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## **NEWS ARTICLE: Gainesville Times on September 12, 2011**

### **YMCA, city to join forces for S. Hall program**

Agreement will start on Oct. 1

The Georgia Mountains YMCA appears poised to expand into South Hall.

Oakwood City Council voted Monday night to move forward with the Gainesville-based nonprofit organization, beginning Oct. 1, to develop parks and recreation programs in the city.

“We’ve still got some issues to work out,” such as membership fees, City Manager Stan Brown said. “... As part of what we’ll try to work on during (the next) three months is try to define what kind of programs will be a good fit for our community.”

The YMCA already operates the swimming pool in the Oakwood City Park off Railroad Street, between Main and Allen streets, during the summer.

“We began talking with them five years ago,” Brown said. “At one point, we were trying to get in a spot over on Mundy Mill Road in one of the shopping centers, but it was (too costly) to go in at that time and try to renovate a space for a fitness center.”

The two sides opted to look instead “at what (space) we already have and try to at least get something up and running, and let it grow from there,” he added.

The city plans to pay the YMCA up to \$12,500 over the next three months. The total cost for the parks and recreation program next year will be about \$50,000.

“For what we see as a very moderate investment, we will be able to offer a lot more opportunities for our citizens, better utilization of our facilities and lay the foundation for a more enhanced parks and recreation program in the future,” Brown said.

The agreement now goes before the YMCA board of directors for approval, Brown said.

Rich Gallagher, the YMCA’s president and CEO, couldn’t be reached for comment Monday. But according to a 15-page preliminary plan released May 27, the YMCA viewed the Oakwood as an important step.

“The development of a full-facility family YMCA in the city of Oakwood is critical for us to expand the number of children, youth families and seniors we are entrusted to serve,” the plan states.

The YMCA's website cites South Hall and Oakwood as two of the future areas it hopes "to service."

"For us, this is a huge step," Brown said. "This is getting a foothold in South Hall."

The plan calls for the YMCA to convert one of two community buildings at City Park into a fitness center and develop programs in the other building, "as far as renting (it) out and making sure we're getting more effective use out of that building," Brown said.

One of two houses on Main Street, between McClure Drive and Flat Creek Road, would be used as administrative offices for the YMCA's after school program. And the other house could be used for teen or senior programs.