

ETHICS OPINION
Office of the City Attorney

TO: Commissioner Larry Vignola
FROM: John J. Hearn, City Attorney
RE: Accepting United Airlines flight voucher
DATE: March 16, 2018

You have asked if you and your family may accept United Airlines flight vouchers from family friends who were affected by the recent Marjory Stoneman Douglas tragedy. The vouchers were provided to those family friends by March for Our Lives Action Fund, Inc, a Delaware not for profit corporation, to allow them to invite family and friends to the March for Our Lives event on March 24, 2018 in Washington D.C. You have also informed this office that, although you met this family shortly after the tragic events of February 14, 2018, you have quickly become very close family friends and it is in this personal capacity that you and your family have been offered the flight vouchers to join them at the March for Our Lives in Washington D.C. on March 24, 2018. Finally, you have advised that because you are attending the event in your personal capacity, you are not accepting the flight vouchers or attending the March for Our Lives in your official capacity as a Coral Springs Commissioner. If these facts are incorrect or inaccurate in any way, please let us know since it may affect the opinion that we give.

The Broward County Code of Ethics, provides that "no Elected Official, or relative, registered domestic partner or governmental office staff of any Elected Official, shall accept any gift, directly or indirectly, with a value in excess of \$5.00" from any lobbyist registered with the City, from any principal/employer of any such lobbyist, or from vendors or contractors of the City. Section 1-19(c)(1)a., County Code of Ordinances. Commissioners may accept gifts in an "official capacity" from "other sources" up to \$50.00 per occurrence. Section 1-19(c)(1)b., County Code of Ordinances. The \$50.00 limitation does not apply to gifts given to Commissioners in their personal (non-official) capacity. Such gifts are still subject to the reporting requirements of Florida Statutes section 112.3148. Section 1-19(c)(1)c., County Code of Ordinances.

The family is not a lobbyist, vendor, or contractor of the City. The March for Our Lives Action Fund, Inc. is also not a lobbyist, vendor or contractor of the City. Although, you would not be able to accept the vouchers if being provided to you and your relatives in your official capacity, as the value is greater than \$50.00, because the gift is being given to you and your relatives in your personal capacity, the \$50.00 limitation does not

apply. Therefore, you any your family may accept the flight vouchers. However, since it is anticipated that the value of the vouchers exceeds \$100.00, you must determine the actual value of the vouchers and report the gift in accordance with state law.

If you need additional guidance regarding this matter, please feel free to contact my office.