

July 30, 2009

Office of the Secretary
Postal Regulatory Commission
901 New York Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20268

RE: Docket #A2009-1
Hacker Valley, WV 26222 Post Office
Temporary Suspension

Dear Postal Regulatory Commission

I respectfully submit this letter in behalf of the older "Seniors" living in the Hacker Valley postal service district of Webster County, WV. We as a community feel that the USPS arbitrarily and thus illegally suspended our Hacker Valley Post Office since we had an alternative site.

The reason given for the temporary suspension was the termination of the lease upon the facility which the Post Office had occupied for decades. Prior to the official date to close, the USPS District Manager in Charleston, WV, as well as, the USPS Real Estate Manager in Durham, NC, had in their possession a copy of the extension to that lease. They also had information of an alternative site for the post office in a suitable facility nearby which was offered by the Webster county Board of Education at little or no cost to the USPS. They also had information regarding the offer by local businesses to construct a new facility to USPS specifications for lease by the USPS. The lease extension by the lessor was for the purpose of allowing time for the relocation or construction of the new Hacker Valley Post Office.

Our community's interaction with the USPS has been the cause of much frustration in that attempts to communicate with the USPS concerning the issues at stake have generally fallen on "deaf ears" with an absence of constructive dialogue. As the process to close our post office continues, it is believed by our community that the USPS hopes that our citizens will tire and simply accept and adjust to the lower level, mediocre postal service that has been furnished after the temporary suspension of our Post Office. We feel that the "spirit of the law" has been violated by the USPS.

By way of history, four years ago the Lessor, Marie Carter, wrote to the USPS requesting to be released from the exiting lease agreement which expired on June 30, 2009. Ms. Carter has indicated that she had never received anything in writing from the USPS regarding her request. The community was blissfully unaware of the coming crisis which ensued when the notice of intended suspension was placed in the boxes of postal patrons. Many Hacker Valley citizens are uneducated, unsophisticated, elderly, and geographically scattered through the mountains of Hacker Valley. Most have been unable to find for themselves effectively in their desire to protect the community post

office. It is quite against the spirit of the law to take advantage of these rural postal patrons. None of the citizens of the community who have come forward to contest the closure of the Hacker Valley Post Office have any knowledge that any impact study was performed by the USPS prior to the suspension. Indeed, even a formal written request for a copy of the USPS file on the Hacker Valley Post Office suspension has not been honored. The public meeting that was held was quite unsatisfactory, as there was little or no discussion or information given the community by representatives of the USPS regarding the community's legal right to contest the suspension or the correct method by which to contest the suspension.

I have had the opportunity to read a copy of the letter to the PRC written by Retha Casto. She mentioned that services of all kinds were late in coming to our area. At that time, this was forgotten corner of old-time Appalachia. Electricity did not arrive until 1947. Telephone service was not available until about 1959. When we moved her in 1965, my husband and I found a community about 75 or so years behind the times relevant to the rest of the country. I mention these facts only to give you a more accurate idea of the dispositions of our Seniors. Many of them are intimidated by even the thought of writing a letter, much less to a government agency. Some cannot read nor write and have to rely up neighbors or family members to do this for them. One room schools were the norm here until 1966. Many of our elders are intimidated by "going to town", the closest incorporated town being about twenty-five miles away. Even a trip to the Hacker Valley post office and the general store can be a large undertaking for some. We are primarily a community of coal miners, loggers, and sawyers with a number of elders on Social Security or SSI. Nevertheless, our community is a very entity and over the last four or five decades has become more rather than less vital. Because of the changes that have taken place elsewhere in the nation (and the world), our little out of the way community has become more desirable as a place to live, where old-fashioned values still prevail. The young people have mostly stopped moving away and have stayed at home to raise their families. Because they want to live here, they have and are devising creative means of making their livings here. A number of small "cottage industries" have sprung up. There are quite a few local artists and artisans. A beautiful brand-new school has just been constructed near the former post office site. The sturdy cafeteria building of the old school is one of the proposed alternate sites for a re-opened Hacker Valley Post Office.

So, we hope that you will see that our Seniors deserve to have at least the level of postal service that they have grown accustomed to having and that no greater hardships of travel and communication should be imposed upon them. A helpful postmistress is quite different from a mute clusterbox. They deserve to have due process observed in any governmental action taken to their detriment.

I respectfully hope that you will consider these comments in making your decision regarding the action taken by the USPS in suspending the Hacker Valley Post Office.

Yours truly,

Montie Van Nostrand

MVN:mvn