

August 5, 2011

To: Postal Regulatory Commission
901 New York Avenue NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20268-0001

Re: Docket #1383312-22654

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Office of PAGR POSTAL REGULATORY
COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

I am writing to voice my objection to the USPS decision to close the Post Office in Star Tannery, VA. Neither the decision itself nor the actions of the Postal Service have followed the letter or the spirit of the law.

1. The decision is in violation of 39 USC 101(b), *"the Postal Service shall provide the maximum degree of effective and regular postal services to rural areas, communities, and small towns where post offices are not self-sustaining. No small post office shall be closed solely for operating at a deficit, it being the specific intent of the Congress that effective postal services be insured to residents of both urban and rural communities."* The USPS has violated two provisions of that law. First, the reason given for closure is an annual \$21,988 deficit, pure and simple. Second, the alternative of repeated round trips (for some, up to 40 miles or 2 gallons of gasoline each trip) to Strasburg for packages and P.O. boxes does not provide maximum degree of effective postal services. Service by carrier does not provide secure delivery (part of effective service), a complaint voiced by many members of the community during public meetings.
2. The loss of handicapped accessibility is particularly unacceptable. Star Tannery Post Office has a handicapped ramp for the infirm, elderly, or any postal patron who cannot negotiate stairs. Because the Strasburg Post Office has no handicapped entrance (ADA exemption), patrons who cannot mount the steep steps must wait in their vehicles and honk the horn until someone inside hears them and comes out to assist. This is demeaning and humiliating. Also, it is poor customer service toward the people at the counter inside, who must endure the honking and wait for a clerk to make trips outside.
3. The USPS has lied to the community about options other than closure. In the March 9 community meeting Michael Furey said the USPS had no options for Star Tannery other than closure. The community is aware of at least two USPS employees who have stated publicly that they would welcome the opportunity to work at a Star Tannery level "C" operation, if only the USPS would consider that option and post the job opportunity. Furthermore, this level "C" option is being considered by USPS for the Fort Valley (VA) community, whose postal activity amounts to the same number of hours per day as Star Tannery's. Why tell the Star Tannery community we have no options, but then consider those options for Fort Valley??
4. The USPS has ignored and/or misrepresented the community input. The USPS report claims that only 7 respondents to the community survey opposed closure. In fact, many more than 7 of the 113 survey respondents were opposed to a potential closure, but they were ignored because their responses did not use the words "I object" or "I protest." USPS classification of the overwhelming number of negative responses as simply "concerns" or, worse yet, as expressing "no opinion" is a gross misrepresentation of the facts. Similarly, the USPS has characterized the March 9 community meeting as having 80-100 citizens "attending." In fact, those people did much more than attend—they voiced strong opposition to any closure. For the USPS to say otherwise is completely unacceptable. The USPS has deliberately twisted the record to support their intentions.

The citizens of the community deserve no less than "maximum effective" postal service guaranteed by law, which is decidedly not what the decision for closure offers. In addition to the decision itself, the USPS misrepresentation on the record is highly objectionable. The decision must not be affirmed.

Virginia L. Ombroff