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**NEWS ARTICLE: Gainesville Times on December 9, 2013**

## Oakwood approves cell tower at Maranatha Baptist Church

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#### Other business

Oakwood City Council also voted Monday night:

- To approve annexation of 13.29 acres at 4738 Flat Creek Road, or next to Arrow Auto Auction, 4712 Flat Creek Road, into Oakwood and rezone it from Hall County's agricultural-residential category to Oakwood's highway business category.

There are "no development plans at the time," the application states.

- To approve an amended animal control ordinance that requires owners to keep their animals under control and bans "tethering of dogs as the primary means of restraint."

*Jeff Gill*

Oakwood City Council gave its OK on Monday night to AT&T putting up a 195-foot cellphone tower at Maranatha Baptist Church in Oakwood.

The council voted unanimously on the matter following a recommendation by the Oakwood Planning Commission last month. Approval also came after a public hearing where no one spoke in opposition.

"It will bring a great benefit to our community, and it will bring a great benefit to our ministry," said Maranatha's pastor, Rod Bell Jr. "And our ministry is all about investing back into our community."

Also housed at the church at 5135 McEver Road is Maranatha Christian Academy.

AT&T stated in its letter concerning the effort that "the primary focus of this project is to improve highway coverage along McEver Road (in West Hall County) and to provide better indoor coverage in the surrounding residential areas."

Providence Real Estate Consulting filed the application for AT&T.

"AT&T anticipates very limited traffic to or from this site and most often is no more than one visit per month by (a) technician," the company states in a Nov. 6 letter to Oakwood. "There should be no noise except in the event of an emergency power outage, at which time a generator may be activated for a short time."

The tower would "be on the back of the property over by the soccer field in a wooded area," City Manager Stan Brown has said.

Property at West Hall High School, 5500 McEver Road, “was evaluated as a potential candidate” for a tower, but AT&T engineers “determined that the location would not meet the current coverage objective,” according to the Providence letter.

Brown told the council that city officials were “pretty skeptical” of the tower plans at the outset.

“Honestly, I was surprised,” he said. “It turned out to be a very good application. I think there’s a tendency on something like this to be in opposition off the bat, that ... nobody wants these things in their community.

“But it’s a reality, it’s a fact of the society we’re in today that you’ve got to have cell communications.”

In September, the Hall County Board of Education approved a 245-foot cell tower at Flowery Branch High School, in a 25-year option that could pump \$659,000 into the school system over that period.