

# Miramar deal could break Waste Management's countywide grip on trash disposal | Broward Bulldog

By Dan Christensen, [BrowardBulldog.org](http://www.browardbulldog.org)

Waste Management's three-decade virtual monopoly on trash disposal in Broward appears to be nearing an end after a competing syndicate's "best and final offer" for the job was ranked higher by a Miramar bid committee.

The Miramar bid is expected to be used by other Broward cities to drive down the cost of trash disposal for residents and customers throughout the county.

The proposal by the group whose public face is the politically influential Davie land baron Ron Bergeron offers substantial price savings over Waste Management's bid. Other cash-strapped municipalities, including four with representatives on the committee that ranked the bids last week, are watching the process closely.

The deal will be presented to the Miramar commission for contract approval, probably in early February. From there, other cities and even the county could piggyback on the pact.

"I have no preference as to who gets the contract, but who gets the contract should be best for the residents of Miramar and our community," said Miramar Mayor Lori Moseley.

## CONTROLLING TRASH BILLS

Miramar has led the push for a new trash disposal deal since a year ago when the county's embattled Resource Recovery Board failed to win approval for a new long-term deal with Waste Management without seeking competitive bids. Miramar customers alone pay to dispose of 70,000 tons of garbage a year.

The Resource Recovery Board, created in the late 1980s, has historically been the negotiating arm for the cities and county.

A home or business owner pays a single fee for two separate parts of garbage removal. Residents pay a trash hauler to pick up garbage curbside and then they also pay money – commonly called a "tipping fee" – to bury or burn the trash at a landfill or incinerator.

The deal being negotiated by Miramar is for the tipping fee portion of a typical garbage bill. The separate rate charged by a trash hauler to pick up garbage is set through agreements negotiated between a hauler and individual local governments.

The new reduced tipping fee would save Miramar and its residents more than \$500,000 a year compared to Waste Management's offer. That does not include an additional \$2 a ton returned to the city as part of revenue sharing generated by the sale of recycled materials.

Waste Management's subsidiary Wheelabrator Technologies owns and operates two local waste-



Miramar Mayor Lori Moseley

to-energy plants where 26 cities and the county now haul their solid waste to be incinerated. The current base tipping fee under Wheelabrator is \$72.57 a ton; Wheelabrator has proposed chopping that to \$52.50 a ton. Bergeron's group has offered a tipping fee of \$45.25 a ton.

Broward commissioners in June approved a two-year, \$107.3 million interim disposal agreement with Wheelabrator at about \$57 a ton to last until July 2013. That's when the existing inter-local agreement among the county and the 26 cities that make up Broward's Solid Waste District expires.

While the Resource Recovery Board's plan included significant cuts in the tipping fee, it was blasted by various city officials who said it didn't go far enough and amounted to a huge giveaway to a multi-billion dollar corporation flush with years of excessive profits made at the expense of Broward customers.

## **DOWN BUT NOT OUT**

Wheelabrator has signaled to Miramar that it won't go down without a fight. On Nov. 21, company Vice President William B. Roberts fired off a protest letter to the city's procurement director objecting to the way the bidding was handled and claiming it favored Bergeron's group.

"The process has been less than transparent or in compliance with Florida law," Roberts wrote.

The low bid garnered by Miramar comes from a venture that teams Lantana-based Sun Recycling with Bergeron Environmental and Recycling. Bergeron's partner in the Miramar bid is his longtime friend Anthony Lomangino. Lomangino is chairman of Sun's parent, Southern Waste Systems. Bergeron already has a contract with the county to dispose of hurricane debris.

Both Wheelabrator and the Bergeron group have hired teams of lobbyists. Bergeron and Southern Waste Systems are represented by longtime Bergeron General Counsel Aleida "Ali" Waldman, former county commissioner George Platt and Democratic insider and attorney Bernie Friedman. Wheelabrator is represented by veteran local lobbyists Bill Laystrom and Dennis Mele, among others. Both sides include frequent contributors to local and regional political candidates.

## **BIG MONEY AT STAKE**

The members of Broward's Solid Waste District generated more than 11 million tons of garbage in 2008 – the latest year for which those totals are available. Savings for cities – and their residents and businesses – will vary depending on how much trash they produce.

For example, Fort Lauderdale produced more than 190,000 tons of trash in 2008. Its annual disposal savings under the Sun/Bergeron proposal would be as much as \$1.8 million. Hollywood, which generated 116,000 tons, would save nearly \$1.1 million a year. Coral Springs' savings would be nearly \$900,000 a year on 96,000 tons.

Officials in Oakland Park, where city leaders helped drive the push for competitive bidding, said this week that the Sun/Bergeron proposal would save the city \$365,000 annually – or \$1.8 million over five years. Over the summer, that city's commissioners became the first to lower residential service rates – by 15 percent or \$3.75 a month – based on the county's interim deal.

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