Matalik, Kimberly I - Washington, DC

Subject: FW: Questions and Answers

Attachments: Station and Branch Questions and Answers - June 2009.doc

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Sent: Tuesday, June 23, 2009 10:51 AM
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Cc: VanGorder, Alice M - Memphis, TN; Rudez, Richard W - Washington, DC
Subject: Questions and Answers

As discussed at our telecon last week, attached are questions and answers on the Station and Branch Optimization effort.

Thanks!

Kim

Station and Branch Questions a...

Station and Branch Optimization and Consolidation
— Questions and Answers —

Q1. How do you change a station or branch into a Post Office?

A. New post offices are only established when the Postal Service cannot provide adequate service through the existing established network (post offices, stations, branches, Contract Postal Units or by an extension of city, rural or highway contract delivery)

Q2. What happens if a station or branch under consideration for closing/consolidation is named for a fallen soldier?

A. The Postal Service's first preference would be to maintain the honor shown a fallen soldier. One suggestion would be to name the nearest retail facility after the fallen soldier and to notify family and local political appointees of that decision as soon as possible.

Q3. Do we notify customers of a proposed station or branch consolidation? If so, how?

In all cases, we provide public notice and an opportunity for input from retail and delivery customers of the impacted station or branch. Notices are placed in each Post Office Box and in the lobby of the impacted station or branch. Notices also are mailed to carrier delivery customers of that facility, unless the number of delivery customers is so substantial that, as an alternative, a Public Notice in a local newspaper is published. Whatever method is employed, the notice must inform the customer of the discontinuance proposal and the method by which public input is being solicited. The two public input alternative methods are the use of a questionnaire or participation in a community meeting.

If it is determined that customer input will be solicited through questionnaires, the questionnaires must be mailed to the delivery customers of the impacted station or branch, unless the number of delivery customers is so substantial that, as an alternative, a Public Notice in a local newspaper is published. That Notice must inform customers of the availability of questionnaires in the impacted office and an address to which written comments may be submitted. Additionally, a notice must be posted in the lobby of the impacted office to inform walk-in retail customers of the proposed change and the opportunity to obtain and complete questionnaires.

If, instead of a questionnaire, it is determined that customer input will be solicited through a community meeting, the notices should inform customers of the proposal and the date, time, and location of the meeting.

Please contact your local Area or District Station and Branch Optimization and Consolidation Coordinator for the Community Input Field Guidelines and template for public notices and questionnaires.

Q4. What is the purpose of the community meeting and questionnaires?

A. The purpose of the community meeting and the questionnaires is to gather information about a community and the services being provided. This information helps the Postal Service determine the most efficient and economical way to provide these services. The questionnaires are sent to the customers at their mailing address. And copies are available at the retail lobby. If important information is not brought to light, any decision based on available information might be sub-optimal.

Q5. Instead of questionnaires or meetings, can't we just send customers a postcard informing them of the proposed change?

A. No. To ensure customers are given an opportunity to provide comments prior to a final decision, either a community meeting is conducted or questionnaires are sent out. A postcard notifying customers of a decision after-the-fact does not provide an opportunity for them to respond to the proposed change and would deprive customers of the opportunity to provide input.

Q6. Can the community meeting be held at the impacted office?

A. It is recommended that the community meetings be held at a neutral location, such as a community center, church, meeting room or school. Community meetings could be held at the impacted facility when no here else makes sense and the office has sufficient meeting room and space. Another option would be to hold the meeting at a local processing and distribution center if there is meeting space to accommodate customers and it does not interfere with postal operations and/or safety and security of the facility, employees and customers.

Q7. Who is responsible for expenses associated with community meetings and mailing the questionnaires?

A. The local District is responsible for all costs associated with these activities.

Q8. Do retail units co-located in airmail facilities have to go through the discontinuance process?

A. If the retail unit is co-located in any facility, and a decision is made to study the retail unit for discontinuance, then the PO-101, *Discontinuance Process* is followed for stations and branches.

Q9. Do classified stations or branches located on Air Force Bases have to go through the discontinuance process?

A. Yes. If it's a postal-run facility, then it has to go through the PO-101, *discontinuance process*. Additionally, there is an interagency agreement with the Department of Defense and any changes to postal services on military bases need to go through Steve Landi in HQ Delivery Operations in advance. (stephen.a.landi@usps.gov or 202.268.2198)

Q10. Are we allowed to modify the customer questionnaires?

A. Any modifications to the questionnaires should be sent to Headquarters Retail Operations for approval. The questionnaires cover a range of customer needs and how they will be impacted by the discontinuance.

Q11. What steps are involved for conducting community meetings and sending out questionnaires?

A. Handbook PO 101, Post Office Discontinuance Guide, Section 26 and Section 27 includes information on conducting meetings and sending out questionnaires. Additionally, Community Input Field Guidelines were sent to Area Station and Branch Optimization Coordinators on July 15.

Q12. Do Carrier Annexes (carriers only) have to go through the PO 101 discontinuance process?

A. No. Carrier Annexes (carriers only) do not have to go through the PO 101 discontinuance procedures. Districts should work with Area FSO if it involves moving carriers.

Q13. If I am moving a classified station or branch with Retail (entire operation) to a new stand alone location, do I need to follow the discontinuance process in Handbook, PO-101?

A. No. If you are moving a stand-alone classified station and branch with retail to a new stand-alone location, the discontinuance process in PO-101 does not apply. Local Districts should work with their FSO on relocations. Community contact procedures may apply

Q14. If I am moving a stand-alone Classified Station/Branch with Retail to an existing Retail location, do I need to follow the discontinuance process in Handbook PO-101.

A. Yes. A discontinuance study would be required because you are closing retail operations at one facility and consolidating that operation with another retail unit.

Q15. As part of the discontinuance process for Classified Stations and Branches, there is a step for initial union notification. Is there a template that districts should use for this?

A. No. Any questions or concerns related to union notification should be directed to local District Labor Relations representatives. If District Labor Relations representatives have concerns, they should contact their Area Labor Relations Representative. If there are still concerns or questions, the Area Labor Relations representative should contact Headquarters Labor Relations. Headquarters Labor Relations has already made national contact with the applicable employee unions and management organizations. Local contacts are still needed once a District Manager authorizes the study.

Q16. Are there any solutions underway at Headquarters that will allow post office box service at Contract Postal Units?

A. This is currently under review at Headquarters for possible solutions. Until a solution is developed, Districts should continue to follow the existing procedures and processes for contract postal units.

Q17. Can we conduct discontinuance studies on facilities where leases are not up for renewal or if there are no termination clause?

A. Yes. We can conduct discontinuance studies on these facilities. There are still opportunities for savings in these instances. Please inform your Area FSO early in the process if a decision is made to study an office for discontinuance that has a long term lease.