



PRESS RELEASE FROM THE SOUTHWEST FLORIDA POLICE BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SOUTHWEST FLORIDA PBA PRESIDENT MICK MCHALE CALLS FOR THE IMMEDIATE SUSPENSION OF BRADENTON POLICE CHIEF MELANIE BEVAN, FROM HER OFFICAL DUTIES, PENDING THE OUTCOME OF AN INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION INTO CHIEF BEVAN’S REPEATED PATTERN OF ABUSE OF POWER, INCLUDING THE UNLAWFAUL SEARCH OF A BRADENTON RESIDENT’S HOME WITHOUT A SEARCH WARRANT

SOUTHWEST FLORIDA PBA TO FILE AN UNFAIR LABOR PRACTICE LAWSUIT THIS WEEK AGAINST THE BRADENTON POLICE DEPARTMENT, CITING THE CHIEF’S REPEATED VIOLATIONS OF HER EMPLOYEES’ EMPLOYMENT RIGHTS

BRADENTON, FL- The following statement can be attributed to Southwest Florida PBA President Mick McHale:

“The number one priority of any Police Chief is to uphold the law, while protecting the rights of the public, as well as the rights of the law enforcement officers under their supervision. Unfortunately, recent events at the Bradenton Police Department have shown that Chief Melanie Bevan has abdicated those responsibilities. On July 14, 2022, Bradenton Police Officers were called to assist Florida Department of Corrections Probation Officers with an arrest warrant. Several Bradenton Police officers responded to a home, including Police Chief Melanie Bevan, who was supervising the training of a new officer at the time. While on scene, Chief Bevan reached her hand inside of the pocket of a bystander on scene without any warrant or warning. After reaching her hand into the pocket of the bystander, she felt something and then instructed one of her officers to find out what was in the pocket.

After conducting the search of the uninvolved bystander, Chief Bevan then proceeded to enter the home and began searching the home. She wore black gloves and began looking around the home with the aid of her flashlight. She was likewise moving things inside the home as part of her search. Officers on scene were in disbelief as they witnessed the Chief unlawfully search the home without a search warrant, even after the defendant had been arrested and secured in a patrol vehicle. The Chief’s unlawful search of the home caused

obvious conflict with the officers' duty to uphold the Constitution. At no point were officers threatened and there was no other justification for a warrantless search of the home. In short, Chief Bevan's search violated clearly established Fourth Amendment law.

The homeowner realized that the Chief had no lawful basis to search the home and told Chief Bevan that she needed to leave the home if she did not have a search warrant. Chief Bevan refused to leave the home and falsely claimed that she could conduct a warrantless search of the home given that a person was just arrested inside the house.

The PBA is requesting that the City immediately begin an independent investigation into the unlawful behavior of Chief Melanie Bevan. An investigation by her own internal affairs division is highly prejudicial and inappropriate. Having the highest-ranking official at the Bradenton Police Department conducting unlawful searches, while training new officers is highly disturbing and must be addressed immediately.

The current investigation being conducted by Chief Bevan's own Internal Affairs Department has already led to abusive and prejudicial interrogations of the witnesses. An investigation into the behavior of the internal affairs department should also be ordered as they have intentionally violated the officer witnesses' rights by ordering the officers to show the contents of their personal cell phones, subjecting them to hostile interrogations, and unlawfully imprisoning witnesses. In fact, during the interrogation of one officer, she was brazenly denied her right to have a union representative present and she was denied permission to use the restroom.

Chief Bevan believes that she is above the law, and she uses intimidation to compel compliance. Chief Bevan has initiated well over a hundred internal affairs investigations into her own employees in just the past year.

Accordingly, the PBA asks that the City suspend Chief Bevan from the Bradenton Police Department, pending the resolution of an unbiased investigation of her behavior. The investigation should also examine the behavior of the internal affairs investigators Chief Bevan entrusted to "investigate" their own Chief, and their abusive conduct. Enough is enough. The public and our police officers deserve better!"

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