

Pine Lake taxes, sanitation fees to go up, mayor says

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Pine Lake residents can expect a 1-mill city tax hike and an increase in their yearly sanitation fees next year because of lower-than-anticipated revenues in 1990, Mayor Neil Copeland said. The **Pine Lake** City Council unanimously adopted the city's \$487,100 budget last week, citing the need for increased revenues to accommodate projected expenditures in 1991.

The adoption of the 1991 budget means the city plans to spend about 8 percent more next year than it did to run the city of almost 1,000 residents in 1990.

"We had anticipated a rise in property values [in 1990], but [revenues] did not keep pace with our anticipations," Mayor Copeland said.

Ad valorem revenue estimates for 1990 were short by about \$12,000 compared to what was budgeted because of lower property assessments by DeKalb County, coupled with a reduction of the city tax rate from 15 to 13 mills this year, Mayor Copeland said.

To compensate, the city tax rate will go up from 13 to 14 mills, and the yearly sanitation fee also will be raised from \$60 a year to \$75 a year in 1991.

A 14-mill tax represents a \$504 city tax bill for the owner of a \$100,000 home. This figure includes a \$4,000 homestead exemption for homeowners who occupy rather than rent their homes. The same homeowner would also pay a \$1,301.80 county tax bill.

The five-member police department, which includes three part-time officers, is the city's largest expenditure at \$177,855. Salaries alone take up \$72,000 of the total police budget.

The administration department is the next biggest expenditure at \$119,000, which includes \$31,000 in salaries for the city manager and a city clerk.

Landfill and garbage collection costs were higher than expected in 1990, said Mayor Copeland, while revenue from sanitation fees fell short of what was budgeted.

"For the last few years, sanitation fees have fallen short of expenditures in that area and have been aided by input from the general fund," said Mayor Copeland in a letter to the City Council recommending an increase in the sanitation fee.

Among the projects Mayor Copeland said are on the city's wish list for 1991 is refurbishing parts of City Hall and the town clubhouse; putting the finishing touches on the city's new maintenance building; and painting and repairing the drain system at the beach house near the city's 12-acre lake.

Mayor Copeland said some of these projects already have received approval by the City Council, but the city just never got around to it.

"We use the budget as a guide map. It's not cast in stone," he said.