

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA  
POSTAL REGULATORY COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON, DC 20268-0001

Before Commissioners:

Ruth Y. Goldway, Chairman;  
Mark Acton, Vice Chairman;  
Dan G. Blair;  
Tony L. Hammond; and  
Nanci E. Langley

Mitchellville Post Office  
Mitchellville, Tennessee

Docket No. A2011-9

ORDER AFFIRMING DETERMINATION

(Issued June 16, 2011)

I. INTRODUCTION

On February 23, 2011, Larry D. Draper (Petitioner) filed an appeal with the Commission seeking review of the Postal Service's determination to close the Mitchellville, Tennessee post office.<sup>1</sup> After reviewing the Administrative Record provided by the Postal Service, the Commission affirms the Final Determination to close the Mitchellville post office.

---

<sup>1</sup> Petition for Review received from Larry D. Draper, February 23, 2011 (Petition).

## II. PROCEDURAL HISTORY

In Order No. 682, the Commission established Docket No. A2011-9 to consider the appeal, designated a Public Representative, and directed the Postal Service to file the Administrative Record and any pleadings responding to the appeal.<sup>2</sup>

On March 10, 2011, the Postal Service filed the Administrative Record with the Commission.<sup>3</sup> The Postal Service also filed comments requesting that the determination to close the Mitchellville post office be affirmed.<sup>4</sup>

On June 15, 2011, the Public Representative filed comments.<sup>5</sup>

## III. BACKGROUND

The Mitchellville community is comprised of retirees, farmers, and commuters who must travel outside of Mitchellville to obtain other supplies and services. Postal Service Comments at 7.

The Mitchellville post office, classified as EAS-C level, provides service 22 hours a week from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and 12:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. on Saturday. Final Determination at 1. In addition to providing retail services, *e.g.*, sale of stamps, stamped paper, and money orders, it provides service to 18 post office box and 8 general delivery customers.<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

The Postal Service has made a decision to close the Mitchellville post office and provide delivery and retail services by rural route administered by the Portland,

---

<sup>2</sup> Notice and Order Accepting Appeal and Establishing Procedural Schedule, February 25, 2011 (Order No. 682).

<sup>3</sup> The Administrative Record is attached to United States Postal Service Notice of Filing, March 10, 2011 (Administrative Record). The Administrative Record includes a table of contents listing 48 items. Item No. 40 is the Final Determination to Close the Mitchellville, TN Post Office and Extend Rural Route Service (Final Determination).

<sup>4</sup> United States Postal Service Comments Regarding Appeal, April 19, 2011 (Postal Service Comments).

<sup>5</sup> Comments of the Public Representative, June 15, 2011 (PR Comments).

<sup>6</sup> There is an inconsistency as to the number of post office box customers. Administrative Record, Item No. 1 at 1 indicates that there are 19 post office box customers.

Tennessee post office, an EAS-20 level office located 5 miles away. *Id.* Service also will be provided to cluster box units (CBUs) in Mitchellville. *Id.* Window service hours at the Portland post office are from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, and 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. on Saturday. Approximately 300 post office boxes are available. *Id.*

On June 29, 2009, questionnaires were distributed to delivery customers of the Mitchellville post office. Questionnaires were also available over the counter for retail customers at the Mitchellville post office. *Id.* A total of 24 questionnaires were distributed. On August 11, 2009, representatives from the Postal Service were available at Mitchellville to answer questions and provide information to customers. Twenty customers attended the meeting. *Id.*; see also Administrative Record, Item No.19.

#### IV. PARTICIPANT PLEADINGS

*Petitioner.* Petitioner is a lifelong resident of Mitchellville, Tennessee and objects to the closing of the Mitchellville post office. Petitioner contends that the Mitchellville post office is one of the oldest post offices in Tennessee and has historical value. Petition at 1. Petitioner argues that the city and surrounding area will be adversely affected by the closing. *Id.* at 2.

Petitioner offers suggestions for strengthening the current financial state of the Mitchellville post office. *Id.* at 1. Petitioner states that if this is an economic decision, the Postal Service should allow the Mitchellville post office to offer more services to customers. *Id.* at 2. He notes that if the Mitchellville post office were to extend its hours of operation, postal business would increase. He adds that the installation of new traditional post office boxes would also encourage business growth. *Id.* at 1.

*Postal Service.* The Postal Service argues that the Commission should affirm its determination to discontinue the Mitchellville post office. Postal Service Comments at 2. The Postal Service maintains that it has followed the proper closing procedures of

39 U.S.C. 404(d) and carefully considered the required factors of section 404(d)(2) in making its determination. *Id.* at 3.

The Postal Service explains that its decision to close the Mitchellville post office was based on several factors, including:

- the postmaster vacancy;
- a minimal workload, low office revenue (including the convenience of rural delivery and retail service);
- very little recent growth in the area; and
- expected financial savings.

*Id.* at 4.

The Postal Service also addresses concerns raised by Petitioner. Regarding Petitioner's concern as to the hours of service at the Mitchellville post office, the Postal Service notes that it reduced the hours in response to a decrease in mail volume and window transactions. *Id.* at 5.

*Public Representative.* The Public Representative concludes that the Postal Service has complied with the closing requirements of section 404(d) in this matter. The Public Representative maintains that the Postal Service provided customers with notice of the possible closure by distributing letters on July 29, 2009. PR Comments at 4. She adds that holding a community meeting and responding to customer questionnaires indicate that adequate consideration was given to community concerns. *Id.* at 5. The Public Representative notes that the distance between the Mitchellville post office and Portland post office is a concern. She explains, however, that the rural nature of the area means that post office locations may be further apart than in some urban areas. *Id.* at 3.

## V. COMMISSION ANALYSIS

Under 39 U.S.C. 404(d)(1), prior to making a determination to close any post office, the Postal Service must provide notice of its intent to close. Notice must be given 60 days before the proposed closure date to ensure that patrons have an opportunity to present their views regarding the closing. If the Postal Service decides to close the post office, it must make its Final Determination available to the public for 30 days, allowing patrons the opportunity to appeal the determination to the Commission. The Commission reviews the Postal Service's determination to close or consolidate a post office "on the basis of the record before the Postal Service in the making of such determination." See 39 U.S.C. 404(d)(5).

### A. Notice to Customers

As part of its investigation, on June 29, 2009, the Postal Service distributed questionnaires to Mitchellville delivery customers. Final Determination at 1. Questionnaires also were available over the counter for retail customers at the Mitchellville post office. *Id.* Sixteen questionnaires were returned. Ten responses were unfavorable and six expressed no opinion regarding the proposed alternate service. *Id.*; see also Administrative Record, Item No. 18.

On August 11, 2009, the Postal Service also held a community meeting which was attended by 20 customers. *Id.*; see also Administrative Record, Item No. 19.

Notice of the Postal Service's proposal to close the Mitchellville post office and invitation for public comment was posted at the Mitchellville and Portland post offices from September 17, 2010 through November 20, 2010. Postal Service Comments at 4; see also Administrative Record, Item No. 29. A total of four comments were received from customers. All comments were unfavorable. *Id.*, Item No. 32. The Final Determination to close the Mitchellville post office was posted at the Mitchellville post office on January 24, 2011 through February 25, 2011. *Id.* The Final Determination was also posted at the Portland post office starting on January 24, 2011.

Based on a review of the record, the Commission finds that the Postal Service has satisfied the notice requirements of 39 U.S.C. 404(d).

B. Other Statutory Considerations

Under section 404(d)(2)(A), in making a determination on whether or not to close a post office, the Postal Service must consider the following factors: the effect on the community; whether a maximum degree of effective and regular postal service will be provided; the effect on postal employees; and the economic savings to the Postal Service. In response to the Postal Service's proposal to close the Mitchellville post office, customers raised concerns regarding the effect of the closure on postal services. The Postal Service responded to each concern. Administrative Record, Item No. 17. Their concerns and the Postal Service's responses are summarized in the Final Determination.

*Effect on the community.* The Postal Service concludes that its decision to close the Mitchellville post office will not adversely affect the community. Final Determination at 6. Customers express concern for loss of community identity. The Postal Service explains that the community identity will be preserved by continuing the use of the Mitchellville name and ZIP Code in customer addresses. *Id.* Customers raise concerns regarding the loss of a gathering place and an information center. The Postal Service responds that residents may continue to meet informally, socialize, and share information at other businesses, churches, and residences in town. The Postal Service adds that there has been minimal growth in the community in recent years and that carrier service is expected to be able to handle any future growth in the community. *Id.*

*Effective and regular service.* Petitioner acknowledges that as a local business owner who ships packages, the Mitchellville post office is an asset to his business. Petitioner explains that he will have to use nonpostal carriers to address the loss of the Mitchellville post office. Petition at 1-2. The Postal Service maintains that it carefully evaluated the effect of closing the Mitchellville post office on the shipping of packages. Postal Service Comments at 6. The Postal Service indicates that service will be

provided to CBUs installed on the carrier's line of travel. CBUs are purchased, installed, and maintained by the Postal Service. Final Determination at 3. Also, parcel lockers will be made available for convenient parcel delivery for customers. *Id.*

The Postal Service indicates that carriers will accept packages at the mailbox without a customer being present, provided the package is under 13 ounces and the postage is fully paid. *Id.* at 4. The Postal Service notes that other options exist for shipping packages such as Carrier Pickup and Click-N-Ship, which are explained on [www.usps.com](http://www.usps.com). Postal Service Comments at 6. Customers will have the opportunity to purchase money orders by meeting the carrier at the mailbox, completing the application and paying the carrier. Final Determination at 4.

Customers question whether their mail will be secure if they receive mail in CBUs. The Postal Service responds that CBUs provide the security of individually locked mail compartments. *Id.* at 2.

Customers express concern about collection of outgoing mail. The Postal Service assures customers that the collection of mail and dispatch schedules will remain the same. *Id.* Customers express concern regarding senior citizens losing access to service at the Mitchellville post office. The Postal Service asserts that carrier service is beneficial to senior citizens because the carrier can make deliveries near residences. Customers will not have to make a special trip to the post office for service. Moreover, for hardship cases or customers with special needs, the Postal Service indicates that alternate delivery arrangements are possible. *Id.*

Customers question the dependability of rural route service. The Postal Service explains that rural carriers are required to serve the route expeditiously and arrive at boxes at about the same time each day. *Id.* at 3.

Based on a review of the record, the Commission concludes that Mitchellville customers will continue to receive effective and regular service.

*Economic savings and effect on employees.* The Postal Service estimates total annual savings of \$21,142.00. *Id.* at 6. The Postal Service estimates that replacement service will cost \$2,500.00. The Postal Service explains that the officer-in-charge will

return to her position at a nearby post office and no other employees will be adversely affected.

## VI. CONCLUSION

Based on its review of the entire record before it, the Commission concludes that the Postal Service has adequately considered all requirements of 39 U.S.C. 404(d). Accordingly, its determination to close the Mitchellville post office and provide rural route delivery is affirmed.

*It is ordered:*

The Postal Service's determination to close the Mitchellville post office is affirmed.

By the Commission.

Shoshana M. Grove  
Secretary

### Concurring Opinion of Chairman Goldway

As I have indicated in a previous Post Office Closing Appeal, the Postal Service developed an extensive record on this action which supports its decision. Nonetheless, I take this opportunity to express concern that the Postal Service appears to be proceeding to close an increasing number of facilities even while it is considering proposed Discontinuance Rules revisions designed to improve its decision-making process, and in particular the ability of concerned members of the public to participate meaningfully in that process. The public would be better served if improved procedures were implemented and followed before additional facilities are closed.

Ruth Y. Goldway