

Robert G. Taub  
Postal Regulatory Commission  
901 New York Avenue NW  
Suite 200  
Washington, DC 20268-0001

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Dear Commissioner Taub:

I am writing to protest the closing of the Careywood, ID Post Office.

POSTAL REGULATORY  
COMMISSION  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

On February 20, 2015, we received notice via a flier in our post office box that our local Careywood Post Office in Bonner County, ID will be closed effective March 31, 2015. The flier notified us that our Post Office Box would be relocated to the Athol Post Office located 7.5 miles south in Kootenai County.

To say that we were surprised by this notice is to put it mildly. According to USPS regulations (and federal law), the USPS must notify the affected public and hold a 60-day comment period prior to closing a post office. Should the USPS decide to close a post office, the public has 30 days to appeal the decision to the Postal Regulatory Commission. Sixty days after it has made a closure decision, the USPS may then close a post office.

We did not receive the required sixty days after the closure decision! We received notification of the closure on February 20, and the post office is slated for closure on March 31<sup>st</sup>! That's just barely 39 days! And there was no 60-day comment period nor was there a 30-day appeal period! The first time we knew anything about a proposed closure was when we received the notice of closure.

This action by the USPS, if completed, will have a disastrous and negative impact on Careywood and its residents. The Post Office is the heart of Careywood, and has been since the 1800's. Closing it virtually wipes Careywood off the map! Even folks who get their mail delivered directly to them on the mail route come to the Post Office to pick up their packages, check out the bulletin board for what's new and say hello to their friends and neighbors. The Post Office is the heart of our community, and, without it, we will lose an important community center!

The USPS notified the box holders that we will be moved (whether we like it or not) to the Athol Post Office in Kootenai County. This will change the distance we drive to pick up our mail in the morning from 7 miles (round trip door-to-door) to 22 miles (round trip door-to-door). If we continue to pick up our mail 6 days a week as we have been in the habit of doing, and we compute our cost at the current IRS mileage reimbursement rate of 57.5 cents per mile, that increases our cost for just picking up our mail to an additional \$5,175 per year  $((22-7) \times 6 \times 57.5)$ ! My husband is retired, and I only work part-time. This is an additional expense that we

cannot easily bear, and we are relatively well off compared to other Careywood residents that are on even more limited incomes. Essentially, the USPS is trying to save money by taxing each and every Careywood Post Office customer to the tune of approximately \$5000 per year in increased driving expense. At 500+ residents, that's two and half million dollars!

Even if we were all as rich as some USPS employees, the trip up and down Highway 95 in our area is not always a safe one. In spite of recent highway improvements between Careywood and Athol, Highway 95 can still be a treacherous drive at the height of the tourist season and, particularly, in the winter. The USPS is exposing each of the Careywood Post Office customers to increased risk on the highway with the goal of saving money for their bottom line.

You may ask, why don't we just have a rural mail route box like others do? The fact is we keep a post office box because it's more secure for business and personal finance correspondence than a rural mail route box that is susceptible to theft and damage due to vandalism and road grader/snow plow assault.

Mail is heavily relied on in rural areas. Many of our residents do not have internet access. Their bills are received and paid via the mail. With the speed of first class mail already slowed (a subject for another letter another day!) having to travel farther to mail or receive bills is a hardship. I also know some residents who get their medications via the mail for whom a trip to the post office is not an optional activity.

In addition, for those of us living in the southern part of Careywood/Bonner County, the USPS has already assigned us a rural route address that places us in Athol, ID 83801 which is in Kootenai County! Our experience has been that this causes major confusion with emergency services, jury duty summons, package delivery, insurance, etc. We get notices from county and, sometimes, state agencies as if we reside in Kootenai County though we actually reside in Bonner County.

Earlier I said that the USPS is exposing the Careywood Post Office customers to increased risk on the highway just to save a few bucks. But are you, in fact, saving any money by closing our Post Office? The truck that picks up and delivers mail to the Careywood Post Office will still have to drive all the way north to Sagle (and Sandpoint?) every day going right past Careywood. So, you aren't saving any money there. The only money you'll save is what you pay our postmaster, Carrie Bartelt, to keep our Post Office open.

The Careywood Post Office shows a profit for the USPS. Since Carrie took over the Post Office on August 1, 2014, the Post Office has improved leaps and bounds! It is more secure and inviting and more customer-friendly. Carrie accepts debit and credit cards, no longer closes at lunch time, has extended the hours the post office is open, ships international, and provides Wi-Fi access, fax & copying services. As a result, the Careywood Post Office is operating at a net

profit. In addition, year-to-date sales numbers show a **40% increase!** At the end of the day, you won't be saving a penny. In fact, you'll be losing money by closing down a profitable Post Office where sales are increasing.

As acting chairman of the Postal Regulatory Commission, it is your responsibility to see that the USPS follows its own regulations. Before you close our post office, we have a right to a 60-day comment period to protest the closure and a 30-day appeal period. Please contact Drew Aliperto, the Western Area Operations vice president, and direct him to follow the rules!

I look forward to hearing from you on this critical issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marrison E. Newsam Banks". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Marrison E. Newsam Banks  
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