ANCHORAGE, ALASKA
AR No. 2023-167

A RESOLUTION OF THE ANCHORAGE MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLY EXPRESSING A LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE LIBRARY DEPARTMENT AND RECOMMENDING HER RESIGNATION.

WHEREAS, the Municipality of Anchorage has longstanding policies and objectives to promote harmonious and cooperative relations between the Municipality and its employees and to protect the public by ensuring orderly and effective operations of government;¹ and

WHEREAS, the personnel rules of the Municipality have an express intent to, among other things, “ensure fair treatment of applicants and employees in all aspects of personnel administration without regard to political affiliation, race, color, national origin, age, sex, religious creed, marital status or disability, and with proper regard for their privacy and constitutional rights as citizens”;² and

WHEREAS, the Municipality has enacted strong prohibitions against invidious discrimination embodied in Charter §§ II(7) and 17.01, Anchorage Municipal Code Title 5, Equal Rights, and AMC Chapter 7.50; and

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Assembly recognizes the importance and significance of strong and reliable leadership and management of the Municipality’s workplaces consistent with the duties to uphold the policies above and expects every official holding public office to project the highest standards of ethics and integrity to implement them; and

WHEREAS, in an official Municipality of Anchorage EEO/AA Policy Statement issued January 11, 2023, by Mayor Bronson he reminds us that the MOA takes its Equal Employment Opportunity obligations seriously, that all MOA employees are obligated to comply with MOA’s Policies and Procedures and the EEO/AA Program to ensure that MOA employees and customers are treated in a nondiscriminatory manner, and that all MOA management and supervisory personnel have a responsibility to ensure these are effectively implemented and that EEO matters within their respective areas are promptly and appropriately addressed;³ and

WHEREAS, in addition, Mayor Bronson’s EEO/AA Policy Statement also says even inappropriate or bullying behavior that may not rise to the level of illegality is equally

¹ AMC section 3.70.020, Declaration of policy.
² AMC section 3.30.011C.
unacceptable and will not be tolerated, to create a workplace based on fairness, dignity and respect for all MOA employees and customers; and

WHEREAS, the public confidence in good government requires the credibility of its public officials in effectuating the foregoing policies; and

WHEREAS, Judy Norton Eledge was selected by Mayor Bronson in late August 2021 to be the MOA's new Library Director, but months afterward transferred to the Deputy Director position, a position she has held from November 2021 to the present, rather than go through the Assembly's confirmation process; and

WHEREAS, recent allegations have been reported of racist statements about Alaska Natives made by Ms. Eledge in her role as current Deputy Director of Library Services to library employees, in a recording from March 14, 2022; and

WHEREAS, the report referenced above describes how library employees were unable to prompt action or an investigation by the Alaska State Commission for Human Rights or the Anchorage Equal Rights Commission when the complaints about Ms. Eledge were brought to those offices; and

WHEREAS, when at least five Library employees complained about Ms. Eledge directly to the Human Resources Department, the then-director wore a t-shirt that said "I'm with Judy" to a meeting of the Library Advisory Board, and no action was taken on their complaints; and

WHEREAS, after the MOA's Office of Equal Opportunity began to investigate complaints against Ms. Eledge, the OEO Director was fired and has filed lawsuits in state and federal court for wrongful termination; and

WHEREAS, several inflammatory, discriminatory and racist statements are attributed to Ms. Eledge during her time as Deputy Director of the Library by employees under her management and alleged in the court filings or media articles referenced above, although the MOA has denied these allegations, such alleged statements include:

- "I worked in an Alaska Native village. If it wasn’t for the white man and his oil money, they’d still be raping their daughters in caves.”
- "I don’t have the same views about Eskimos as other people at the library. I worked in Barrow; I know they diddle their kids. It’s a well-known secret, people just don’t talk about it. I knew a 2nd grader that had gonorrhea. They send their FAS [fetal alcohol syndrome] babies to Anchorage because they don’t want to take care of them.”
- That Ms. Eledge told Library security they should “not enforce the policy against ‘mothers with diaper bags,’ but to enforce it strictly against individuals who appeared homeless, many of whom appeared to be Alaska Native.”
- "The atmosphere here has gone downhill with woke movements like Black Lives Matter … I’m telling you, the woke culture is killing libraries and this

country. If I could get rid of those employees, I could turn this library around for the good.”

- “There are too many ‘liberals’ working in libraries.”

and

WHEREAS, several long-time senior level employees at the Loussac Library have reportedly resigned their positions because of the hostile work environment created by Ms. Eledge; and

WHEREAS, Caitlin Shortell of Shortell Law LLC sent a letter on March 14, 2023 addressed to the Anchorage Assembly Members regarding the AERC’s handling of complaints by municipal employees and LGBTQ+ complainants and, stating she represents five library employees, asserted that

- one was constructively discharged after being subjected to pervasive discriminatory speech and unfair treatment by the Deputy Director, who was her supervisor;
- within the past two years, seven library employees have left due to discrimination, harassment, bullying, and unfair treatment
- the Municipality has lost many employees due to unlawful employment practices and a failure to investigate and remedy these employee complaints;

and

WHEREAS, while it is common to decline to comment on matters that are the subject of pending litigation, as Ms. Eledge and the Mayor did for the April 22, 2023 Daily News and ProPublica article, the Mayor’s response was to send a statement: “The Mayor has no comment on these matters due to pending litigation. The Mayor denounces all hateful, racist, and derogatory remarks made by any Municipal employee, and expects those who work for the city to uphold the law and protect the rights of all,” which reportedly was revised and resent a few hours later, that did not include the sentence denouncing “hateful, racist and derogatory remarks,” a concerning action that calls into question the Administration’s remedy to address such allegations; and

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Assembly respects and understands the importance of due process and for the adjudication of claims and grievances to be heard by an impartial decision-maker, and does not by this resolution intend to interfere with those legal proceedings; and

WHEREAS, at the same time the Anchorage Assembly recognizes the existence of friction, hostility and discontent at the Library Department demonstrably due in large part to Ms. Eledge’s reported role and conduct, and is committed to cultivating an inclusive, harmonious, and welcoming workplace across all departments of the Municipality; and

WHEREAS, the Anchorage Assembly recognizes that maintaining Ms. Eledge in this position, who serves at the pleasure of Mayor Bronson, has an appreciable risk of financial liability and lawsuits against the Municipality on the grounds of alleged harassment and unlawful employment practices; and

\[ Id., \text{ see footnote 4.} \]
WHEREAS, the sense of the Assembly is the Mayor is more likely to retain executive
appointees he personally favors and pay out municipal funds to settle employment
related complaints resulting from those executives’ management and conduct rather
than commanding them to address and resolve hostile work environment claims in
departments within his Administration; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Eledge’s inflammatory and discriminatory perspectives and
statements are known and consistent, reported during her candidacy for public office
prior to her employment at the Anchorage Library, and are unlikely to change or
improve even if directed by the Mayor; now, therefore,

BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED BY THE ANCHORAGE ASSEMBLY THAT:

Section 1. There exists a lack of confidence in the Deputy Director’s
performance and conduct at the Anchorage Library and in her capability to operate
and direct the Library and its staff in a manner consistent with the Municipal policies
described in this Resolution.

Section 2. The Anchorage Assembly recommends the Mayor ask for, and accept
when tendered, the resignation of the Deputy Director of Library Services.

PASSED AND APPROVED by the Anchorage Assembly this _______ day
of ________________, 2023.

Chair of the Assembly

ATTEST:

Municipal Clerk

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6 See, e.g., Zachariah Hughes & Emily GoodyKoontz Bronson-appointed Anchorage library
manager accused of racist remarks and fostering a hostile work environment (updated June 9,
2022) <https://www.adn.com/alaska-news/anchorage/2022/06/02/bronson-appointed-anchorage-

7 See, e.g., Rivera, Danielle, Alaska’s News Source, ‘I wrote a couple of them’: Conservative
candidate for Anchorage School Board addresses inflammatory social media posts, (February 10, 2021) <
https://www.alaskasnewssource.com/2021/02/11/i-wrote-a-couple-of-them-conservative-candidate-for-
anchorage-school-board-addresses-inflammatory-social-media-posts/>.