

Chair Constant Report Archive, Q4 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**.