

## MEMORANDUM

TO: Lake County Solid Waste Task Force  
FROM: Dan Gorden, Task Force Member  
DATE: March 28, 2011  
RE: Suggested Goals for Lake County Solid Waste

***Goal #1 – Lake County government should continue to be responsible for solid waste in unincorporated Lake County. The County should continue with the mandatory collection system, currently in place, and continue with the district system, which allows different solid waste haulers in each established district.***

**Comments on Goal #1** – Although our neighbor to the west, Sumter County, has removed the county government from responsibility for solid waste, I do not believe Lake County should make that decision. The mandatory collection system in Lake County seems to be working well. If we as county residents have to pay for waste disposal, we are more likely to dispose of our garbage in the proper fashion rather than dumping it illegally on some vacant land. This was a problem before mandatory collection, but now seems to be resolved. The district system spreads responsibility for collection beyond a single entity, which gives the County some level of comfort in the event a waste hauler in one district goes out of business. This happened in one of the three current districts and another current hauler was able to begin collection in the vacated district without disruption of service.

***Goal #2 – Consider use of the Covanta incinerator for waste disposal only if the cost is competitive with a landfill. The County should consider use of its own landfill as well as others in the region. In the event the County does not contract with Covanta, discontinue accepting incinerator ash at the County landfill.***

**Comments on Goal #2** – The experience Lake County has had with the incinerator contract has been very unfortunate for everyone involved. At the time the contract was negotiated, the County felt there was no other option, since it was believed permits for a new landfill could not be obtained. Today, we know this is not true since the County has a new

landfill, fully permitted. Contract negotiations in this type of atmosphere proved to be disastrous for Lake County. The contract was very 'lop-sided' with Lake County liable for the cost of the incinerator as well as most operating anomalies. Costs for disposal increased to \$95/ton and nearly all cities in Lake County opted out of taking their solid waste to the incinerator. The distrust this situation created between the County and cities in the county still lingers to a certain extent today. Because of the high incinerator cost, Lake County is forced to subsidize the Solid Waste Enterprise Fund out of the General Fund. In fiscal year 2010, this subsidy was approximately \$4,500,000. Most residents of Lake County probably do not know the \$184 non-ad valorem assessment on the annual tax bill does not pay the total cost of solid waste collection and disposal. The current \$40/ton tipping fee does not reflect the actual cost either, but is a 'political fee' based on the amount cities are willing to pay for waste disposal.

This whole scenario has been such a financial disaster; I think it is time to put it behind us. In a way, it is unfortunate since there are some advantages to incineration, such as the large reduction in waste volume to be land filled. Incinerator ash represents about 10% of the volume of waste materials that are incinerated. With the current financial status of the County, it is time to look at disposal options that make economic sense for all the residents of Lake County.

***Goal #3 – In an effort to reduce the waste stream, institute single stream curbside recycling. Educate the public on the benefits of recycling and what can be recycled. Set a goal of doubling, tripling or quadrupling the current recycling percentage, which is less than 15%.***

**Comments on Goal #3** – Presentations shown to the Solid Waste Task Force indicate single stream recycling can at least double the amount recycled. The current yellow bins are difficult for older county residents to carry curbside when fully loaded. A wheeled cart with larger capacity will encourage greater amounts of recycling. Resident education is also extremely important. Currently, public education by the County is minimal. The incinerator has discouraged higher rates of recycling. Because the incinerator must be fed, there are times when materials have been incinerated rather than recycled.

**Goal #4 – Remove yard waste from the solid waste stream. Consider grinding and composting yard waste. Institute a program that does not use plastic bags for holding yard waste.**

**Comments on Goal #4** – If the County decides not to use the incinerator, yard waste must be removed from the waste stream and not land filled. Whether we use the incinerator or not, I believe yard waste should be composted for reuse. Plastic bags with yard waste are a real cost problem because they must be removed. The City of Gainesville requires city residents to use their own containers for yard waste or buy special paper bags that will decompose. I just returned from a visit to Apex, North Carolina (suburb of Raleigh) and noted they use vacuum trucks to suck up leaves, grass, etc. piled at the curb and a truck with a chipper attached to grind tree limbs, large shrubs, etc.

**Goal #5 – Investigate additional means for disposing of household hazardous waste, other than bringing items to the landfill or drop-off stations. Reinstate the use of the mobile hazardous waste truck.**

**Comments on Goal #5** – It is all too easy for residents to drop hazardous waste in a garbage bag for disposal. We must find more convenient means for disposal of these items that will not harm our environment. The presentation made by Waste Management on front door disposal of hazardous items is worth further study. It may not be economically feasible, at this time, but a program of that nature may be worth considering.

**Goal #6 – Continue to investigate new technologies for solid waste disposal.**

**Comments on Goal #6** – Based on information presented to the Solid Waste Task Force, there are other technologies being tested for disposal of solid waste. The City of Orlando was accepting bids on a gasification plant; however, it is unknown whether this technology will work on municipal solid waste. I would not recommend Lake County consider new technologies until they are proven, but we should be open to investigating technologies that work.