

OCT 12 2011

BEFORE THE
POSTAL RATE COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, DC 20268

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POSTAL REGULATORY
COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

In the Matter of:

Old Chatham, NY 12136 Post Office

:

Docket No. A2011-69

Richard J. Dorsey, Petitioner

PARTICIPANT STATEMENT

1. Petitioner is appealing the Postal Service's Final Determination concerning the Old Chatham, NY post office. The Final Determination was posted August 9, 2011.

2. In accordance with applicable law, 39 U.S.C. § 404(d)(5), the Petitioner requests 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. Petitioner believes the Postal Service's Final Determination should be reversed and returned to the Postal Service for further consideration for the following reasons.

The Postal Service did not properly consider the effect of such closing on the community served.

The closing is not consistent with the policy of the Government to provide a maximum degree of effective and regular postal services to rural areas, in that the Postal Service failed to present, or even have, any plan for maintaining an effective presence in the rural area involved.

The Old Chatham Post Office has been in existence approximately two hundred years. But besides representing a significant historical presence, it continues to have an active role in the local business and residential community. This is not a sparsely settled area, but one that combines agriculture with a many residences and home occupied industries. The hamlet of Old Chatham is at a busy crossroads in the Town of Chatham and it has a central location. It is the logical place to continue a postal presence in the whole area.

The Postal Service seems intent on picking off its post offices in this area, one by one. The triggering factor starting the process here was "retirement" of the postmaster. However, the younger Old Chatham postmaster did not retire, but merely went on to what was considered a better position in the postal service.

From the beginning the Postal Service has tried to justify the closure of the Old Chatham post office by a shift of its operations to a newer East Chatham office. This is

not an overall plan for the whole area. The East Chatham facility came into being about a decade ago as part of a build lease program by the Postal Service. It appears as a tremendously oversized structure with massive parking area. It is out of proportion to a rural location. The rental that the Postal Service pays to out-of- state investors for this big box is many times what it has paid to local owners for having post offices in parts of their buildings. Apparently anything that increases East Chatham's use is attractive because it bolsters up a previous unwise bureaucratic decision.

But geography rules against East Chatham ever being a plan solution for the Town's rural postal needs. East Chatham is not located centrally but at the fringe of a hilly easterly border of the Town. It is impractical to expect residents to ever travel there to do postal business. For residents like petitioner it means a five mile trip in the wrong direction, using steep secondary roads and crossing a very narrow old bridge at East Chatham. This bridge has been classified as dangerous and, being railroad owned, there is no present prospect of change. Convenience and safety of customers has not been considered in making this decision.

As the Postal Service closes all our rural post offices it is also impairing its customer base. It is losing the income from its box rentals. It is forcing many loyal customers to consider using alternate means for mailing.

There are other objections to the procedure used in the Old Chatham closing. A questionnaire had been mailed out by the Postal Service with slanted questions leading to responses which could be represented by the Postal Service as the respondents having no real objection to closing. There was to be a 60 day response period to the closing proposed, but well before the 60 day period was over a decision came out from the postal region affirming the closing. The survey was cited as the majority of people really had no position on the closing.

Actually local users of the Old Chatham post office signed protest petitions and affidavits questioning the survey results, which the Docket will show. These received what appeared to be stock answers prepared by postal officials.

Even if certain rural offices have to be closed, it should be done with a vision on how to keep some physical presence of the Postal Service in the rural section involved. In short, the Service should be required to come up with some believable overall plan, instead of virtual abandonment.

In the case of the Old Chatham closure it has failed to do so.

It is respectfully requested that the Determination appealed from be reversed and that the matter be remitted to the Postal Service for more consideration of the needs of its rural customer base in this area.

Dated: October 10, 2011


Richard J. Dorsey
994 Albany Turnpike