

January 27, 2010

Postal Regulatory Commission
901 New York Avenue NW Suite 200
Washington, DC 20268-001
ATT: Richard Oliver-Docket # PI 2010-1

Dear Postal Regulatory Commission,

Our Post Office, Laketon, IN 46943 was suspended on January 16, 2010 because of eviction.. ***This is not true.*** This is what happened, the Landlord, Rodney A. Gahl, ran into financial difficulties and filed bankruptcy. The First Farmer Bank and Trust Company hold the mortgage. The Bank assured the community that they would not evict the Post Office. The bank even told Dick Shepherd, Association President of the Laketon Association, that if the Association bought the building that “the bank will make a donation back to them”. There will be a sale in February 16, 2010. It would almost be certain that whoever bought the building would seek to have the Post Office there since we already have a few empty buildings in Laketon. The empty buildings are also an alternative place to have the Post Office. It has never been an “eviction”. The USPS never even looked at them. Someone interested in buying the building said he would like to have the post office remain there. The lease was signed 8/1/2008 and is good until 2013.

On December 8, 2009, Randy Stines, the POOM, sent a letter to the community stating the following: “The lessor of the building has filed bankruptcy and the bank is requesting the Postal Service to vacate the building”. This was not true. The Bank assured William Ruppel, , Indiana State Legislative Representative and Chair of the State Banking Commission that they would not evict the Post Office. He contacted the Indiana District Manager, Lynn Smith, after the “Temporary Suspension “ and she wouldn’t even respond to Mr. Ruppel’s inquiries on this Temporary Suspension.

The Laketon, IN post office is handicapped accessible. The North Manchester, IN Post Office is not.

The USPS knew last April of the problems with the landlord and that he had filed bankruptcy, they had plenty of time to find an alternate site. In addition, since the sale was on February 16, 2010, why did they suspend the office in January. 16, 2010? This is not an emergency since the post office could have stayed in the building until after it was sold.

It should have been “officially closed” because Randy Stines, the Post Office Operating Manager, had already made arrangement for a contractor to actually install rural mail boxes at the customer delivery sites. The cost was \$7000.00. They were installed the week that the Post Office was closed. They also did the same thing at the Ragsdale, IN community so that the customers wouldn’t complain too much. This is very unusual. Therefore, the USPS had not intentions of reopening the Laketon, IN Post Office. We would then have been giving 60 days to protest and 30 days to appeal to the Postal

Regulatory Commission. In Addition, the USPS was offering post office boxes for sale for \$15.00 each. They literally gutted the building. The USPS has no intentions of ever reopening the Laketon, IN Post Office.

We were given very little notice of a community meeting. We were notified on December 10, 2009 for a meeting on December 16, at 7 p.m. at the fire house. That was changed to 12/17/09 at the American Legion Hall at 5:30. Mr. Stines then changed it from 3 to 5 PM. We protested that the people who worked would not be able to attend. This meeting is supposed to be for the convenience of the Community according to Handbook 101. At the meeting, Thelma Butler requested that it be rescheduled at a more convenient time. Mr. Stines refused.

The Postal Service had already made up their minds to suspend Laketon. Mr. Stines made the statement ,”This meeting would not give a final decision, but gather information so I can go back with the Info. This meeting was a fact finding meeting. Someone else, higher up would be the one making the decision.”. But further on he stated that the USPS have a contractor ready who would install mail boxes (first one free) at their houses. Obviously, the plan to suspend was a “go”. As Bill Ruppel stated “this is a railroad job” was certainly true.

We have a young man, Jon Albright, who served his country for two years. He had an automobile accident when he came home that has paralyzed him and he is in a wheel chair. Jon has gone on with great courage and is attending college and is an adjutant of the Laketon American Legion. The Laketon Post Office was handicapped accessible since the North Manchester Post Office isn't, he has to call ahead and schedule a time to come in for service and they meet him at the back loading dock. He finds this very embarrassing since he is trying very hard to live a normal life and doesn't want to be treated different.

In this day and age, this is no way to treat a Veteran or a Handicapped person. Our Seniors are also finding it very difficult to do service with the USPS. The myth “The Rural Carrier is a Post Office on Wheels” is not true and we are not happy that we have to travel to another town to get money orders and mail packages.

The Community of Laketon, IN thank you for your interest, you and the Congress are our only hope of getting the Laketon Post Office reopened.

Sincerely,

Thelma Butler
25 N. Main Street, Laketon, IN 46943
(260) 982-2896
Chair of Committee to Keep Laketon Post Office open

Name, address, telephone #