



MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE
MAYOR DAVE BRONSON

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

Date: November 28, 2023
To: Anchorage Assembly
From: Mayor Dave Bronson 
Subject: FY 2024 Budget Line-Item Vetoes of Ordinance No. AO 2023-95, As Amended

Today, pursuant to Section 5.02(c) of the Municipal Charter, I hereby, by veto, strike or reduce the following amendments to AO 2023-95, AN ORDINANCE OF THE MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE ADOPTING AND APPROPRIATING FUNDS FOR THE 2024 GENERAL GOVERNMENT OPERATING BUDGET FOR THE MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE, As Amended, that were moved and approved by the Assembly at the meeting of November 21, 2023.

The budget that I proposed in October 2023 took a significant burden off Anchorage taxpayers by proposing a budget that was \$12 million under the tax cap, and was actually less (\$317.3M) than the amount taxed in 2023 (\$317.8M). Department heads in my administration took a long, hard look at how to reduce their operating budgets without sacrificing critical Municipal services. All Anchorage taxpayers can take pride in the work of these departments, and I credit our excellent Office of Management and Budget team for managing the work.

Although I agree with some of the amendments passed by the Assembly – particularly the amendment that reflects the wage increase to APD officers in the deal my administration struck with APDEA – most of these amendments represent projects that do not enhance public safety or food security for Anchorage residents. With the inflation facing us every day at the supermarket and the gas station, now is not the time to begin social experiments.

I. Amendment #52 – 2024 General Government Operating Budget (Omnibus)

Strike Line 1: \$75,000, Planning

My reason is as follows: This amendment intends to fund a contractor to produce communications content for the Planning Department, including web and social media. This is a function that can be served by Municipal employees.

Strike Line 2: \$75,000, Legislative Services

My reason is as follows: While I am in favor of finding solutions to our housing needs in the Municipality, I do not support an additional \$75,000 of property taxes to find these solutions through another housing summit. Planning for an event in 2024, which is based on the positive outcomes of the Assembly's 2023 Housing Action Summit, does not appear to be a good use of property taxes.



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Strike Line 3: \$2,643,116, Various

My reason is as follows: This amendment seeks to reverse various departments' internal decisions to remove vacancies in their departments. Many of these vacancies have gone unfilled for years. Finding the right financial size for a department, and the best way to pay a just wage for Municipal employees, is a decision that should be made by the executive branch.

Strike Line 5: \$224,216, Property Appraisal

My reason is as follows: Directing organizational changes dealing with vacancies is an executive branch function.

Strike Line 6: \$150,000, Assembly

My reason is as follows: While funding a workforce study is a legislative function, the execution of finding a contractor should be an executive branch function. This amendment seeks to give the Assembly both the funding and the executive function.

Strike Line 8: \$0, Fire Department

My reason is as follows: The SAFER grant has been used to fund an additional 18 firefighters above the target level. Organizationally, the Fire Department intends to transition these SAFER grant positions into permanent positions scheduled to be vacated through retirements. Directing changes to organizational structure is an executive function.

Strike Line 10: \$650,000, Police

My reason is as follows: I support the current use of the Alcohol Tax to fund Mobile Intervention Team services in the Anchorage Police Department. This amendment seeks to remove this funding from the Alcohol Tax – outside the tax cap – and instead increase the tax burden on Anchorage taxpayers by placing it within tax capacity.

Strike Line 11: \$125,000, Planning

My reason is as follows: This recurring budget amendment seeks to fund a position on a half-year level, beginning on July 1, 2024. But this therefore cannot be a recurring budget amendment, as it will require the other half of the year to be funded beginning in 2025. This is a hidden, unbudgeted cost of at least \$125,000 beginning in 2025 when the full year position is presumably expected to be funded in perpetuity.

Strike Line 12: \$175,000, Traffic



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My reason is as follows: This is a new recurring budget amendment for a program that was phased out in 2019. I support public safety, and am in favor of reviewing data that helps public safety decisionmakers, but this amendment is a priority of a previous administration that did not produce measurable results for taxpayers.

Strike Line 14: \$165,000, Library

My reason is as follows: This interface position between the Library and the Foundation was not a budget item sought by the Library in internal budget discussions with my administration. Hoopla has been a good tool at the Library, but the Hoopla contractor, Midwest Tape, LLC, recently received a sole-source change order for an additional \$80,000 (AM 835-2023). Taxpayers expect my administration to follow the budget process, and this amendment does not.

Strike Line 19: \$112,500, Assembly Counsel

My reason is as follows: This recurring budget amendment seeks to fund a position on a half-year level, beginning on July 1, 2024. But this cannot be a recurring budget amendment, as it will require the other half of the year to be funded beginning in 2025. This is a hidden, unbudgeted cost of at least \$112,500 beginning in 2025 when the position is presumably expected to be funded in perpetuity.

Strike Line 26: \$45,000, Assembly Consultant for Eklutna

My reason is as follows: My administration has diligently followed the existing agreements between the parties to the Eklutna River Restoration project. I respect the Assembly's interest and advocacy for its position, but I see no need for further money from taxpayers to hire consultants regarding this topic. Further, executing and administering consultant contracts on this topic should be an executive function.

Strike Line 27: \$100,000, Real Estate – Anchorage Downtown Partnership PILT

My reason is as follows: My administration appreciates our partnership with Anchorage Downtown Partnership. An additional \$100,000 in taxpayer monies was not budgeted, and this amendment appears to have circumvented the process.

II. Amendment #55 – 2024 General Government Operating Budget – Alcohol Tax Program

Strike Line 1: \$100,000, Health, Increase to Behavioral Health

My reason is as follows: With the homelessness crisis facing Anchorage, including a radical underestimate of the numbers of people seeking shelter in winter of 2023-24, I do not support additional monies for an increase to the behavioral health portion of the Alcohol Tax. As I have said, I support shelter.



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Strike Line 4: \$150,000, Assembly, Professional Services for Assembly's Housing Initiative

My reason is as follows: I do not support using Alcohol Tax monies to fund the Assembly's professional services contracts for its Housing Action Initiative. In my view, this does little to further the third goal of the Alcohol Tax; namely, preventing and addressing Anchorage's homelessness crisis.

III. Amendment #53 – 2024 General Government Operating Budget – ACCEEF Implementation Team Support Direct Grant to ACT

Strike \$100,000, ACCEEF Implementation Team Support Direct Grant to ACT

My reason is as follows: This is a grant to Alaska Children's Trust, which already is receiving a separate \$1.75 million-dollar grant from the Anchorage Health Department. Moreover, this grant is specifically to implement the marijuana tax. In my view, such a cost should be borne by marijuana users, not by Anchorage property taxpayers.

IV. Amendment #4 – 2024 General Government Operating Budget – Real Estate Housing Fund

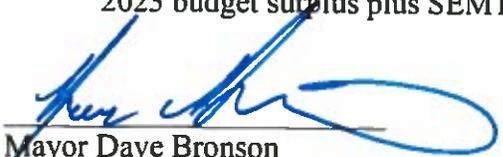
Strike \$500,000, Real Estate Department Housing Fund

My reason is as follows: This is a budget amendment that was not requested by Real Estate, but rather imposed by the Assembly as a fund source for housing providers, provided that the provider receives the Assembly's final approval. This amendment was originally proposed at the \$3,000,000 funding level, and would create a fund to rehabilitate vacant or abandoned properties and achieve rent stabilization. While well-meaning, I believe the concept requires further planning before \$500,000 of taxpayer money is spent.

V. Amendment #13 – 2024 General Government Operating Budget – AFD Mobile Crisis Team

Strike \$2,447,180, Anchorage Fire Department Mobile Crisis Team Operational Funding

My reason is as follows: I support the current use of the Alcohol Tax to fund Mobile Crisis Team services in the Anchorage Fire Department. This amendment seeks to remove this funding from the Alcohol Tax – outside the tax cap – and instead use 2023 budget surplus plus SEMT funds.


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