

Dear Mayor Bronson,

We are writing in support of AMEA's request for the Municipality of Anchorage to consider allowing the option for AMEA employees to telecommute with a hybrid schedule. A hybrid schedule was in place prior to the ratification of the current AMEA contract and worked well where practical at Anchorage Water and Wastewater Utility (AWWU).

We love the work we do and feel that we play an integral role in AWWU's mission of providing reliable service, safeguarding public health, and protecting the environment, long into the future, executing responsibilities with dedication and accountability.

In today's working world, in both the public and private sectors, it falls to mid-managers to assure staffing levels are sufficient to meet the needs of the business (public) while encouraging a positive work environment and finding efficiencies wherever they may exist. Teleworking is a management tool long used successfully in the private sector and has become increasingly mainstream in the public sector as well.

As civil servants, we are employed by the taxpayers and/or ratepayers to work for the interest of citizens, teleworking may be perceived as a luxury rather than a practical management tool. Below is a list of reasons why we support a hybrid telework schedule.

A robust and well-practiced telework program improves employee performance, engagement, efficiency and supports increased productivity.

- Over the past 2 years, significant improvements have been made to workflow processes, with a heavy emphasis on electronic processing. This change has allowed for process efficiencies, reducing the amount of time it takes to process documents. This would not have been developed without the workforce's participation in telecommuting. Now that individuals are back in the office full-time, the tendency to revert to aged, outdated, and time-consuming paper processes is on the rise.
- A manager recently recounted a situation, summarizing what he has seen with our workgroup over the past two years. He needed critical project information and the project engineer was attending a conference here in Anchorage. He was able to get ahold of the engineer and made the request. The engineer was able to go to their utility vehicle, which is wifi enabled, using their AWWU issued tablet connected to the network and got the manager the needed documents. This took less than 10 minutes to complete. The manager stated that prior to covid and teleworking, he would not have received the information he needed so quickly. Employees have developed skills to telework efficiently and effectively.
- Many AMEA members experienced and proved to be more productive and efficient with workloads. The ability to focus on tasks without the increased disruptions that come with being in the office at AWWU was priceless. An employee being physically present in their employment office space does not necessarily mean that it will increase productivity and performance. It seems that MOA wide, there is a significant increase in dissatisfaction in the workplace as employees have been called back to the office full-time. Offering a hybrid schedule will assist in addressing these rising problems.
- Technology and tools needed to work remotely are already in place. There is no added or increased financial burden to the MOA.

- AWWU Project Management already works "remotely" seasonally with the construction-nature of the job.
- The State of Alaska and many (local and national) private sector employers are continuing to support teleworking and offer a hybrid schedule to their employees.

Teleworking offers critical workplace flexibility that enables employees to meet critical needs of an organization.

- An example of this benefit is when in 2018, a 7.1 magnitude earthquake struck Anchorage and caused severe damage around Anchorage and surrounding communities. The response from AWWU employees was immediate with shifts around the clock to allow for assessment of utility infrastructure. Consideration for the technicalities of workplace location was not a priority in the response after the earthquake.
- The world-wide response to the pandemic in 2020 showed that once processes and hardware tools were obtained, teleworking became a viable option to being in a workplace office. Work was completed efficiently and effectively.

We respectfully request the consideration to participate in the option to telework, per Municipal Policy and Procedure 40-40.

Respectively,

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