

2019 STATE OF THE VILLAGE

The Honorable Joseph M. Corradino
Mayor

January 30, 2019

Pinecrest Gardens
Cypress Hall

The State of the Village of Pinecrest continues to be as strong as ever. Together, as citizens, elected officials, and staff we have been able to stay focused on our mission, which is ultimately enhancing our character and quality of life. While we may take this for granted, it is not this way in many places. Just look around, there is a lack of civility and effectiveness, resulting in bickering and fighting over the most essential activities of government. We strive to rise above this confusion. We work hard to provide a thoughtful, reasonable and rational approach to local government.

Cities are places where many different people come together to provide for the common good. But like all successful entities, they must be capable of growth and adaptation. Going forward there will be significant opportunities to adapt in Pinecrest. The hard part about government is how we go about understanding and making these choices at the right time. In Pinecrest, our primary responsibilities are to administer our land use, police, parks, and public facilities.

But what does it really mean to run a good city? Does it mean simply mean that we provide the highest quality services at the lowest tax rate? While many communities struggle with it, we've got that down. Or does it mean more? Like contributing something positive to society at-large by tackling our community's greatest challenges, even though they may not be completely under our jurisdiction. Undertaking efforts that address issues not only generated from within our area but those that come from beyond our boundaries? Providing a higher level of cultural commitment? If done well, do these efforts result in a reliable and consistent increase in value for our citizens? The answer is yes.

By the numbers, we are thriving; but running a highly functional village is more than the numbers. Much of what we have always done in Pinecrest is attitude. Each year we work hard, as an entire organization to become the best we can for our community. We are mindful of who we are as a city, what we like and don't like. We attempt to create innovative ways to approach our problems. We have challenging goals and aspirations that require the work of many people to accomplish, and that no one person could ever achieve on their own. And finally, the ingredient that makes it all work, is that every person in every department does their jobs with respect, love and compassion for the Village, the mission and the citizens.

As a result, Pinecrest continues to have some of the highest property values and lowest tax rates in Miami-Dade County. We maintain a solid AAA bond rating. The funds in our reserves exceed the amount prescribed by our financial policy and provide an important funding source in the case of an emergency. Our budget is lean and focuses on maximizing dollars by providing high quality services with a small but dedicated staff. We have protected ourselves as well as possible against economic downturn.

The Village is one of the safest communities in the State of Florida, and fortunately, crimes this year are at an all-time low. In fact, crime is less than half of what it was before incorporation,

and has consistently trended downward. Our police force is fully staffed with a work load that allows them to practice community policing, in a way that gets them to interact with our citizens on a personal basis. Our police force is one of the most well compensated organizations in the state, and it shows. Our response time is a matter of minutes. We are doubly accredited. We have more crime watch neighborhoods set up than ever. As always, we remain committed to providing the police with the tools and resources they need to continue combating crime in the Village. And, person for person, you couldn't find a finer group of people.

We strictly, fairly and consistently enforce our codes; processing thousands of permits and inspections each year. We diligently review and revise our codes to assure they are responsive to ever changing needs. Councilmember Doug Kraft has worked hard with our staff to assure this work continues. Our streets and public rights-of-way are neat and clean, offering the Pinecrest look that is so attractive to many. Our parks are first rate providing both active and passive opportunities for people across the county. The cultural commitment to the community is unwavering. We internally administer our government so that is as efficient and effective as possible. And, most importantly, we are focused on providing a concierge level of service, so that when our citizens have a need, we are there to find the best possible solution.

Over the last year, there are many examples of this in practice. Last January, we gathered for the Inspire Pinecrest conversation; the results of which are the foundation for how we will move forward in the coming years. We have just partially replaced a recently retired bond to undertake nearly 40 of these much-needed capital projects necessary to enhance our community. We completed our first transportation master plan and will begin providing multimodal opportunities for all our road users. Soon we will be prioritizing a list of projects in each mode that fits into our annual budget. Councilmember Jim McDonald has been a leader in transportation. He sits as the Chairman of the National League of Cities' Transportation Committee. We were finally able to reopen Cypress Hall, the café at the old Parrot Jungle, which was idle since it was put out of service by Hurricane Wilma in 2005. It represents our most historic and iconic areas. The Pinecrest Community Center has an extra 7,000 square feet of gym space, additional classrooms and indoor and outdoor play areas for children. For nearly two decades, we debated about a restaurant, coffee, or food service in these areas. Now we have two activated spaces that start to fulfill that need. Of course, we are always cognizant of these facilities fitting seamlessly into the surrounding community, and will never stop being focused on that.

We continue our work with the Pinecrest Pioneers, Youth Advisory Council, Education Advisory Council, and our Veterans Day Celebration. Our schools are of particular importance to us, because for generations one of the most attractive features of the area was the high quality of education both public and private. We are extremely proud that both of the finalists for the public schools' Teacher of the Year are from Pinecrest schools; Mr. Oliver Diaz, From Palmetto Elementary, and Ms. Laura Haim, from Pinecrest Elementary.

One of the things that we should be most proud of is the way that as a community we are able to come together to handle some of the most difficult and controversial issues that face us. This we have done over and over again for nearly a quarter of a century. Whether it is reviewing a development, dealing with an unforeseen emergency, or having to tackle a controversial issue, this ability to come together truly embodies the spirit of Pinecrest. This year we had another example of this in working with Temple Beth Am related to their redevelopment.

Being part of a community is also about having to deal with situations that are outside of our control. In these situations, it is much about having strength, compassion, empathy for one

another in a time of crisis. Last year we had the hurricane. This year two things more sinister and more frightening happened that deeply impacted our community. The events in Pittsburgh and Parkland remind us that these can be trying times. Here in Pinecrest, an attack on one of us is an attack on all of us. Whether it be a hurricane or something worse, the Village stands on high alert and will do whatever it takes to ensure our safety and security. We always get through these times because we approach them as one community.

Just as those incidents were national, but meaningful to everyone in Pinecrest, we are also doing our part in coming together on other issues that impact us from beyond our boundaries. We continue the good initiatives of working on the issue of resiliency to climate change. This year, Vice Mayor Anna Hochkammer was instrumental in working on recent prohibitions on the use of Styrofoam.

One of the most pressing issues we ever have had to deal with is the absence of county water. Pinecrest inherited a giant hole in infrastructure. After incorporation, we found ourselves with a significant amount of properties without access to county drinking water. This water system is owned, operated and maintained by Miami-Dade County. Over the past two decades we have debated this and have made good progress. Over the last two years, we continued to work with Miami-Dade County on the completion of their water system. Today we have more than 700 homes without access to county water. But after long negotiations, we have determined that neither the county nor state are likely to commit to assisting with completion of this essential infrastructure in the near future. This March, we will be going to a referendum of the voters to ask if they are willing to finally complete the county's water and fire hydrant system, by issuing a bond. Councilmembers Cheri Ball and Katie Abbott have worked very hard on this issue. After two decades, this will come to a conclusion one way or another.

Ahead there are challenges if we are going to maintain our character and quality of life. Aside from the typical ageing of parks, fields, signs, and facilities, we are faced with having to deal with our lack of underground infrastructure. After the water, we have drainage, and the need to replace our septic systems with sewer. These are issues that every city in Florida must deal with; while few but the most responsible are. Truly projects that will take all of our abilities, and partnerships with others at various levels of government if we are going to continue to be successful.

We have considered the undergrounding of all the electrical and telecommunication lines in the Village. We are ahead of the hardening efforts by FPL and we can facilitate undergrounding for individual streets and neighborhoods that would like to undertake such a project. For the first time FPL has scheduled 10 Undergrounding projects in Pinecrest; 20% of their state-wide projects this year.

Unfortunately, this year we lost another valued contributor to our Pinecrest Family. Gail Serota was an amazing woman. She passed in a tragic accident just after Thanksgiving. She was intelligent, full of energy and effort and caring. Truly dedicated to public service. She loved Pinecrest. She was long active in our community through the PTAs, Bet Shira, as a member of our Planning Board, as a Councilmember, and candidate for mayor. Gail was a delight to be around. Kind and friendly. She was a caring mother, beloved spouse, and a brilliant lawyer who always conducted herself with class and civility. She will be deeply missed by all of us.

As always we need to thank Evelyn Greer and Gary Matzner for having the wisdom and courage to lead our incorporation efforts, form our government and lead us as our first two mayors. They with the people who served on those early Councils; Leslie, Gail, Barry

Blaxberg, Cindy Blanck, and Bob Hingston have set the standards by which we measure ourselves. To Cindy, Jeff Cutler, Nancy Harter and Bob Ross; thank you for what you have done in getting us here today. To Vice Mayor Anna Hochkammer, Councilmembers Doug Kraft, Jim McDonald, Katie Abbott, and Cheri Ball, thanks for being smart, solid, and giving such a high level of effort, in studying the issues diligently, working tirelessly, and making Pinecrest a better place each day. Finally to the people that make it work day to day: Yocelyn Galliano, our Manager; Guido Inguanzo our Clerk; Mitch Bierman our Attorney, and our department heads and staff you are inspirational.

Rest assured that going forward we will continue to be focused on, carrying out our responsibility to provide for the orderly, efficient and fair operation of government. Assuring that we exercise our rights with dignity, respect and restraint. And as always, working to protect our character and enhance our quality of life.