

## **Campaign in Pine Lake Is A Placid One**

Copeland, Touch To Return to City Council After Drawing No Competition

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Neil Copeland and Ralph J. Touch Jr. are running unopposed for mayor and city councilman of **Pine Lake**. Running for public office with no opposition may sound like the ideal political situation for a candidate. But for Neil Copeland and Ralph J. Touch Jr., **Pine Lake's** new mayor and city councilman, a little competition in this year's city elections would have made things more interesting. "It didn't hurt my feelings that I had no competition, but I would have liked to have seen more people involved especially in a small town like this," said Mr. Copeland. With a population of about 900 people, the smallest of DeKalb County's cities has never been known for its rough-and-tumble politics.

"People feel that most things are being taken care of well in the city the police department, sanitation. Still, we need to have a little more involvement," said Mr. Copeland. The 40-year-old freelance photographer has been involved in **Pine Lake** politics for several years, serving first as councilman in 1978 and 1979 and then as mayor from 1980 to 1982. When current Mayor Myra Singer announced that she would not be running for re-election, Mr. Copeland, a regular at most city council meetings, decided to run for the post. "I was pretty confident that I could win an election. I've kept my ear to the ground to keep up with what people were interested in and stayed friendly with folks," he said Mr. Copeland said that, as mayor, he wanted to work towards strengthening **Pine Lake's** housing ordinances.

He said he also wanted to start a city newsletter to increase resident participation in city affairs. "It wouldn't be a government paper but something everyone could contribute to - it would be a good way of keeping fresh blood in city matters," he said. For a while, it did seem that the mayor's seat would be contested when Leonard Vaughn, a graduate theology student at Emory University, tried to qualify to run for mayor. But, according to **Pine Lake** city clerk Judy Griswell, Mr. Vaughn was disqualified because he had not lived in **Pine Lake** the required two years to be eligible to run for public office.

Having served on the city council off-and-on since 1983, Mr. Touch said he attributed the lack of competition for his seat to his good record as councilman and police commissioner. "I would have rather run a campaign even with the consideration that I might have lost my seat," said the 53-year-old commander for the U.S. Public Health Service. "But the absence of negative communication makes me feel like, thus far, people want me as councilor," he said.

Mr. Touch said he too would like to see improvements in the aesthetics of **Pine Lake**.

"Some homes have to be brought up to the housing standards, and I believe the city should help residents financially," he said. Both Mr. Copeland and Mr. Touch will begin their three-year

terms January 1, 1989. Mayor and council seats in **Pine Lake** are part-time, non-salaried positions. The last two paragraphs did not appear in the newspaper.