

Mayor  
JIM O'BRIEN



Town Manager  
ROBERT SMITH

Clerk  
DOROTHY BURKHALTER

614 Main Street, Windermere, FL 34786  
Office: (407) 876-2563 Fax: (407) 876-0103

## **Town of Windermere Prioritizes School Safety and Fair Compensation**

On December 4, 2024, Orange County Public Schools (OCPS) announced consideration of implementing school guardians across five Orange County jurisdictions. The Town of Windermere, in collaboration with Apopka, Ocoee, Winter Park, and Winter Garden, is currently in negotiations with OCPS to secure fair compensation for school resource officers (SROs) in local schools.

### **Commitment to School Safety**

The Town of Windermere and the Windermere Police Department prioritize having SROs in our schools and have never considered removing them. Our dedication to safeguarding our schools and fostering a secure learning environment remains steadfast.

### **Fiscal Accountability**

We maintain fiscal accountability to our citizens. The primary point of contention is the 1.5% raise offered by OCPS for the second year of the contract. Given substantial cost increases experienced by law enforcement agencies, this increase is insufficient.

### **Existing Contract and Future Considerations**

The existing one-year contract allows for all parties to reassess available funds for the upcoming year and evaluate additional costs incurred by law enforcement. This reassessment is crucial in determining fair compensation for SRO services.

### **Responsible Financial Stewardship**

Accepting a minimal increase in subsequent years would be fiscally irresponsible. We must ensure responsible financial stewardship to maintain the sustainability, quality, and effectiveness of our services. Notably, the Town's general fund currently subsidizes 54% of SRO costs.

### **Community Contribution**

Our residents contribute to the school millage rate through taxes and supplement these funds with additional tax revenue from the Town's general fund. A fair and equitable agreement acknowledging our community's significant financial commitment is essential. Under Florida law, OCPS holds the responsibility for security at all public schools. To support this mission, law enforcement agencies throughout Orange County have maintained a consistent presence in schools for many years.

### **Commitment to Collaboration**

The Town of Windermere and the Windermere Police Department have no intention of removing SROs from schools. In the spirit of good faith, The Town of Windermere has kept our SRO at Windermere Elementary and will continue until an agreement is reached. We remain committed to resolving this matter with OCPS, prioritizing the safety of our students and staff.