



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

August 9, 2022

Contact: Linda Piotrowicz  
[LPiotrowicz@wildwood-fl.gov](mailto:LPiotrowicz@wildwood-fl.gov)  
352-330-1330, ext. 110

## **Wildwood Commission Approves Pay Increase for Police**

Wildwood City Manager Jason McHugh today announced a pay increase for police officers, effective October 1, 2022, approved yesterday by the city commission at its regular meeting.

In a memo to McHugh, Police Chief Randy Parmer presented information on starting salaries offered by 14 other municipalities, counties, and state law enforcement agencies. Wildwood's current starting rate, \$43,000, was second lowest of the group. The memo noted most others on the list were either under negotiation at the time of the study or were already set to be adjusted upward.

"As you are aware," Parmer wrote, "the recruitment and retention of qualified officers is a very competitive process in today's climate. Agencies consistently raise starting salaries and offer bonuses in order to attract new officers, as well as hire experienced officers away from other departments."

The average starting salary for the study group is scheduled to increase to at least \$49,136 but may grow higher as contracts are negotiated. Based on that data, Parmer recommended the city consider raising starting salaries for its officers to \$51,000, effective with the new fiscal year.

McHugh explained to the commission that if approved, the increase would be applied equitably throughout the department, not just to new hires, so current employees would benefit proportionately.

"We don't want Wildwood to be a training ground for other cities," said Mayor Ed Wolf. "After investing in these men and women, we definitely don't want to lose them to other police departments."

Commissioner Joe Elliott, also in support of the recommendation, emphasized the need to extend compensation studies beyond law enforcement to the rest of the city's departments and ensure employee recruitment and retainment remains a top priority.

"Losing employees creates a huge problem and would have a significant impact on the rest of the city," Elliott said.

McHugh agreed, responding that he and his senior management team are conducting research and discussing options for the entire Wildwood team. He will provide recommendations to the commission for discussion and action during the August 29, 2022, budget workshop. If adopted, the solution would be shared in detail with all city staff and implemented as part of the FY 2023 budget and new strategic plan.

"All eyes are on the City of Wildwood right now," Wolf added. "In my opinion, not only do we have the best police department in Florida, we have the best workforce, period. The last thing we want is to risk the city's enormous success because we lose the very employees who have contributed to it."

Commission and other public meeting information can be found on the city's website, [www.wildwood-fl.gov](http://www.wildwood-fl.gov), by clicking on "Agenda."