

KEYSWEEKLY

CITY HALL RALLY BLASTS ICE TACTICS AFTER ALLEGED GUN INCIDENT IN MARATHON

By **Alex Rickert** - May 5, 2026



Demonstrators gather in Oceanfront Park behind Marathon City Hall in a show of support for the Middle Keys' immigrant population.

One week after a Customs and Border Patrol agent reportedly held a gun to the head of a legal worker in Marathon, Middle Keys residents gathered behind Marathon City Hall to

reaffirm support for the city's immigrant population – and denounce the tactics employed by Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

The gathering replaced the group's intent to address the Marathon City Council in a scheduled April 28 workshop session, asking the council to sign a resolution in support of the island's immigrant population. In January, the group made the same request to the council ahead of staff and council members' advocacy trip to Florida Keys Day in Tallahassee the following month. The city later canceled the session, citing a lack of agenda items for discussion.

A crowd of around 60 attended the demonstration in Oceanfront Park, with roughly a dozen speakers following organizer Laurie Swanson in relaying their own personal experiences with friends and neighbors deported in sweeping roundups across the Keys.

"When they posted about this rally, there were a lot of cruel, hateful comments – some of whom were my neighbors," said Mary Ackroyd, a central figure in the local Justice for Immigrants Coalition. "But then I thought, my fear is nothing compared to yours – the fear of getting detected, detained, deported, when you've done all the right things, filled out all the forms, paid the huge fees and showed up for every hearing while building a life in this community."

Vladimir De La Torre recounted his story in the alleged April 21 incident with agent Bruno Cabral, which resulted in a federal complaint filed against Cabral by local construction company Design Center.

"He went in (to our jobsite), saying that we were illegals," De La Torre said. "When I tried to record it, he took out his gun, and he put it to my head. I couldn't record it, because I was scared for my life. I couldn't do anything."

"I feel like we're good enough to help, to be at a retail store, to sell you something, but we're not good enough to stay in this country," another speaker said. "I do a lot of immigration paperwork, and 90% of these people ... were at a border and inspected, and this country gave them a legal entrance."



"There's good and bad everywhere, and there's good and bad here that we can't deport. The criminals aren't out there trying to work knowing they're going to get caught. The criminals are at home hiding."

Speaking to the Weekly on April 28, interim city manager Steve Williams said the cancellation was unrelated to the protest. Since workshop meetings were reinstated in January 2023, the council has forgone its second monthly session roughly 10 times. The council's May 2026 workshop, originally set for May 26, is also canceled due to proximity to the Memorial Day holiday.

"We have canceled workshops before, and there were no agenda items to proceed with," Williams said.



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ALEX RICKERT

Alex Rickert made the perfectly natural career progression from dolphin trainer to newspaper editor in 2021 after freelancing for Keys Weekly while working full time at Dolphin Research Center. A resident of Marathon since 2015, he fell in love with the Florida Keys community by helping multiple organizations and friends rebuild in the wake of Hurricane Irma. An avid runner, actor, and spearfisherman, he spends as much of his time outside of work on or under the sea having civil disagreements with sharks.



