MUNICIPALITY OF ANCHORAGE

Assembly Memorandum

No. AM 786-2017

Meeting Date: November 21, 2017

From: Assembly Chair Traini

Subject: AN ORDINANCE OF THE ANCHORAGE MUNICIPAL ASSEMBLY AMENDING ANCHORAGE MUNICIPAL CODE CHAPTER 8.80 TO REMOVE THE EXEMPTION FROM FEES FOR EXCESSIVE POLICE RESPONSES FOR NON-PROFIT AND CHARITABLE PROPERTIES, AND ADD ON-SITE SECURITY GUARDS AT COMMERCIAL PROPERTIES AS AN EXAMPLE OF APPROPRIATE CORRECTIVE ACTION.

Several non-profit and charitable organizations in Anchorage have required frequent and excessive police responses to their sites over the past several months, and even years. Calls to the police from non-profit and charitable establishments have increased to well over 6,000 calls in one week, compared to a total of 8,000 calls over the whole year of 2016, according to a recent article published in the Alaska Dispatch News.

Anchorage Municipal Code section 8.80.010 defines “excessive police response” for commercial properties as “each police response in excess of 100 to a commercial unit in a calendar year.” For purposes of that section, a commercial property is any property that is not residential, and if they were not expressly exempted it would include those used for nonprofit, religious, charitable, cemetery, hospital, or educational purposes. This proposed ordinance removes that exemption. According to the Property Appraisal Division, there are 944 parcels in the Municipality within those categories and affected by removal of the exemption. It is anticipated only a few of those would actually exceed the 100 police responses threshold.

The Anchorage Police Department is already stretched thin, both physically and financially, with crime in the city. The large volume of calls from some non-profit and charitable organizations draw a substantial amount of the responders’ time and resources. These uses are exempt from paying taxes that fund those basic services by state law, and they are not being billed for police responses that exceed 100 in a calendar year. It is just and equitable to hold those properties responsible for the number of police responses above their fair share of the basic police services provided by the taxpayers. The Code currently exempts those uses from fees for excessive police responses, but state law does not require this exemption.
The ordinance also includes the provision of on-site security staff as an appropriate corrective action that commercial properties may take to avoid being liable for the fees for excessive police responses. It is anticipated the costs of providing security staff would be far less than the total fees for excessive police responses for many commercial properties. And, the expected reduction in calls to police resulting from having on-site security guards deterring criminal conduct should lessen the burden on APD’s resources.

Non-profits and charitable organizations need assistance to maintain the safety of the employees, volunteers, customers and clients. This ordinance is intended to indirectly effect an increase in safety and security at those locations.

Prepared by: Assembly Counsel
Respectfully submitted: Dick Traini, Assembly Chair
District 4--Midtown