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**NEWS ARTICLE: Gainesville Times on December 23, 2011**

## **Cities return to county landfill in spirit of cooperation**

County estimated to bring in \$200K

Gainesville and Oakwood residents' trash is a treasure for Hall County's cash-strapped Solid Waste Collection and Landfill Division.

Both cities of Gainesville and Oakwood have signed on to two-year agreements with Hall County to dump trash in its landfill.

Gainesville City Council approved its deal on Tuesday. Oakwood agreed in November to begin using the county landfill.

The new agreements come after the cities stopped using the landfill in 2008 in favor of a private firm when the county raised its rates for dumping.

City and county officials said the agreements is a gesture toward better cooperation between the governments.

"We are a part of the county," said Oakwood City Manager Stan Brown. "And if it was all the same (price), I would want to work with the county in that regard."

The new partnerships also come at a time when Hall County is trying to make its waste management divisions more cost efficient.

Hall County Commissioner Craig Lutz said the county could consider allowing private firms to take over its landfill, compacting sites and recycling operations in 2012.

The combined projections from the new agreements estimate the county will bring in \$200,000 in revenue, while providing some savings to the cities. Gainesville stands to save about \$23,600 annually from its previous arrangement; Oakwood can save about \$4,000.

Gainesville and Oakwood had previously been contracting with private waste management firm Advanced Disposal.

Oakwood's decision to leave the county's landfill in 2008 was "strictly economics," said the city's manager.

The reason it came back to the county, he said, was both a financial and political decision.

In Oakwood's new agreement, the tipping fee — that's the cost of transferring garbage to the county — is \$34 per ton. The private firm charged them a \$39.50 per ton tipping fee, but also allowed a more convenient process.

The city of Gainesville is getting an even better deal with \$33 per ton fee.

Brown said one dollar difference was not a problem for Oakwood, acknowledging that Gainesville's volume is much greater.

Oakwood dumps about 700 tons per year, compared to Gainesville's 5,250 tons.

"I thought it was a fair amount," Brown said. "I'm not going to squabble over a dollar a ton."

In addition to cheaper services, the county sweetened the deal with the cities by providing a more user-friendly experience for city workers.

In the old agreement with the county, city trucks had to dump directly into the landfill.

"We've had experiences of a muddy truck getting stuck, getting tires punctured (and so forth)," Brown said.

Advanced Disposal, on the other hand, took the cities' trash at a transfer station — where conditions were easier on the vehicle.

In the new agreement with the county, Oakwood and Gainesville negotiated a condition to allow the truck to dump on a concrete pad.

While acknowledging they were getting a better arrangement for the county, officials with both cities said switching back to the county was also about improving relationships.

"We thought it was a good faith effort on our part to give the county a revenue stream coming in," Brown told The Times.

Padgett said in addition to the perks, "It was just being a good neighbor."

Padgett said Advanced Disposal counter-offered similar — though still pricier — rates. He still recommended the county's deal to his city council.

Brown said he did not even ask for a counter offer.