

Submitted by: Assembly Member
Perez-Verdia and Assembly
Chair Constant
Prepared by: Assembly Counsel's Office
For reading: May 9, 2023

ANCHORAGE, ALASKA
AR No. 2023-167

1 **A RESOLUTION OF THE ANCHORAGE MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLY EXPRESSING**
2 **A LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF THE LIBRARY**
3 **DEPARTMENT AND RECOMMENDING HER RESIGNATION.**
4

5 **WHEREAS**, the Municipality of Anchorage has longstanding policies and objectives
6 to promote harmonious and cooperative relations between the Municipality and its
7 employees and to protect the public by ensuring orderly and effective operations of
8 government;¹ and
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10 **WHEREAS**, the personnel rules of the Municipality have an express intent to,
11 among other things, “ensure fair treatment of applicants and employees in all
12 aspects of personnel administration without regard to political affiliation, race, color,
13 national origin, age, sex, religious creed, marital status or disability, and with proper
14 regard for their privacy and constitutional rights as citizens”;² and
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16 **WHEREAS**, the Municipality has enacted strong prohibitions against invidious
17 discrimination embodied in Charter §§ II(7) and 17.01, Anchorage Municipal Code
18 Title 5, *Equal Rights*, and AMC Chapter 7.50; and
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20 **WHEREAS**, the Anchorage Assembly recognizes the importance and significance
21 of strong and reliable leadership and management of the Municipality’s workplaces
22 consistent with the duties to uphold the policies above and expects every official
23 holding public office to project the highest standards of ethics and integrity to
24 implement them; and
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26 **WHEREAS**, in an official Municipality of Anchorage EEO/AA Policy Statement
27 issued January 11, 2023, by Mayor Bronson he reminds us that the MOA takes its
28 Equal Employment Opportunity obligations seriously, that all MOA employees are
29 obligated to comply with MOA’s Policies and Procedures and the EEO/AA Program
30 to ensure that MOA employees and customers are treated in a nondiscriminatory
31 manner, and that all MOA management and supervisory personnel have a
32 responsibility to ensure these are effectively implemented and that EEO matters
33 within their respective areas are promptly and appropriately addressed;³ and
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35 **WHEREAS**, in addition, Mayor Bronson’s EEO/AA Policy Statement also says even
36 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.

³ Accessible at the web pages of the MOA Office of Equal Opportunity,
<https://www.muni.org/Departments/equal_opportunity/Pages/EEOAA.aspx> (accessed May 2, 2023), and
citing MOA Policy & Procedure 40-38, *Unlawful Discrimination and Harassment*, and 20-3, *Affirmative
Action Program*.

1 unacceptable and will not be tolerated, to create a workplace based on fairness,
2 dignity and respect for all MOA employees and customers; and
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4 **WHEREAS**, the public confidence in good government requires the credibility of its
5 public officials in effectuating the foregoing policies; and
6

7 **WHEREAS**, Judy Norton Eledge was selected by Mayor Bronson in late August
8 2021 to be the MOA's new Library Director, but months afterward transferred to the
9 Deputy Director position, a position she has held from November 2021 to the
10 present, rather than go through the Assembly's confirmation process; and
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12 **WHEREAS**, recent allegations have been reported of racist statements about
13 Alaska Natives made by Ms. Eledge in her role as current Deputy Director of Library
14 Services to library employees, in a recording from March 14, 2022;⁴ and
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16 **WHEREAS**, the report referenced above describes how library employees were
17 unable to prompt action or an investigation by the Alaska State Commission for
18 Human Rights or the Anchorage Equal Rights Commission when the complaints
19 about Ms. Eledge were brought to those offices; and
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21 **WHEREAS**, when at least five Library employees complained about Ms. Eledge
22 directly to the Human Resources Department, the then-director wore a t-shirt that
23 said "I'm with Judy" to a meeting of the Library Advisory Board, and no action was
24 taken on their complaints; and
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26 **WHEREAS**, after the MOA's Office of Equal Opportunity began to investigate
27 complaints against Ms. Eledge, the OEO Director was fired and has filed lawsuits in
28 state and federal court for wrongful termination; and
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30 **WHEREAS**, several inflammatory, discriminatory and racist statements are
31 attributed to Ms. Eledge during her time as Deputy Director of the Library by
32 employees under her management and alleged in the court filings or media articles
33 referenced above, although the MOA has denied these allegations, such alleged
34 statements include:

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

⁴ Kyle Hopkins, *In Secret Recording, a Top City Library Official Calls Alaska Natives "Woke" and "Racists"* (April 21, 2023) <<https://www.propublica.org/article/judy-eledge-alaska-libraries-recordings-dunleavy>>

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

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

4 and

5
6 **WHEREAS**, several long-time senior level employees at the Loussac Library have
7 reportedly resigned their positions because of the hostile work environment created
8 by Ms. Eledge; and

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

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

21 and

22
23 **WHEREAS**, while it is common to decline to comment on matters that are the
24 subject of pending litigation, as Ms. Eledge and the Mayor did for the April 22, 2023
25 Daily News and ProPublica article, the Mayor’s response was to send a statement:
26 “The Mayor has no comment on these matters due to pending litigation. The Mayor
27 denounces all hateful, racist, and derogatory remarks made by any Municipal
28 employee, and expects those who work for the city to uphold the law and protect
29 the rights of all,” which reportedly was revised and resent a few hours later, that did
30 not include the sentence denouncing “hateful, racist and derogatory remarks,”⁵ a
31 concerning action that calls into question the Administration’s remedy to address
32 such allegations; and

33
34 **WHEREAS**, the Anchorage Assembly respects and understands the importance of
35 due process and for the adjudication of claims and grievances to be heard by an
36 impartial decision-maker, and does not by this resolution intend to interfere with
37 those legal proceedings; and

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

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

⁵ *Id.*, see footnote 4.

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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;⁶ 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;⁷ 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

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-library-manager-accused-of-racist-remarks-and-fostering-a-hostile-work-environment/>>

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.alaskasnewsresource.com/2021/02/11/i-wrote-a-couple-of-them-conservative-candidate-for-anchorage-school-board-addresses-inflammatory-social-media-posts/>>