

BEFORE THE
POSTAL REGULATORY COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, DC 20268

In the Matter of:
Valley Falls, Post Office, Cumberland Rhode Island, 02864

Docket No: A2011-18

Petitioner(s) Derrick Watson, Concerned Citizens of Valley Falls SOPO

PARTICIPANT STATEMENT

1. Petitioner(s) are appealing the Postal Service's Final Determination concerning the Valley Falls Post Office, Cumberland Rhode Island 02864. The Final Determination was posted on May 5, 2011

2. In accordance with applicable law, 39 U.S.C. § 404(b)(5), the Petitioner(s) request the Postal Regulatory Commission to review the Postal Service's determination on the basis of the record before the Postal Service in the making of the determination.

3. Petitioners: Please set out below the reasons why you believe the Postal Service's Final Determination should be reversed and returned to the Postal Service for further consideration.

Providing for the Greater Good

A principle upon which our beloved country was founded is based on the belief that government would act and make decisions that provided for “the greater good” of those it serves. Basically, the worth of a governmental action should be weighed against the potential consequence that its citizens may have to endure. The history of our country has provided many examples where the principle of providing for “the greater good” has been realized for some and not for others. We live in a democratic society that espouses “majority rules” and “by the will of the people”. The recent decision rendered by the USPS violates these democratic principles in that it severely undermines our basic trust that our government will always take care of its fringe populations.

The residents of Valley Falls have had to weigh how the closing of our local post office would affect our lives. We realize that we live in one of the tiniest corners of the country’s tiniest states. We also realize that our community’s economic and quality of life issues, with regard to the closure of the Valley Falls post office, is considered miniscule when compared to the

economic benefits that the USPS will supposedly reap. Our community as a whole may suffer greatly as a result of the closing of the Valley Falls Post Office but as far as the USPS is concerned one community's loss is a governmental agency's gain. I would also like to say that I began this journey purely for selfish reasons because this USPS decision could potentially ruin my ebay business by substantially increasing the cost of my shipping. When I began to dialogue with my neighbors, I realized that this issue had deeper reaching ramifications for the Valley Falls community. I have come to embrace the citizens of Valley Falls concerns as a whole. I am neither a lawyer nor a leader. I am however a realist. I am a Harlem born, Bronx New York raised person who understands and who has personally experienced how seemingly inert decisions can make rubble of an entire community's infrastructure and quality of life. Right now I am simply a person who seeks an impartial audience to present the detailed concerns of my community.

I would like to address the specific reasons why the decision by the USPS to close the Valley Falls Post Office should be reversed or at least suspended by The Postal Regulatory Commission (hereafter the PRC) in regard to 39 U.S.C. 404(d); but first I'd like to express how our already economically depressed community has now become morally depressed as a result of this proposed action. The blunt truth is that we feel, as the Pastor of The Valley Falls Our Lady of Fatima Church coined it, "like David fighting Goliath". The residents of our community also feel that our actual concerns were never considered by USPS representatives who hosted the April 6, 2011 community meeting, because this meeting, as I will demonstrate, was never designed to solicit our concerns nor address the needs of our community.

Reason Number One. The Retail Postal Service Facility in Valley Falls is a "Post Office"

In response to the USPS notice dated June 7, 2011 before the PRC, I'd like to address the specific USPS assertions as delineated on page one, paragraph two in the last sentence. The USPS states that the current postal retail facility located at 197 Broad Street in Valley Falls is not considered an official "Post Office" by the USPS and therefore its proposed closure should not be subject to the statutory 39 U.S.C. 404 PRC appeals process. Their contention is neither

hypothetically true nor can it be factually proven based upon historical, physical, electronic or empirical evidence.

Historically, the Valley Falls community has been served by a local post office since about 1890 when a US Post Office was engendered at 12-14 Mill Street. The USPS saw fit to establish and also maintain a post office in Valley Falls since that time. How can a century and a quarter of historical postal services in what was always considered an official post office now be declassified by the USPS? When one researches the history of Valley Falls in Cumberland, RI on the internet, there are many references to a “Post Office” being situated there. However, there are no historical references to USPS re-classifying the Valley Falls Post Office as being a Postal Station. Current evidence supports this fact.

Firstly, the brick building located at 197 Broad Street has cemented and attached to its façade metal letters that spell out the following: “UNITED STATES POST OFFICE – Cumberland Rhode Island 02864. There is no signage on the building or any lettering on the front door of the facility that identifies this edifice as a “Station”.

Secondly, the USPS web site contains the complete listings of all postal retail facilities located within the state of Rhode Island. (Exhibit1) Although the USPS has classified many of the listed facilities as “Stations”, i.e. (NORTH STATION FINANCE, 351 SMITH ST, PROVIDENCE, RI 02908-3700, FRIAR STATION, 333 EATON ST, PROVIDENCE, RI 02908-2825, EAST SIDE FINANCE STATION, 306 THAYER ST, PROVIDENCE, RI 02906-1590), the Valley Falls facility at 197 Broad Street is listed as a “Post Office” on this web site and not a “station”. http://usps.whitepages.com/post_office/02865

Additionally when one dials 401-725-2962, the official telephone number of the postal retail facility located at 197 Broad Street in Valley Falls as listed on the official USPS web site, the following recorded greeting is played. “Hi you’ve reached the Valley Falls Post Office...” If the Valley Falls retail postal facility is not a “Post Office” then why is it announced as such to any and all callers?

Finally, inside the lobby of the building located at 197 Broad Street is a bronze plaque signed in 1970 by former President Richard M. Nixon and Winton M. Blount, the 59th US Postmaster General, that designates and dedicates this building to public service as a post office. Why would the President of the United States and the then Postmaster General designate this structure as a post office if it wasn't. If the USPS did not want this building or retail facility to be considered an official post office then it should not have erected and maintained signage that identifies it as such. The lettered sign on the building says United States Post Office and that's what the Valley Falls community and the USPS has called it since its dedication in 1970. If the USPS changed the designation of this building since its dedication in 1970, then the USPS should have also changed the official signage on the building and also amended or edited its classification on the official USPS web site. They have done neither. The USPS should not be allowed, for the purpose of their recent decision to close this facility, to change the designation of the Valley Falls Post Office to a station when it has been and still is advertised to the citizens of Valley Falls and to the world via the internet as a "Post Office" for the past 40 years. The USPS has seen fit to declassify the Valley Falls Post Office as a station simply to get around the PRC statutory appeal process and preclude it from the PRC's 39 U.S.C. 404 process. The USPS should be denied its request to declassify the Valley Falls Post Office as a station for this appeal process by estoppel.

Reason Number Two: The Term "Customers Lose Access" Can Never Be Realized in The United States.

In the second paragraph of the second page of the USPS Notice Before the PRC, the USPS attempts to demonstrate how the proposed Valley Falls Post Office closure should not be subject to 39 U.S.C. § 404(d) because this statute should only be applied when a community loses total access to US retail postal services. Where in the United States is it possible to "lose access" to postal services? Answer-nowhere? It is almost impossible for any citizen of the United States not to be able to locate postal services. Locating a post office in the US is like locating a McDonald's fast food restaurant- there is and always will be one somewhere. Even when the United States was in its infancy and our forefathers decided to "Go West" in their quest for territorial expansion, citizens that settled in rural and remote areas were served by the "Pony

Express” to facilitate their communication with the rest of the more densely settled areas of the US. Losing access to postal services is not the issue here and it should never be the issue. If the USPS is allowed to use the “Lose access” as the litmus test for deciding to close post offices then they will succeed in every one of its closure actions. The USPS will always be able to say that citizens can find postal services somewhere else. The citizens of Valley Falls are more concerned with the type, quality and proximity of access that we have to postal services in our community.

Reason Number Three: What Exactly Does The Term “Close Proximity” Mean?

As per Webster’s dictionary “Close” means: at or to a short distance or time away. Webster’s defines “Proximity” as: the quality or state of being close or near. The term “Close Proximity” represents a tautology meaning that is redundant. If the USPS is allowed to use this term when it attempts to justify the nearness of a retail postal facility to a customer’s home then the term should be interpreted to mean “very very close” The USPS asserts that two (2) alternative stations are located within two (2) miles of Valley Falls. The USPS is correct in its assertion that these stations exist. How in the world can the USPS surmise that a postal facility located two (2) miles from a customer’s home as being “very very close” For the residents of Valley Falls “very very close” means walking distance. Residents walk to the Valley Falls Post Office on a daily basis. They walk to this Post Office either because they don’t drive or have access to a vehicle. A two mile distance is not even “very very close” for a person who has transportation. Two miles represents an insurmountable distance for those who do not have transportation or the elderly who have to walk to their local post office. In the case of postal box holders who normally walk to the Valley Falls Post Office to retrieve mail daily they would be forced to travel almost seven (7) miles roundtrip to a post office that is not serviced by RIPTA (Rhode Island Public Transit Authority). The Diamond Hill post office is not “very very close” to the Valley Falls Community. The ultimate question of proximity is how far one has to travel and by what means and across what terrain one must travel. The distance from the base of Mount Everest to its peak is only 5 miles. It’s not the distance but the elevation that makes climbing Everest so difficult. I’m not trying to suggest that traveling 3.5 miles to another post office is as equally arduous as climbing Mt Everest but am simply illustrating that proximity is relative and dependent upon the means by which you travel. Although the USPS views “very

very close” as 3.5 miles or less, it never provides examples of how one who has no vehicle or one who is relegated to walking can traverse a 1.2, 2, or 3.5 mile distance. It is quite common to see teens and twenty something’s jogging along Broad Street and Diamond Hill Road but does the USPS really expect baby boomers and seniors who don’t drive, to carry packages, and walk 3.5 miles to buy stamps, money orders and retrieve mail from postal boxes? With regard to the Valley Falls residents who have means to transportation, should they be required to expend their already limited resources on extra fuel to travel the 1.2 -3.5 mile distances as well? Should the citizens of Valley Falls set up car pool services to travel to more distant post offices? The USPS should not be allowed to close the Valley Falls Post Office on the basis of what they consider to be “very very close” because a distance of 1.2-3.5 miles fails to meet that definition. The only post office that is “very very close” to Valley Falls is located at 197 Broad Street.

Reason Number Four: The USPS 2009 Survey is stale, inconclusive and does not represent the complete or current concerns of the Valley Falls Community.

The USPS asserts that it satisfied the provision to gather comments from the Valley Falls community in its September 2009 survey. It fails to mention how long it conducted this survey or the parameters in which that survey was conducted. The USPS states that it left survey forms at the Valley Falls Post Office counter and mailed survey forms only to postal box holders. This survey method was completely inadequate and its results have never been made available to the residents of Valley Falls or to the public. The USPS has never made the conclusions that it garnered as a result of this survey public. The fact that this survey has been guarded by the USPS since 2009, and has not been made public, is reason enough to dismiss it as a valid survey that can be utilized for a decision that was rendered in 2011. A survey should at least be timely, current and its results should be made available to the community that it affects. The population of Valley Falls as per the US Census Bureau is approximately 12,000. I find it very difficult to believe that the USPS could draw any real conclusions based upon such a small survey sampling (79). Utilizing a two year old survey is akin to going to a doctor not being told that you have cancer and having the doctor call you two years later to begin treatment. The community of Valley Falls is traditionally and primarily comprised of Portuguese-speaking people, some of whom neither read nor write English very well. If the form used in survey was simply left at the counter and did not fully explain the purpose of the survey, this would explain why the response

to the USPS survey was so low. Although the USPS is required to conduct surveys in communities where they are considering closing post offices, it is understandable why they put so little effort into thoroughly completing this requirement. Why would an agency that expects negative feedback regarding a decision that may negatively impact a community be motivated to do a thorough job at completing a survey. The PRC should require the USPS to mail a survey form along with a postage paid return envelope to all households in a community that receives mail instead of simply leaving a survey form at the retail postal counter. Leaving a survey form at the postal counter and expecting this procedure to garner a true representative sampling of the concerns and comments of a community regarding a post office closing is wishful thinking. Would it take much more effort to mail these forms to households? The cost to do so would be minimal since the USPS would not have to pay for postage. In the future the PRC should require the USPS to contract with a bonded and independent auditing organization to undertake the completion of a community survey. The results of this survey should be made available to the USPS as well as the governing body of the community that will be affected by any proposed closing. Requiring the USPS to conduct its own survey of a community is like having a fox guard the hen house.

When the Concerned Citizens of Valley Falls SOPO began to poll the community regarding the closure of the Valley Falls post office in beginning in March of 2011, we faced several obstacles. The first obstacle was the language barrier and the second was trust. We overcame both obstacles by leaving the petition and comment forms at various businesses in the Valley Falls area. These businesses, which all have a stake in the proposed closure of the Valley Falls Post Office, were instrumental in getting signatures on both the petition and the comment forms. The petition forms were personally handed to John “Mike” Powers at the April 6, 2011 community meeting because we were all under the impression that the USPS had come to solicit our current comments regarding the proposed closure. (This was very far from the truth as will be explained and in reason number 6 of why the PRC should reverse the USPS proposal) The individual letters that we submitted to the PRC on May 22, 2011 contained many forms where only the names and signatures were completed. Although some of the residents could not read the English part of the letter they understood that the USPS was attempting to close the Valley Falls Post Office and they simply signed their names in protest because they were unable to

respond in English. The signed petition documents and the individual opposition letters submitted to the PRC on May 22, 2011 represent a more accurate demonstration of how the residents of Valley Falls feel regarding the closure of the Valley Falls Post Office. These recent petitions and letters provide more up to date comments as opposed to the USPS 2009 survey.

How can a current petition that contain over 400 signatures collected in 2011 not carry more credence than the 79 responses collected by the USPS in 2009? How can the 142 individual comments and 34 business owner petitions be excluded from the USPS decision process. Will the PRC also ignore our current comments and allow an outdated and effortless survey to supersede a more inclusive commentary? The USPS never intended to understand the Valley Falls community or its needs nor was the USPS ever interested in our objections to the proposed closing. Its goal was simple – close the Valley Falls Post Office - period. Our country was founded on two important democratic principles, majority rules and the will of the people. The USPS has demonstrated its disregard for these principles by submitting a 2009 survey while ignoring a more recent survey that represents four times the amount of commentary and response than their survey. The question is not whether there is something wrong with this picture, because most would admit that it is completely out of focus, but rather will the PRC look at it and make the proper focal adjustments.

Reason Number Five: The USPS never considered the concerns or needs of the Valley Falls community and is ignorant as to our community's cultural traditions.

The USPS is absolutely clueless as to the needs of the residents of Valley Falls. They just don't get it. Valley Falls is a community comprised of 85% second generation Portuguese-Americans. If the USPS truly understood Portuguese culture then they would have tempered their analysis of the Valley Falls community with this understanding. They did not. The Portuguese, as a culture, prefer to conduct business and most other personal interaction face to face and hand to hand. They trust who and what they can see. The residents of Valley Falls traditionally prefer to conduct business locally rather than globally. If one were to tour the streets of Valley Falls one would see vegetables growing in almost every homeowner's back yard. Growing vegetables and shopping locally is a testimony to their independence and self sufficiency. The "look 'em in the eye and give 'em a firm handshake" is part of their cultural

makeup. They support their local businesses and prefer not to travel great distances for goods and services. Why travel to a supermarket for lettuce when you can go to your own garden and harvest a head? When communicating with others, the residents of Valley Falls prefer face to face contact and will opt to send a message by mail as opposed to using the internet. They inherently trust the mail for communication and for paying bills. Many residents in Valley Falls still use money orders to pay their monthly financial obligations. I don't understand why the USPS thinks that it can change the cultural traditions of the Valley Falls residents that have existed for over a hundred years by suggesting they use the internet to perform retail postal transactions. (One of the primary reasons why the Concerned Citizens of Valley Falls –SOPO had to mail the comments it collected from the community to the PRC was because the residents absolutely refused or could not use the internet. Residents who completed the comment forms did so by visiting the counters of their local businesses.) How can the USPS assume that residents of Valley Falls who have been used to conducting retail postal transactions in their own neighborhood to suddenly alter their life style to include traveling 1.2 – 3.5 miles away from their homes? The fact that the USPS ignores the obstacles that our citizens will have to overcome is indicative of the callous disdain that the USPS has exhibited toward our community since the inception of this proposed closure of the Valley Falls Post Office. The USPS assumes that Valley Falls resident can visit the Diamond Hill Post Office while completing his/her normal daily errands. This assumption again demonstrates the ignorance of the USPS with regard to the culture of Valley Falls. If the USPS had really assessed our community they would have ascertained that Valley Falls residents don't conduct daily errands in the Diamond Hill Area. On a daily basis Broad Street is traversed by many local resident who have been accustomed to walking to banks, schools, churches, grocery stores, bakery shops, pharmacies, hardware stores, and other local establishments. Walking to the Valley Falls Post Office is an important thread in the fabric of our daily lives. Conversely, no one in the Diamond Hill area walks to any of its local businesses. This is the main reason why this area is not provided with public transportation by RIPTA. RIPTA realizes that the residents of Diamond Hill have no need for public transportation because they all have private transportation and drive to all business establishments.

The USPS has submitted a totally erroneous and fictitious analysis in their justification on the “ease” in which residents of Valley Falls can navigate to the Diamond Hill Post Office. Firstly, Valley Falls is located south of Diamond Hill so although there is a dedicated left turn lane on Diamond Hill Road on the southbound side it is inconceivable why a residents who live to the south would take advantage of this lane. The direct route from Valley Falls to the Diamond Hill area is via Diamond Hill Rd. and that route is from the south not the north as the USPS suggests. To reach the Diamond Hill Post office from the north would require residents of Valley Falls to travel over 5 miles from the south to reach the this destination via Angel Rd. That’s two miles more than when traveling north on Diamond Hill Rd. This makes no sense and only further demonstrates how out of touch the USPS is in terms with identifying the needs of the Valley Falls community. The fact they mention this alternative route from the north and dedicated left turn lane is indicative of their acknowledgement that traveling north along Diamond Hill Rd is very problematic. In addition to the horrific traffic problems residents would experience daily while traveling north along Diamond Hill Rd, they would experience infinitely more problems while attempting to make left turns out of the Diamond Hill parking lot during peak times to return south to their homes and businesses. Traffic at this location is totally unforgiving in this regard.

For some reason the USPS considers Valley Falls some sort of high tech community. It mentions that community residents have the option to purchase retail postal items via the internet. The fact of the matter is that Valley Falls is truly a low tech community and most residents purchase only what they immediately need with cash and in person. Many postal customers in Valley Falls don’t have computers nor do they have access to the internet. The postal service “Stamps by Mail” will not benefit those who can only afford to purchase the stamps that they immediately need, nor does it address the needs of customers who walk to the Valley Falls Post Office to purchase money orders with cash. The USPS in its justification to close the Valley Falls Post Office does not offer our community any advantageous alternatives. Its idea of this supposedly simple change requires access to the internet, traversing longer distances, more travel time and expenses, and more inconveniences.

Reason Number Six: The USPS and its representative John “Mike” Powers flagrantly lied to the residents of Valley Falls at the April 6, 2011 community meeting and the USPS has not conducted its determination in good faith.

The USPS hosted a community meeting on April 6, 2011 at City Hall in Cumberland. The flyer/notice that the USPS posted at the Valley Falls Post Office indicated that this meeting would be a forum where the USPS would listen to comments and concerns from the community regarding its consideration to close the Valley Falls Post Office and consolidate its services with the Diamond Hill Post Office. I have already submitted this flyer to the PRC in my original appeal request document. The document states the following in the first and second sentences:

“Current economic conditions require that the USPS review all postal operations for opportunities to streamline processes and provide services more efficiently. Accordingly, we are considering consolidation of the retail and delivery operations at the Valley Falls Finance Station located at 197 Broad Street in Cumberland RI 02864.....

The last sentence of the flyer states: “The Postal service operates to serve our customers. We value your opinions during this process.Please try to attend the meeting in order to voice your concerns. There will be a Postal Representative there to answer your questions.”

The flyer that stated the aforementioned was posted on the lobby door and several other lobby locations at the Valley Falls Post Office in the beginning of March 2011.

Lie Number one: The USPS had made its determination to close the Valley Falls Post Office almost two (2) months before it hosted the April 6, 2011 community meeting.

As part of the USPS Notice before the PRC, the USPS includes a document titled “FINAL DETERMINATION TO CLOSE THE VALLEY FALLS CLASSIFIED STATION...”. The document was signed by the Vice President of Delivery and Post Office Operations on February 24, 2011. If the USPS had rendered its final determination in February of 2011 to close the Valley Falls Post Office then why did the notice that was posted in the lobby of 197 Broad Street state that the USPS was considering closing the Valley Falls Post Office?

When John “Mike” Powers was directly asked by a Valley Falls resident if the USPS had made the determination, Mr. Powers emphatically said no and that the reason for the meeting was to

solicit the concerns of our community. The questions that the PRC should pose to the USPS with regard to this flagrant lie and misleading statement as provided by Mr. Powers are as follows:

Was Mr. Powers aware of the Final Determination document that was signed on February 24, 2011? If so, why did he tell the Valley Falls residents that the closure was still being considered?

Why did the USPS post a sign in the lobby of the Valley Falls Post Office stating that the final determination was under consideration if it had already made that determination? On page five (5) of the FINAL DETERMINATION TO CLOSE that was signed on February 24, 2011, it states in section VII NOTICES: “Notify customers of the permanent discontinuance of the Valley Falls Station and advise them....” How can this statement coupled with Mr. Powers’ public statement that the closure of the Valley Falls Post Office was still being considered be seen as operating in good faith?

When a governmental representative and an agency as a whole lie to the public it undermines the public’s faith in that agency. This sequence of event should be taken seriously by the PRC because it reveals the true nature of the USPS Valley Falls proposal. The USPS’s decision to close the Valley Falls Post Office should be overturned by the PRC because the actions of the USPS have been totally unethical. How can the residents of Valley Falls or the PRC, for that matter, trust anything else the USPS has to say. This was not the only impropriety that plagued the April 6, 2011 community meeting.

Lie Number Two: The Valley Falls Post Office is being considered for closing due to a 20% decline in its revenue.

Mike Powers publically stated that the USPS was considering closing the Valley Falls Post Office because it had experienced a 20% drop in revenue. The Final Determination document clearly states the Valley Falls Post Office was being closed due to a 9.5% decline in revenue. In an official USPS Press Release dated February 1, 2011 the USPS states that it was conducting a study of the Wareham MA Postal Annex and possibly consolidating this operation with a facility in Brockton MA. Mr. Mike Powers is quoted as saying that the entire New England operations had experience a 20% decline in income since 2007. Why did Mr. Powers

double this amount that is officially stated in the “Final Determination” statement and then attribute the New England’s percentage of decline to the Valley Falls Post Office? The residents of Valley Falls contend that Mr. Powers did so because he never really expected that our residents would initiate an appeal and that the flagrantly misleading statements and lies made by Mr. Powers and the USPS would never come to light. Does the PRC consider what the USPS has done in our community dealing in good faith?

Lie Number Three: Closing the Valley Falls Post Office will save the USPS \$100,000

Mike Powers told our community that closing the Valley Falls Post Office would save the USPS \$100,000 per year. He failed to mention that due to the USPS lease and contract obligations at 197 Broad Street that it would have to pay almost \$90,000 to facilitate this closing. Since the USPS lease obligation to the owners of the building at 197 Broad Street does not end until 2013 the USPS should be forced to continue the Valley Falls Post Office retail operations until that time. Paying \$90,000 to close a facility mitigates the supposed saving that the USPS would realize for at least one year.

Federal law states that a Post Office should not be closed simply because the USPS feels that the Post Office facility is losing money. It further states that the USPS should also investigate and study how closing a Post Office will negatively impact a community. To date the only study that the USPS has attempted to conduct is one that was conducted in September of 2009 that consisted of 79 responses. This meager sampling and the financial statement contained in the “Final Determination” clearly indicates that the USPS never really considered the total negative impact that closing the Valley Falls Post Office would have on our community. The last statement in section VI of the “Final Determination” clearly states that the primary reason and major advantage for closing the Valley Falls Post Office is to save the USPS \$106,282 annually.

It is obvious that the USPS feels that the quality of life of the residents of Valley Falls should be sacrificed to provide the USPS with a 0.002% savings of its \$8.5 billion deficit. As per the US Census Bureau (2000) the total population of Cumberland Rhode Island is approximately 33,000 of which 12,000 citizens reside in the 3.5 square mile area that comprises Valley Falls. Senior citizens represent 20% of Valley Falls’ total population. It is difficult to fathom how

closing the Valley Falls Post Office upholds the principle of providing for “the greater good” by saving the USPS a meager 0.002% of its national deficit while inconveniencing approximately 12,000 or roughly 38% of Cumberland’s residents and postal service retail customers. The “greater good” should be determined not only by USPS profit or the lack there of, but also by the needs of a community. The USPS decision to close the Valley Falls Post Office is a flagrant attempt to deprive a poverty level and socio-economically depressed community of a basic need. Why would the USPS cause a community that has suffered through the worst of Rhode Island’s economic crisis, to suffer even more?

John “Mike” Powers, the Public Relations Manager for the New England Area Operations stated at the April 6, 2011 community Meeting in Valley Falls, that the Cape Cod area in Massachusetts has an over abundance of retail postal services and he said that he did not understand why Cape Cod needed such saturation but confessed that the USPS is not even considering closing any postal operation in this affluent area. In a nut shell the USPS has decided that the poor should be made to endure more inconvenience while the affluent are afforded more services than they really need. The PRC needs to analyze whether the USPS decisions to close post offices is actually based upon on the socio-economic status of a community. I assert that the USPS viewed Valley Falls as a community that was vulnerable to “steam rolling”. I’m sure that the USPS could save a lot more money by closing a few of its retail services on Cape Cod, but they felt that the protest of the Valley Falls residents would be pale in comparison to the protest that they would face in an affluent community such as Cape Cod.

CASE IN POINT:

The town of Yarmouth Cape Cod is comprised of approximately 24 square miles. As per the US Census Bureau the town has a population of approximately 24,000. That’s approximately 9,000 less than the town of Cumberland. There are three (3) post offices located in the town of Yarmouth that support 24,000 people The town of Cumberland RI has a population of about 33,000 that occupy approximately 26 square miles. How can the USPS justify suspending services in Valley Falls when it obvious that our town has a larger population and occupiees more land mass. Cumberland currently has two post offices. Is it equitable that the USPS now intends to serve a population of 33,000 with one post office while allowing a community with a population of 24,000 to be served by three post offices? Are the USPS actions actually “providing for the greater good” or simply providing for those it views as greater?

LIE Number Five: John ‘Mike Powers never mentioned that the community of Valley Falls could approach the PRC to appeal its closure decision.

As I stated previously, the meeting that was hosted by the USPS on April 6, 2011 was never intended to solicit the concerns of Valley Falls residents. The proof as contained in the USPS February 2011 “Final Determination” statement reveals that this meeting was simply a diversion in the USPS attempt to deprive Valley Falls of its right to appeal the USPS decision. When a voice from the crowd asked Mr. Powers if he was going to reveal that the community could initiate an appeal with the PRC to oppose the closing of the Valley Falls Post Office, Mr. Powers rolled his eyes to the ceiling, looked at his watch and then turned his back to the speaker who made the suggestion. The USPS in their Final Determination” statement states in “concern number four (4) that USPS employees receive instruction on public courtesy. Mr. Powers must have called out sick on the days that this instruction was provided because he showed neither the speaker nor the rest our community any semblance of public courtesy. Mr. Powers dismissed the mentioned appeal process and never attempted to explain the process to our community. Mr. Powers in his demeanor treated our community with disdain. Mr. Powers even turned his back on me when I handed him our petitions and began to express my concern of how the closing of the Valley Falls Post Office would affect the shipping cost for my eBay business.

In addition to Mr. Powers, the Valley Falls community meeting was attended by several Post Masters from other post offices in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. When I inquired of Mr. Powers why he needed such a large entourage of postal employees, whom he admitted had no bearing on the consideration of the USPS to close the Valley Falls Post Office he replied that the other Post Masters were there for observation. The meeting that the USPS conducted on April 6, 2011 was not conducted for the benefit of the residents of Valley Falls but instead as a training session for the other Post Master attendees so that Mr. Powers could show these trainees how to quell community protest and “steam, roll” a community.

In conclusion the PRC should reverse the decision of the USPS to close the Valley Falls Post Office for the aforementioned reasons. The PRC should require the USPS to complete a thorough and more diligent analysis of a community’s needs before it attempt to close a post

office in any community. The PRC should require the USPS to submit evidence of the additional measures it intends to take to reduce its state-wide and national deficit woes before closing a community post office. More importantly, the PRC should thoroughly investigate the deceptive practices that the USPS has attempted to use in all of its actions to close the Valley Falls Post Office.

The USPS should be reprimanded and sanctioned for its failure to disclose relevant facts and for publically lying about its decision to close the Valley Falls Post Office. Its actions have breached the public trust and any decision that it has made as a result of this breach should be summarily denied.

The Concerned Citizens of Valley Falls respectfully request that the Commission review all documents and exhibits that we have submitted to this body.

Respectfully;

Derrick Watson
Concerned Citizens of Valley Falls – SOPO
June 27, 2011

Exhibit 1

VALLEY FALLS Post Office™ Location



Post Office Location - VALLEY FALLS

197 BROAD ST

CUMBERLAND, RI 02864-9991

(800) ASK-USPS

(800) 275-8777

(401) 725-2692

TTY Service

(877) 889-2457

for hearing impaired

- [Send to my email](#)
- [Nearby Businesses](#)

Business Hours

Mon-Fri

9:00am-12:00pm

2:00pm-5:00pm

Sat

9:00am-12:00pm

Sun

closed

Last Daily Collection

Mon-Fri

5:00pm

Sat

11:30am

Sun

closed

Services

- [PO Boxes Online](#)