

**Indian River County, Florida  
Solid Waste Disposal District  
Board Memorandum**

**Date:** August 22, 2024

**To:** The Solid Waste Disposal District Board of Commissioners

**Through:** John A. Titkanich, Jr., County Administrator  
Sean C. Lieske, Director of Utility Services  
Himanshu H. Mehta, PE, Managing Director, Solid Waste Disposal District (SWDD)

**Prepared By:** Sue Flak, SWDD Recycling Education and Marketing Coordinator

**Subject:** Indian River County SWDD Vape Pen Recycling Program

**Description and Conditions:**

Recently, there has been an influx in the amount of rechargeable and lithium-ion batteries making their way into the waste and recycling streams. Unfortunately, these batteries are known to explode and cause fires when compressed in a hauling vehicle or buried in the landfill. Almost 200 vape pen explosions and fires leading to 133 acute injuries were reported in the United States between 2009 and 2016. There have even been numerous fires at the Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) as these batteries make their way there, as well.

Currently, in Indian River County, there is a variety of options for proper disposal of many types of rechargeable batteries, but no viable option for vape pen batteries. Vape pen users were asked about proper waste disposal and 73.7% believe that it was difficult to find a drop off site. What is worse, these pens are also mixed with other hazardous materials that need to be separated, such as nicotine and Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), making them difficult to recycle and dispose of properly.

**Analysis:**

The Solid Waste Disposal District (SWDD) staff is partnering with GAIACA Waste Revitalization, a sustainability provider who specifically handles hazardous materials to launch of a new Vape Pen Collection program. This program is to encourage residents to properly dispose of these pens at one of the five Customer Convenience Centers, the Main County Landfill, or at a participating retail store. This service will provide a viable option for collection while eliminating waste and recycling stream contamination and increasing education awareness of the situation. Vape pen usage has increased significantly between 2019 and 2020 and will only continue to increase, exasperating the problem. This program will give residents a viable option for proper disposal and increased awareness through education and outreach.

## SWDD Item

GAICA has proposed to provide six (6) receptacles (7-gallon each) for each of the CCC's and the main landfill. These receptacles are lockable to prevent theft/misuse of the vape pens. Since this is a start-up project, GAICA has proposed to provide pick-up and disposal on an on-call basis. Based on GAICA's proposal, the initial setup cost is \$1,200. Staff has estimated approximately \$2,000 per on-call collection/disposal with two events per year for a total annual cost of \$5,200.

### Funding:

Funding for the Vape Pen Collection Program is budgeted and available in the SWDD/CC & RECYC/Other Professional Services account, number 41125534-033190, for a total amount of \$5,200, which is funded from SWDD assessments and user fees.

Account Name	Account Number	Amount
SWDD/CC & RECYC/Other Professional Services	41125534-033190	\$5,200

### Recommendation:

Staff recommends the Solid Waste Disposal District (SWDD) Board approve the funding of up to \$5,200 to launch a Vape Pen Collection program to support the proper collection and disposal of these items in Indian River County. Staff recommends that the SWDD Board waive the requirement for bids and authorize the Purchasing Manager to issue a purchase order to GAICA Waste Revitalization for these services.

### Attachments:

1. Vape Pen Flyer
2. Proposal from GAICA