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Halifax Regional Council
November 25, 2003

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad Anguish", written over a horizontal line.

Brad Anguish, Director, Environmental Management Services

DATE: November 10, 2003

SUBJECT: Abandoned Shopping Carts and Scavenging

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

A motion of Regional Council, June 10, 2003, (item 10.1.3) requesting that an update be provided regarding what action has been taken relative to enforcing the prohibition on scavenging and whether or not meetings have been held with the business community regarding a solution to the problem of shopping carts.

BACKGROUND

In response to motions of Regional Council on April 16, 2002, (item 11.2.1) and May 14, 2002, (item 8.10), a staff report dated June 25, 2002, regarding abandoned shopping carts and scavenging of recyclables was submitted to Council. The matter was discussed on July 2, 2002, (item 8.2) with Council approving the recommendation for staff to meet with representatives of the business community who utilize shopping carts to discuss solutions to reduce the number of carts leaving store property and consider this input in future recommendations on this issue. Solid Waste Resources submitted an information report entitled "Litter, Flyers and Shopping Carts" to Regional Council on December 10, 2002. The report included a progress update on the abandoned shopping cart issue, and the results of a meeting staff had with the business community.

Meeting With Local Retailers Who Utilize Shopping Carts

A meeting with representatives of the retail industry was convened on November 20, 2002. Loss Prevention Officers and Store Management for all major retailers within the HRM were invited. Turnout for the session was low with only seven participants from the grocery sector attending.

The focus of the meeting was to discuss the issues that evolve when shopping carts are removed from store properties. There was consensus that abandoned shopping carts are an issue for both retailers and the community. All agreed that the desired situation is that shopping carts remain on store property.

DISCUSSION

(A)(i) Interim Strategy for the Retrieval of Abandoned Shopping Carts

During the November 20th meeting, it was agreed there was a need for an interim strategy. Retail representatives put forward the suggestion that stores be contacted directly to retrieve abandoned carts. This approach did not prove to be practical as in most cases residents reporting abandoned shopping carts were not able to identify which retail chain (ie. Sobey's, Canadian Tire) the cart belonged.

Any shopping carts abandoned in the street right of way, where Street Maintenance staff empty litter receptacles, are collected and held by Public Works and Transportation. When cart owners are identifiable, retailers are notified that their carts have been impounded. If the impounded carts are not retrieved, they are disposed of as scrap metal.

A local bottle exchange company collects abandoned shopping carts and returns them to the appropriate retailer, provided the retailer is a customer of the bottle exchange company. The retailer is charged approximately \$5.00 per cart. Currently this company services most major retailers.

Abandoned shopping cart complaints can be reported to the Corporate Call Centre. The service request will be forwarded to the appropriate Business Unit.

(A)(ii) Trends Analysis

Technical solutions exist to minimize the number of carts leaving store property. The Real Atlantic Superstore employed a coin deposit system for a number of years but discontinued its use as a result of customer dissatisfaction. A more sophisticated technology called CAPS (Cart Anti Theft Protection System) has been utilized by the Zellers Store on Bayers Road. The system is comprised of a sensor controlled braking mechanism which is attached to the cart wheel and an electronic antenna line that runs along the perimeter of the store property. If a cart crosses the perimeter, the braking mechanism is activated, immobilizing the cart. The CAPS has been successfully implemented across Canada and the United States (see Appendix "A" Schnucks Press Release). Despite its acknowledged success, the retailers attending the November 20, 2002, meeting were of the opinion that the cost of the system was prohibitive.

Research was conducted on best practices utilized by other municipalities relative to abandoned shopping carts and available technology to prevent cart theft. The cities of Guelph, Markham, Winnipeg, Calgary; and North Vancouver have enacted legislation to address the issue. Common components include a provision that shopping carts are not to leave store property, mandatory identification on cart, listing store name and location, cart collection services by municipal staff or contractors, and impound fees.

The HRM By-Law Rationalization Working Group is developing a new "Nuisance" By-Law for Regional Council's consideration. Potential effective punitive measures regarding the issue of abandoned shopping carts will be addressed in the draft Nuisance by-law. The target date for delivery of this report is Spring 2004.

(B) Enforcement of Scavenging

The enforcement approach toward incidents of scavenging is dependent upon the accuracy of information received regarding a complaint. If adequate information is provided, an Enforcement Officer will be assigned the case. If an Enforcement Officer witnesses a violation of By-Law S-600, Section 16.1(a), "no person shall pick over, remove, disturb or otherwise interfere with any waste material that has been set out for Municipal Waste collection" while performing other enforcement duties, they are to take the appropriate initiative to address the situation. To date, there have been two complaints in which there was adequate information to pursue a prosecution. These cases resulted in fines of \$100.00 and \$500.00 respectively to the perpetrator. In both cases, the perpetrator was the same individual, hence the Judge increased the fine on the second offence.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications at this time.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality’s Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

REGIONAL PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

N/A

ALTERNATIVES

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

Appendix “A” - Schnucks Press Release

Additional copies of this report, and information on its status, can be obtained by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.		
Report Prepared by:	Andrea MacDonald, Manager, Community Projects, EMS	490-7371
Report Approved by:	Allan Wayne, General Manager, Community Projects, EMS	490-6484
	Jim Bauld, Acting General Manager, Solid Waste Resources, EMS	490-7176

APPENDIX A

August 13, 2001

Schnucks is Putting the Brakes on Shopping Cart Losses. New Security System Helps Schnuck Markets Reduce Losses and Keep Neighborhoods Free of Abandoned Shopping Carts

ST. LOUIS, Mo. - Lost shopping carts can be one of the largest expenses in doing business for any retailer.

That realization has prompted Schnuck Markets, Inc., to become the first grocery retailer in the Midwest to install Cartrronics, an electronic security system designed to curb shopping cart loss. A grocery cart costs about \$100. One Schnucks store used to lose 30-40 carts per month. Until recently, there was very little that could be done to prevent it.

Last year, Schnucks partnered with Cartrronics, LLC, a San Diego, Calif. company that specializes in electro-mechanical technology. From January to April 2001, cart retention systems were installed at four Schnucks supermarkets with the highest incidences of cart losses. All stores have noted marked improvement in the number of carts that now remain in inventory.

"Since installing Cartrronics, we have not lost a single cart," said Keith Brown, store manager of the City Plaza Schnucks. He added, "Our store was losing 15 - 20 carts per month. We had to pay someone to retrieve them from throughout the neighborhood."

Barry Gallace, National Accounts Manger for Cartrronics, said the system is good for both customers and the company. "Stores across the country are seeing increases in sales because, with Cartrronics, more carts are available to customers at peak shopping periods." Gallace added, "This means that customers are not inconvenienced by a shortage of carts and can conveniently complete their entire shopping trip. Stores remain more profitable and continue to keep costs down for customers."

Approximately 600 stores are utilizing Cartrronics across the country. The system operates using an antenna imbedded in the perimeter of the store's parking lot. The front wheel of each cart is fitted with a caster containing a radio receiver. When pushed past the antenna line, the caster activates and locks the wheel, stopping the cart.

Brown said that customers who walk to and from the store simply push the carts home with the intention of bringing them back to the store on their return trip. Often, particularly in the summer, children take them home to use as go-carts.

During a recent store remodel, the Kossuth Schnucks store replaced an older security system with Cartrronics. "The former owner had installed steel bars which not only prevented customers from taking carts off the lot, but also prevented them from taking them to their cars," said Roger Hines,

store manager at the Kossuth Schnucks store. He added, "It was a great inconvenience and we lost customers because of it. Since removing the bars and installing Carttronics, we have seen many of those customers return." Hines reports that his store has only lost one cart since the installation.

All four Schnucks stores report significant reductions in the numbers of calls from neighbors concerned about abandoned carts. Brown said that it was not uncommon to find carts throughout the community. "Carttronics has enabled us to help our customers in their efforts to improve the look of their neighborhoods," said Brown.

Schnuck Markets, Inc. currently operates 92 stores in Missouri, Illinois and Indiana. The family-owned company was founded in St. Louis in 1939.

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Editor's note: The four Schnucks supermarkets with the Carttronics system are listed below.

Schnucks City Plaza, 3431 Union Blvd. (63115)

Schnucks Kossuth, 4127 N. Grand Ave. (63107)

Schnucks Lindell, 4171 Lindell Blvd. (63108)

Schnucks South City, 3430 So. Grand Ave. (63118)