

A 2011-80

September 21, 2011

Ruth A. Goldway, Chairman  
Postal Regulatory Commission  
901 New York Ave. NW Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20268

Received

Re: Closing of Tariffville, CT Post Office

SEP 27 2011

Office of PAGR

Dear Ms. Goldway:

I would like to make a complaint about the closing of my post office in Tariffville, CT. This office had provided service to the community for 185 years. I myself have been a customer for almost 25 years. USPS did not have the courtesy, professionalism, or sense of service to actually notify me (and presumably other patrons,) but I learned from a friend that a final decision has recently been made not to reopen the office.

This was a post office with a loyal customer base and strong community support, and an institution which served as an economic and social anchor for local citizens. About 200 people turned out for the public meeting held by the Postal Service. The decision to close has damaged the village while depriving it of a vital government service.

Despite assurances, substitute service at the Simsbury post office has never been satisfactory. My old trip of 5-6 minutes to Tariffville has been replaced by a 15-20 minute trek to Simsbury including the heavy traffic through Simsbury Center and the need to pull out from the p.o. parking lot onto busy Route 10. And the substitution of a small box in Simsbury for my large box in Tariffville means I usually have to go the counter to collect overflow mail, waiting in line while a single clerk handles a family of 5 applying for passports, business customers mailing multiple packages, etc. etc.

A further problem with this substitute service was revealed earlier this month, when overflow from heavy rain flooded the 2 roads from Tariffville to Simsbury, resulting in a round trip of over 20 miles to pick up my mail.

Despite conflicting information and incomplete statistics released by USPS' Hartford district office, and the contention in their 4/12/11 letter to me that "the office itself has been losing \$35,000 a year..." IT IS CLEAR THAT TARIFFVILLE WAS MAKING MONEY FOR USPS. Their "Proposal to Close the Suspended Tariffville Post Office" listed annual salary and lease costs of \$66,383 and (75 pages later) annual revenue for the last 3 years averaging \$157,240. More recently they have been stonewalling Freedom of Information Act requests for the figures they used to conclude the office was a money loser.

Aside from the statistical discrepancies, USPS is also making itself look bad with various other dubious claims about Tariffville contained in the official "Proposal to Close...." For example, the statement that "daily window transactions averaged zero" is obviously incorrect (this has since been acknowledged as an error,) and the contention that "the office provides no more than 4 hours of work [per day] for our employee" strikes me as implausible when window service was provided for 8 hours a day. I was in the post office on hundreds of occasions during the year, on different days and at different times, and rarely witnessed any down time for the sole employee, Postmaster Mary Ann Chiapponi. I wonder if she would be allowed to comment on the "4-hour" claim.

All this seems to indicate false information was put out to discourage supporters, and try to create the impression that the closing was a sensible and necessary action due to the Postal Service's poor financial condition.

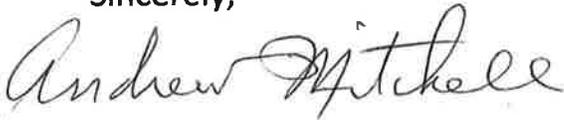
The circumstances surrounding the initial closure in February and the failure to reopen also makes it appear that that USPS did not perform mandated procedures in good faith, never had any intention of reopening or moving, and has just been going through the motions. The building was temporarily evacuated in February due to concerns about snow on the roof. Within days the snow problem had been remedied and the other tenants had moved back in, but the Postal Service was prematurely dismantling the post office and stripping it to the

bare walls. In other words, they quickly seized upon a temporary problem as a pretext to permanently end service.

Unfortunately, I suspect this decision has actually harmed USPS, resulting in many customers like me mailing fewer discretionary items, or using other means including competitors. The reason: what used to be simple, convenient and pleasurable (Tariffville service) has become complicated, inconvenient and annoying (a trip to the Simsbury post office.) And post office box rentals (an area targeted by the postal service for growth) will certainly decrease. In other words, USPS is shooting itself in the foot by alienating hundreds of good customers and surely losing some of its core business in a wrongheaded attempt to save money.

For the good of the Postal Service as well as the citizens of Tariffville and the customers of the Tariffville post office, I ask that you use your influence and authority to restore our local service. Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Andrew Mitchell".

Andrew Mitchell

**Andrew W. Mitchell  
P.O.Box 5  
Tariffville, CT  
06081-0005**