

2007-2008 State of the Village
Mayor Gary C. Matzner

This past year, Pinecrest, like all Florida municipalities and counties faced the unprecedented challenge of rolling back ad valorem taxes by 23.1 percent. In the case of Pinecrest, it meant rolling back taxes to an historic low rate of 1.95 mills, which saved Pinecrest property owners almost \$1,774,000 last year. In addition, the January 29th property tax amendment to the Florida Constitution will result in an additional \$350,000 in tax savings next year. Of course this savings to our tax payers translates into a corresponding reduction of revenues to the Village.

To meet this challenge the Village adopted an austere budget of \$31,573,000 which included cutting expenses, reducing staffing of non-essential personnel, limited salary increases and reduced hours of operation at our parks. In conjunction we also limited the number of capital improvements. Due to the efforts of Village Manager Peter Lombardi and the Village Council we were able to avoid raising taxes and still maintain a healthy reserve of \$7,268,000.

Looking at results for last year, strictly by the numbers, the Village had revenues of \$18.2 million and expenditures of about \$17.2 million. Village personnel currently authorized by the Village Council stands at 120 full-time and 42 part-time staff, about the same as the prior year – a reduction of 3 full-time and 3 part-time positions from last year.

In terms of accomplishments, we will dedicate our new Pinecrest branch of the Miami-Dade Library System and Community Center at Pinecrest Gardens in March. I am most pleased that this project will include our first dedicated Soccer field along with a vita course.

Next month, we will also complete and dedicate Flagler Grove Park, which will have the Village's first lighted Soccer Fields. The park, which is located at 104th Street and 77th Avenue, will also have a boundless playground, which gives access to children with special needs.

The Village completed the lighting of the Red Road Linear Park on Red Road between Kendall Drive and Killian Drive. This project was welcomed by bikers and joggers alike who get up early in the morning or exercise after work. I hope they enjoy it.

We completed the design of a water system for the nearly 40% of the Village without potable water or fire hydrants. After surveying and meeting with affected residents, the Village Council approved moving forward to install the spine or backbone for the system without cost to the residents, by utilizing funds from Miami-Dade County's general obligation bonds. We will put out to bid this portion of the system next month, which will bring access to County water to about 300 families by next year. We look forward to the challenge of finding the financing to complete the system over the next four years.

We also commenced the restoration of the historic original entrance building at Pinecrest Gardens that faces Red Road and expect to complete the project by the end of the year. Unfortunately, we don't plan on selling hot dogs and sodas on the Red Road side of the building.

As we watched the cost of our County Fire Rescue service continue to climb to an all-time high of \$9.3 Million to Pinecrest residents last year, we began a dialogue with other municipalities about alternatives. Base on about 1,100 calls for rescue and fire services in the Village last year, it equates to over \$9,000 for each call by a Village resident. Meanwhile, Miami-Dade County, instead of addressing the rising cost to taxpayers, chose instead to prevent municipalities from

opting out of the County Fire District. By passing a timely resolution, the Village Council acted decisively to reserve the right for Pinecrest to opt out of the Fire District. We are in the process of discussing the City of Coral Gables providing these services to Pinecrest residents at considerable savings to taxpayers. As we move forward on this issue over the coming months, I urge the Council to allow residents the right to vote on their choice for fire rescue services.

Finally, after almost twelve years of steady decline the number of major crimes inched up this past year. Despite the small increase, we still have one of the lowest crime rates in the County. Chief John Hohensee's annual police report with statistics is available online. I would remind all Pinecrest residents to help reduce the opportunity for crime by remembering to lock their cars, even in their driveways, and be vigilant as they return home from grocery shopping or the mall. If you see an unfamiliar truck or other vehicles in your neighborhood, I would encourage you to call the Pinecrest Police Department at 305-231-2100.

I look forward to many of our residents joining us for the opening of the Library and Community Center, which I hope it will make Pinecrest Gardens the center piece of our community.

February 11, 2008