

State of the Village 2000

BY MAYOR EVELYN GREER



It is my responsibility under the Village of Pinecrest Charter to give a state of the Village report each winter.

It seems amazing, but the Village will celebrate its fifth anniversary this coming spring. We are now a regular city in Miami-Dade County, functioning as part of the two-tier government structure. We are no longer odd or new, although I believe that our success serves as a model for many groups longing to go down our road.

I continue to view the Village operations in two segments: first, the daily delivery of services such as police protection, code enforcement, building and zoning and parks and recreation; and second, the capital projects of the Village.

We are now delivering services in all areas where we intend to do so, and we continue to create structure and enhance the way in which we deliver those services. Delivering high quality services is a daily concern of every employee of the Village, and our services are wonderful or mediocre depending on the situation. I know that everyone involved in the Village, paid employee and volunteer, wants to deliver the best quality service every day.

In operations, we now employ about 120 people — 66 in the Police Department, 21 in parks and recreation and 34 in all of the rest of our government.

Our excellent and extremely dedicated manager Peter Lombardi continues to run a lean operation; this is great for the bottom line, but fewer people is still fewer hours to answer calls, solve problems and finish projects. The balance between a larger work force and more time to deal with problems is always an issue, and different councils will solve it in different ways, none of which is the only way.

Our focus again this year is on law enforcement. Our new police chief John Hohensee has brought renewal to our police force, solved a number of technical problems, raised morale and brought a high level of professionalism to the force. Every month Council members get copies of four or five letters of appreciation to the police department, along with one or two complaints; we continue to try to do better, but are certain that we will not achieve perfection. The Village continues to hire sworn officers in an effort to remain fully staffed, but demand for police offi-

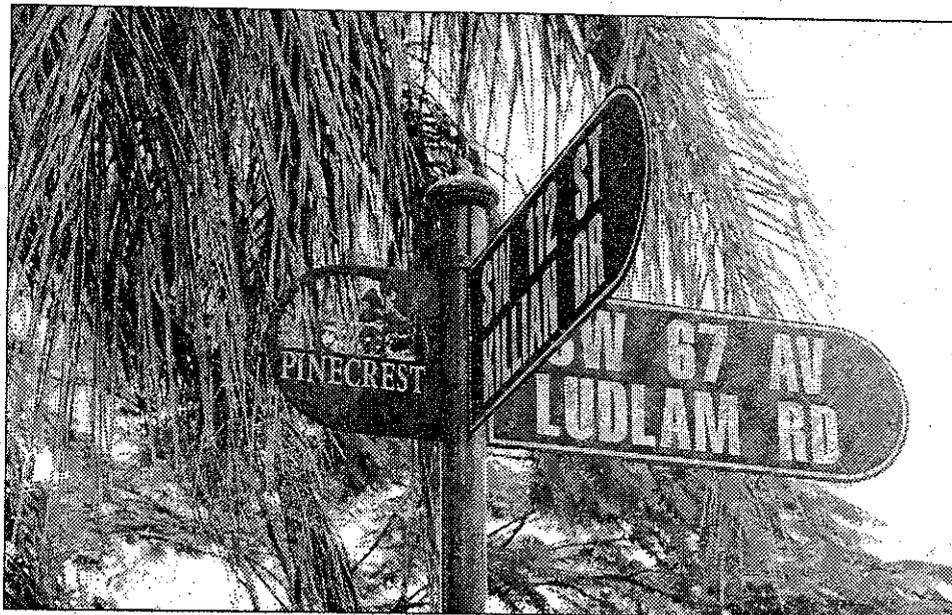
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New street signs have been selected.

cers is a nationwide issue.

We continue to have an adversarial relationship with the Police Benevolent Association, which represents our sworn officers. Specifically, the PBA wants a "just cause" for termination provision in our contract with unionized employees, which we believe would severely limit the Village's ability to terminate poorly performing officers. The Village currently has a multilevel appeal system, including levels of review of all decisions and hearings where lawyers represent officers, which the council unanimously believes has worked well. We anticipate continued disagreements with the PBA, which bitterly opposed the incorporation of Pinecrest.

In capital projects, we have made progress on our five-year capital plan. Our largest project, Pinecrest Park, is a beautiful facility — which I encourage everyone to visit — with a scheduled completion date in December and an opening-for-play date in February (the grass has to grow in).

This year we hope to complete the re-paving of all of our roads and begin selective construction and improvements of sidewalks on main roads in order to connect some of our schools and parks. The street signs have been selected — hopefully you have seen them on 67th avenue — and will be installed early next year. We are preparing the plans to renovate Sunniland Park, which will bring that facility up to the standard set by Pinecrest Park, and

that should begin in late spring.

We ended the 1999-2000 fiscal year with an additional budget surplus, over our budgeted surplus, of almost \$2 million. The \$2 million represents \$1,350,000 in increased real property tax revenue, due to all of the new construction and home sales in the Village, and spending that was below the budgeted level.

We have allocated this surplus to capital projects, including funds to new stormwater projects in areas that experienced flooding during the recent no-name storm, to implement our improvement of the Red Road/Old Cutler corridor, to landscape the median on S. Dixie Highway and to supplement our street tree-landscaping program.

The major unresolved issue for the Village is the location of Village Hall. The council is seriously considering a location on the northeast corner of Parrot Jungle, where the utility buildings are located next to the Florida Power and Light power station. We expect to hold a public hearing on this issue early next year, so please look for this notice if you are interested.

As I begin my second and last four-year term, I continue to enjoy moving projects forward, solving problems and dealing with complaints.

My best wishes to all of you for happy and healthy holidays and a wonderful New Year. Please contact me at 305-854-8989 or by email at evelyn-greer@greerco.com.