

# City of Marco Island

## *Press Release*

02-03-21  
21-10

The following outlines the findings and intent to discipline Fire Rescue Chief Chris Byrne from City Manager Mike McNees.

### Factual Background

On January 20, 2021 City staff members were preparing for the first opportunity to offer the Covid-19 vaccination on Marco Island. A web link had been provided by Collier County to the Eventbrite platform to allow reservations for those vaccinations to be made. That link was to be made available on the City of Marco Island website and through the City's collateral social media accounts at 2:00 p.m. on that day.

At approximately 1:50 p.m. Fire Chief Chris Byrne was notified by Collier County staff that the reservation link had been compromised, and that one reservation for vaccination had already been made. That reservation had been made by Mr. William Frazzano, the husband of Marco Island Police Chief Tracy Frazzano. With public opening of the web portal looming, Chief Byrne chose not to attempt to purge the one early registration in that moment so as not to interfere with the upcoming registrations. He did speak to Chief Frazzano, who indicated that she had provided the Eventbrite link to her husband, believing that the link would go live at 2:00 p.m. as planned.

At 2:00 p.m. on January 20 the Eventbrite registration link went live on the City's various portals, and approximately 3 minutes later all available reservations had been filled.

On January 22, 2021 Mr. William Frazzano, who is 65 years of age or older and a Florida resident appeared at Veterans Community Park on Marco Island and received the Covid-19 vaccination for which he had secured the reservation on January 20.

### Analysis and Findings

It is a fundamental tenet of ethical public service that as public employees we conduct ourselves in a manner that merits the trust and respect of our communities. It is also fundamental that we not leverage our public positions for personal gain or benefit.

Fire Chief Chris Byrne's decision not to attempt to purge the early registration in the minutes before the system went live is understandable under the circumstances. Ensuring that the process be completed smoothly was an appropriate overarching goal. After the fact however Chief Byrne's tacit approval of Mr. Frazzano receiving the vaccine under the circumstances represents a clear failure to balance his desire to "do good" with his professional and ethical responsibilities to the community. This breach is compounded by the fact that allowing Mr. Frazzano to receive the vaccination required that Chief Byrne not report the breach. While his sensitivity to Chief Frazzano's health demonstrates compassion and empathy, his inability to temper that instinct to help with appropriate professional decision-making represents a serious lapse in judgment.

Availability of and access to the Covid-19 vaccination is far and away the most sensitive issue currently of these times. Chief Byrne's lack of sensitivity to that issue, and his desire to help Chief Frazzano ahead of a carefully devised and fair public process to distribute the vaccine represent serious lapses of judgment on his part. As Fire Chief he is in position to guide others in the delivery of emergency medical services and must appropriately balance what are often conflicting priorities. He is the role model.

In holding Chief Byrne accountable for this lapse fairness dictates that this failure in judgment be balanced against his otherwise clean record in more than thirty years of employment with the Marco Island Fire Department and its predecessor organization.

It is my determination that Chris Byrne will be suspended from his duties as Fire Chief for the City of Marco Island for a period of thirty calendar days though I will offer him a predetermination meeting within 24 hours before this decision is final. Thereafter, the period of suspension will commence at a time to be determined, but no later than March 1, 2021. During that period he will not participate in the operation of the department in any way, and will receive no compensation or accrue any benefits as would normally accrue to him as an employee of the department or the City of Marco Island.

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