

Jerry Cantrell
Civil Service Commission, Chair
City of Madeira Beach
300 Municipal Drive
Madeira Beach, FL 33708

March 19, 2026

Chief Clint Belk
Acting City Manager
City of Madeira Beach
300 Municipal Drive
Madeira Beach, FL 33708

Subject: Urgent Need to Strengthen Employee Safety and Incident-Response Protocols

Dear Chief Belk,

I am writing to formally express concern regarding recent incidents involving harassment and physical contact directed at City employees, and to recommend immediate improvements to the City's incident-response procedures. These issues implicate both the City's own Personnel Policy and several provisions of Florida law that protect public employees.

The *City of Madeira Beach Personnel Policy, Rules, and Procedures Manual*, adopted by Ordinance 25-01 and effective April 6, 2025, includes a General Policy Statement and an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) section that prohibit harassment and discrimination in the workplace. These provisions obligate the City to maintain a work environment free from intimidation, hostile conduct, or any form of harassment directed at employees.

Florida law further reinforces these obligations. The Florida Civil Rights Act (FCRA), §§760.01–760.11, prohibits workplace harassment and hostile work environments within public-sector employment. Additionally, §784.07, Florida Statutes, enhances penalties for assault or battery committed against public employees engaged in lawful duties. Related statutes—including §877.03 (disorderly conduct) and §843.02 (obstruction of public officers)—also apply to conduct that threatens or interferes with employees performing their responsibilities.

Two recent incidents highlight the need for a more consistent and assertive response protocol. In one case, a City employee reported harassment by a group of teenagers, but the responding deputy issued only a warning and did not document the complaint. In

another, a member of the public physically chest-bumped a City employee while the employee was performing their duties. Both incidents fall squarely within the conduct prohibited by City policy and Florida law. Failure to document or escalate such events exposes the City to unnecessary liability and undermines employee safety.

To ensure compliance with our legal obligations and to protect City staff, I respectfully recommend the following actions and will bring this information forward to the Civil Service Commission at its next regularly planned meeting:

- Establish a mandatory reporting and documentation protocol for all incidents involving harassment, threats, or physical contact directed at City employees.
- Coordinate with the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office to ensure deputies understand the City's expectations regarding documentation of incidents involving municipal staff.
- Provide refresher training to supervisors and department heads on the City's anti-harassment obligations and escalation procedures.
- Communicate to all employees that the City will enforce a zero-tolerance approach to harassment and assault, consistent with the Personnel Policy and Florida statutes.

The City has both a legal and ethical responsibility to provide a safe working environment. Strengthening our response protocols will help ensure compliance with state law, reduce liability exposure, and reinforce the City's commitment to protecting its employees.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I am available to discuss these recommendations further at your convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jerry Cantrell", written in a cursive style.

Jerry Cantrell
Civil Service Commission, Chair