

# Don't Trade Away Our Safety

By Michael Hook  
July 2, 2026

A recent proposal that passed the Marco City Council should alarm all of us. By the slimmest majority, the council has ordered the city manager to take the first step toward disbanding and defunding the Marco Island Police Department (MIPD) and outsourcing the city's law enforcement to the Collier County Sheriff's Office.

While Marco Island consistently ranks among Florida's safest cities, these proponents claim that outsourcing could save the city money. But in reality, it's a dangerous gamble with our safety and our tax dollars.

Longtime Marco Island residents have seen this before. When the city was created in 1997, it relied on Sheriff patrols for policing. It did not take long for residents and city leaders to recognize that the arrangement was ineffective.

Voters overwhelmingly passed a 2000 advisory referendum urging the city to establish its own police department. The City Council agreed and created the MIPD, which began operations in 2001.

Residents and city leaders recognized the demographic, logistical, and geographic challenges that a tourist destination like Marco Island faces in maintaining public safety. As we have matured as a city, these challenges have intensified.

With a large senior population, response time is critical. With our local police, anyone making a 911 call can expect assistance within minutes on our 16.5-square-mile island. Our officers are singularly focused on our community, know every street, every neighborhood, and every quirk.

Even with mobile units stationed on the island, the Sheriff's Office will face challenges in addressing our island's unique characteristics. Deputies would likely be rotated in and out of Marco Island, leaving many unfamiliar with our beaches, tourist corridors, and residential patterns. The community-focused policing our residents rely on today would be replaced by a transactional, generalized law-enforcement model designed to police the 2,000-square-mile county.

How about the matter of accountability? Our police chief answers to our City Manager, who answers to our City Council, which answers to us. That chain of accountability disappears the moment we hand policing over to the county.

What happens to noise enforcement, patrols of our beaches, enforcement of fishing regulations, parking enforcement, our student resource officers, and security for large events? These non-emergency situations will likely be casualties of the expected one-size-fits-all policing the county would provide.

And the costs? Contract arrangements with government agencies never become cheaper over time. Once Marco Island cedes control of its police function, it loses meaningful leverage to curb cost escalations. We lose our decision-making authority while being forced into a take-it-or-leave-it scenario.

Cost savings are also likely to diminish because the city would need to address current and future police pension fund liabilities and still retain its own code enforcement infrastructure, which is currently under the MIPD.

Thanks to this recent action by the council majority, officer morale suffers, concerns about job security arise, and new officer recruitment stalls. All while the department transitions to a new chief. Is this how we repay those who keep Marco Island one of the safest cities in Florida?

The city council needs to fix this now. Keep our policing local. Keep it accountable.

Keep control of the tax dollars we spend. Support our police officers and let them do their jobs. Rescind this proposal.

*Michael Hook is a full-time resident of Marco Island and the President of the Marco Police Foundation.*