

## **Pine Lake 'cash cow' wasn't racist, illegal, prosecutor decides**

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For a city of just 800-plus residents, **Pine Lake** was again making an inordinate amount of news Friday as the district attorneys in both DeKalb and Fulton counties held separate press conferences pertaining to simmering controversies there. Traffic ticket receipts were a "cash cow" for **Pine Lake**, but police there did not target black motorists for traffic tickets, nor did they employ a pattern of illegal traffic stops, DeKalb County District Attorney J. Tom Morgan said Friday morning in announcing the results of a four-month investigation.

Three hours later, Fulton County District Attorney Paul Howard said it was prosecutors, not police, who dropped the child molestation case against J.T. Williams II, the man whom **Pine Lake** officials tagged to be the city's new police chief. Williams, an African-American, was hired to bring credibility to a city rocked by criticisms of racism and that it was a ticket trap. In 1981, Williams was an Atlanta policeman who admitted to investigators that he had had sexual relations with a 7-year-old girl, according to his Atlanta personnel file. He was charged by Atlanta police, resigned from the force but was never indicted. Howard, who in 1981 was an assistant district attorney in Fulton, said his office had destroyed the case files and all that remained was an index card that simply states: "The victim declined to prosecute." "I don't know what that means. The victim was a 7-year-old child; we cannot say with certainty why the case was not prosecuted," said Howard, adding that such a case would be prosecuted vigorously today.

Robert Rubin, Williams' attorney, said his client "denies he ever molested anybody. "Rubin said Williams did not lie on his **Pine Lake** application by not mentioning his stint in Atlanta. He said the application asked only for the last five years of employment. Williams was suspended without pay from **Pine Lake** this week. Mayor Alfred Fowler said Friday the city would make a decision on Williams' fate "in the next day or two."

In DeKalb, Morgan said informal traffic counts along a strip of Rockbridge Road in **Pine Lake** found that 72 percent of the drivers were black and 86 percent of the 2,271 tickets written between last September and May went to black people. "That's not a disparity that amounts to discrimination," said Morgan. "**Pine Lake** pulled over everyone who was violating the law in this area. This resulted in a cash cow for **Pine Lake**." Morgan said an "exceeding discrepancy" was seen in the fine amounts between **Pine Lake** and other municipalities. About 42 percent of the tickets were tag violations, which brought a \$285 fine in **Pine Lake**, compared to \$125 in DeKalb Recorder's Court and \$62 in Decatur. Local judges, however, are given huge leeway in determining traffic fines, said Morgan, with a range from \$1 to \$1,000. **Pine Lake** has replaced the municipal court judge and lowered fines.

Karim Shahid, a protester who held a daily vigil picketing against the city on Rockbridge Road, said he had "mixed emotions" on Morgan's report. Shahid said he often saw **Pine Lake** police fail to stop white motorists with dealer tags but then stop a black motorist in a similar situation. "We know we were targeted as African-Americans and that money was raised on our backs," Shahid said. **Pine Lake** last year raised 75 percent of its \$1.1 million revenue from tickets. This year, that figure is projected to be considerably less.