

December 27, 2009

Ms. Ann Fisher, Director
Postal Regulatory Commission
901 NY Avenue, NW #200
Washington, DC 20268-0001

Dear Ms. Fisher:

The enclosed Gazette-Daily Mail (Charleston, WV) December 26, 2009, news article on the Hacker Valley Post Office caused me to go to the PRC website. I read your invitation to participate in a conversation on the future of mail service.

Here is my contribution to the conversation you invite.

Generally I come at this from the perspective that the US Postal Service is "its own worst enemy" and today's internet communication makes the situation much worse.

Hacker Valley and St. George, WV

My own experience with the closing of the St. George, WV, post office perhaps now twenty years ago was very disappointing and frustrating. The postal authorities who held the local hearing in St. George were condensing, I felt disrespectful of local residents and definitely were only going through the motions as their minds were made up. The hearing was a sham.

The decision was made to close St. George post office, zip 26290. When that decision was made the Postal Service promised we (the postal patrons) could continue to use the St. George name and the zip 26290. That was important to our business as the name St. George is unique and well associated with YMCA Camp Horseshoe.

We printed letterhead at significant expense.

Then, the Postal Service went back on its word and eliminated the 26290 zip code. While we were told we could continue to use the name St. George we were instructed to use the Parsons, WV, Zip Code, 26287. We did not do that for years as we purchased letterhead to last for several years – based on the word of the USPS.

In 2007 we were told to cease using St. George and to use Parsons and the 26287 zip code. We have reluctantly done that.

I do not see the necessity of eliminating the name St. George and replacing it with Parsons. Were we in Columbus there are many smaller local community names that are used with zip codes that are for Columbus. What works in urban areas certainly would be workable in small rural areas. Why not? The 26287 zip should work for St. George as well as Parsons.

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My point is the Postal Service did not keep its word, did not respect local citizens or communities or local businesses. It is no surprise to me how the persons of Hacker Valley now experience the Postal Service.

My Suggestions on Moving Forward

1. The Postal Service appears to operate for its employees, not its customers.
2. The Postal Service needs to dramatically change its attitude and become customer focused.
3. Perhaps the Postal Service should turn over its work to Walmart or UPS or a combination of these two private businesses. They are customer focused, are open at times convenient to their customers and deliver services with the customer in mind.

Hours of the Postal Service are out of touch with today. The Pt. Pleasant, WV, Post Office as one example closes for lunch, closes before 5, is not open on Saturday afternoons or Sunday. Working people do not have those hours. When they cannot get service because their post office is closed, they give up. An institution founded by Ben Franklin to promote communication and knit the nation together as a common people is no longer true to its purpose.

While the USPS has limited and inconvenient hours or is not even open at all, local banks now have offices in Walmart and Foodland grocery stores that are open into the evening and on weekends including Sundays.

Where is the Postal Service – closed. Postal Service hours do not match a world where both spouses work and where many persons work hours outside the 9 – 4 the Postal Service offers on only some days.

Yesterday I was in the Huntington (WV) Mall. It was crowded. Thousands of persons were shopping. What about the Postal Service office – it was closed.

Locations

The USPS needs to get out of its buildings and either turn over its operations to Walmart and similar businesses OR open branches in Walmart, grocery stores, malls and other places where citizens now patronize. In a sense this would be a modern version of the Post Offices of years ago when postal offices were routinely a part of the local general store. It seems a return to those operations is a way to reinvent the future of the Postal Service.

Follow the model of private business and go where the customer (money) is. Location, location, location and convenient hours must be offered. Have your Postal executives and union leaders go on a field trip to Walmart and think how USPS could re-invent its business model for the customer by taking a page from the past on today's much larger scale and potential customer base.

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Staff

USFS needs to get out of the idea that the purpose of the USPS is its staff and workers. USFS is to be for the customer. Reinvent USPS with the customer as the number one focus.

The USFS needs to get off the idea it is there for the convenience or benefit of its employees and commit to serve the public. After all, who is covering the deficits of the USFS? Who owns the buildings? Who do postal employees work for? They work for the tax payers and in exchange are to provide service to the tax payer.

Procedures, Rules, Regulations

Again, think customer . . . not USPS machinery or staff. Make it easy to use the mailing service.

Name

If none of the above can be done in some form . . . then just change the name to the Post Office and drop Service from the name.

Thank you for inviting me and all citizens to join in the conversation on the future of the United States Postal Service.

Sincerely,

David King, Executive
Ohio-West Virginia YMCA

CC: Shelley Moore Capito, Member of Congress
Senator Robert Byrd