

April 6, 2009

Mayor Devine and Common Council Members
7525 West Greenfield Avenue
West Allis, WI 53214

Re: "Half Price Sale" on Refuse Carts

Honorable Mayor and Council Members:

As you may recall, during the spring and summer of 2007 then Mayor Bell convened a community Strategic Planning Committee to discuss various issues of concern about the community. One of the issues that came out of one of the discussion groups was the various problems associated with absentee landlords.

Subsequently, staff from various departments has gotten together to address various issues related to absentee landlord properties. One of the issues identified was that such properties often lacked adequate refuse containers and were causing a blighting condition in the neighborhood. A proposal was made to require such properties to utilize refuse carts rather than garbage cans.

I disagreed with such a proposal in so far as it presumed that this problem was characteristic of all absentee landlord properties. This simply is not the case. While, perhaps, it may be fair to state that a disproportionately higher number of the properties have that problem, it would be wrong to penalize those that don't. Conversely, there are a number of single family homes who have an inadequate number of containers and/or containers that are not properly maintained that are causing a blighting problem in the neighborhood. In short, inadequate numbers of and/or poorly maintained refuse containers is not a problem unique to absentee landlord properties.

Needless to say, the refuse carts substantially improve the aesthetics associated with refuse storage. Currently, approximately 55% of the residential units serviced by the City utilize an owner purchased refuse cart. The current cost of the cart, depending on size, is between \$50 and \$75. The cost is considerably higher than the cost of a garbage can(s) despite the fact that the cart will outlast the typical can by three or four fold. In an effort to encourage the use of more carts, I am recommending that the Council approve a "Half Price Sale" on the refuse carts for a three month period of time. The sale would coincide with the release of the next Newsletter and also be advertised in other locations including the website, cable and, perhaps, water bills.

I would propose that the City supplement the difference in cart cost during this "special sale" with a portion of the money set aside to implement various community projects identified by the Strategic Planning Committee. If, for instance, 1,000 carts were sold during this period (admittedly a high estimate), the additional funding necessary would be approximately \$35,000.

While such a proposal will not cure the blighting conditions of various neighborhoods, it is hoped that additional refuse carts will lessen the impact of the blight on the neighborhood. I am therefore asking the Council to concur with this recommendation so that I may start the implementation process.

Respectfully Submitted,

Michael F. Pertmer
Director of Public Works