

The Employee Relations Team (ERT) held our regular meeting on Thursday November 8th and discussed the ongoing arbitration conversation. Many members of the ERT were present at the work session with City Council and appreciated the opportunity for Council to hear from the ERT. The Employee Relations Team members remain committed to the opinion that arbitration *should not* be removed as a final and binding appeal option during an employee dispute.

As discussed in the legal memorandum provided by the city attorneys, eliminating arbitration will not eliminate employee claims. Instead those claims will be directed into a court of law. Sending employee claims into a court of law can mean a more expensive and lengthy process with the potential of additional delays to a resolution caused by the appeal process.

The arbitration section of our current personnel regulations provides the City with a more efficient option for the resolution of any disputes with a professionally trained and non-biased outside arbitrator.

It is our understanding that the arbitration process has only been used a handful of times and, as stated by the Human Resources Director during the work session, is common in union, partial union and non-union municipalities around Alaska.

We appreciate the steps that have been taken to begin the process of revising the entire personnel regulations document but believe that individual changes to the regulations would be premature. Instead, we should continue in the process of updating the entire personnel regulations document. The ERT Chair and Chair Pro tem are currently assisting in the initial revisions by the HR department and the entire ERT is ready to review the draft revisions when they are completed.

It is the opinion of the ERT that proper training for supervisors in handling disciplinary actions will be the most effective to reduce employee disputes that are escalated to the level of binding arbitration. The online training currently required for employees covers the subjects of sexual harassment, controlled substance abuse and workplace violence. The further training options that are currently being pursued by our Human Resources Department are a good step towards preventing arbitration in the future and should be fully implemented before this change to the regulations is considered. We hope to see management and disciplinary training for executive staff and supervisors, as well as separate training for all employees to ensure that everyone understands the personnel regulations and disciplinary processes.