about the Assembly's work on homelessness. The reality is, in my opinion, the Assembly should not get in front of that work, but we do have the question before us tonight and it should be an interesting conversation.

All politics aside, I think we can agree that we do need to figure out a solution that moves people out of camps and into shelter and ultimately into housing, because that's the solution.

May 23, 2023

Welcome and thank you for being here tonight – whether in person or online.

Housing Summit

Last Friday, the Assembly joined members of the Administration and our community partners in an all-day housing retreat. Addressing the housing crisis in our community and spurring new housing development ideas is a top priority for the Assembly this year.

We've already passed a number of pieces of legislation to address this problem, including reducing parking minimums, easing the process for building ADUs, passing a resolution with the Assembly's housing priorities, and investing in a year-long community effort to bring focus to Housing Action.

The retreat was the kick-off to that community initiative, which will lead up to a community summit this fall with workgroups and action steps running throughout the year. To keep up with the Assembly's housing action, go to www.muni.org/assembly and subscribe.

Election Contest

A Notice of Election Contest was filed at the Municipal Clerk's Office on Thursday, May 4, 2023, and will be taken up by the Assembly as item 12.A. The Assembly's process for how to address the contest is included as an Assembly Informational Memorandum in the documents on that item. Resolution 2023-181 is before us with the option to either accept the contest for further hearing or decline to further hear the contest.

Settlement of Claims

A big item on tonight's agenda is Item 14.A., the settlement of legal claims against the Municipality. I wanted to provide background to clear up some misunderstandings around the Assembly's role in this process. There has been some criticism lodged at the Assembly for taking up this important community issue "behind closed doors." I want to

ensure everyone that while the Assembly did conduct an executive session on the matter on May 5, no decisions were made and our debate and decision on this item will be made in the public eye when this comes up on the agenda tonight.

The Administration requested an executive session to brief the Assembly on the legal and confidential aspects of the matter. It is standard for the Assembly to use an executive session to discuss a specific legal matter, including pending litigation, and this was one of those cases where an executive session was needed.

However, by code, the Assembly is not authorized to take any official action during an executive session, except to give direction to an attorney on a specific legal matter. As a result, once the executive session is complete, the item in question returns to the same public process as any other piece of legislation. AR 2023-162 will be opened to a public hearing tonight under Item 14.A. and afterwards, the body will take up the matter for questions, debate and voting. All of which will be conducted here in the open so the public can watch that process.

May 9, 2023

Guest report from Vice Chair Meg Zaletel. Chair Constant was excused for this meeting and Vice Chair Zaletel chaired the meeting and gave the chair report.

Welcome and thank you for being here tonight – whether in person or online.

First Meeting for New Members

Once again, I would like to welcome our new Assembly Members. As this is your first full meeting, I want to assure you that I plan to take it slow so you are able to follow along and have plenty of time to ask clarifying and procedural questions. As a reminder, on this body, we use the term “Point of Information” to request the floor to ask for information relevant to the debate. If at any time you need a clarification or information on what to do for a certain procedure, please don’t hesitate to speak up.

Mayor Vetoes

Recently, the Assembly passed the first quarter budget and there were two mayoral vetoes. Fortunately, we have found other paths forward to address these items that allow the Assembly to effectuate its budget goals without needing to override the vetoes. We will address funding for a real estate consultant for the Holtan Hills project

with Item 10.E.3. tonight and funding for the short-term rental study will be on the May 23 agenda. An Assembly Information Memorandum (AIM) will be introduced at the June 6 meeting documenting this process for public records.

Mayoral and Assembly Roles in Executive Appointments

Item 10.B.2. on the agenda is AR No. 2023-167, a resolution expressing a lack of confidence in the Deputy Director of the Library Department and recommending her resignation. While we learned earlier today that the Library Deputy Director has resigned, this item will remain on the agenda. In preparation for that item, I wanted to review the standard municipal process for executive appointments.

Under the Anchorage Charter, the Mayor is responsible for appointing executive staff and for certain appointments, including the Library Director, but not the Library Deputy Director, the Assembly is responsible for confirming those appointments. Once an executive is confirmed by the Assembly, they serve at the pleasure of the Mayor and their oversight moves outside of the Assembly's purview. The Assembly is able to provide input on municipal staffing issues by providing guidance to the Administration through resolutions, such as our recurring 'resolution establishing general labor relations policy guidelines and direction for collective bargaining and contract negotiations,' and now this resolution.

As a reminder, resolutions are not typically set for public hearing unless the body decides to set it as such.

[April 25, 2023](#)

After being voted in as the new Assembly Chair, Assembly Member Christopher Constant gave the following acceptance speech:

Dear fellow members of the Anchorage Municipal Assembly, distinguished guests, and residents of Anchorage,

I sit before you today with gratitude as the newly elected chair of the Anchorage Assembly. This election, just certified, comes at a crucial time in our city's history as we emerge from a long, dark period of the pandemic and enter a new day of what I hope will be characterized as "collegial accountability." The Assembly members who have just departed led this Municipality through the greatest challenge it has faced in its near 50-

year existence. They served in a profoundly challenging time and they did so honorably. And now it is your turn to take up the mantle they leave for you. I am honored to have been given the opportunity to lead this new Assembly, boldly and bravely into the future, facing our biggest challenges head on and directly.

As we embark on this new chapter together, I want to acknowledge that our biggest challenges remain. The homelessness crisis and housing shortage in our city being the foremost. This crisis is deeply complex and requires a multifaceted approach. Despite all campaign rhetoric, it will be a steep and swift learning curve for you. I am committed to working with each of you, along with community organizations, and other stakeholders to implement the solutions that we know will solve the problem: providing safe and stable housing options for all residents of Anchorage.

We also face a workforce shortage in our government and in our city. In the face of the greatest infrastructure investment in our lifetime, we have been caught short, unable to nimbly respond. We must prioritize attracting and retaining a talented workforce that will serve our city with excellence. We need innovative approaches to attract talented professionals and provide opportunities for career advancement in the public sector.

We must also soberly work together to address the perennial issue of rebuilding the Port of Alaska. For a generation, Anchorage political leaders been attempting to rebuild our State's most critical infrastructure supplying goods to 80% of Alaskans, and we have made great progress in recent years. We have the opportunity to complete the project and leave a lasting legacy for generations for our state, but we must keep our focus. There are important decisions coming soon and I challenge each of you to embrace your role. We cannot fail this time.

In addition to these pressing issues, we must continue to protect our free and fair elections. Anchorage is a city that values democracy, and it is our responsibility to ensure that every eligible voter has the opportunity to cast their ballot without interference. We must also continue to be good stewards of the peoples' treasure through strategic investments. We owe it to our citizens to make smart and effective decisions that will benefit our community for years to come.

We must not forget that our job isn't just to put out fires, slipping from crisis to crisis. But instead, we must also dedicate ourselves to a vision for our community. A vision of a community with robust housing and economic growth. A place where people desire to stay, desire to return, or decide to move here because they can find opportunity to

make a life for themselves and their families. We live in the most beautiful place in America. Each of us has an opportunity to play our part in building this city.

I am thrilled to welcome the five new members to our twelve-member body. Their unique perspectives and fresh ideas will add significant value to our discussions and decision-making processes. I am committed to ensuring that each new member is supported and has access to the resources they need to fulfill their roles effectively.

As we begin this new chapter together, I urge each of us to remain committed to open and respectful communication. We may not always agree, but we must always do our best to listen to one another and find common ground where possible--I promise there is more than you may think. I believe that together, we can achieve great things for Anchorage.

Thank you for entrusting me with the responsibility of leading this assembly. I look forward to working with each of you to address the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead. Now, onward.