

POSTAL NEWS

No. 132/2009

**Formulated by UNI-Japan Post in cooperation with UNI-Apro,
ASPEK Indonesia and SPPI**

1. CabinWindow: Postal Change on the way . July 19, 2009.
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Years ago, our first full-time job in the newspaper business was in an stately, old, heavy concrete building with huge thick steps out front. It looked like a post office because it had been a post office.

The Postal Service had built a new facility a few blocks away, and the old location made for a perfect newspaper office, albeit one that folks kept visiting to buy stamps.

At any rate, we've seen firsthand what happens when somebody mentions closing down a post office. It's not a pretty sight.

People use postal services for different reasons, from shipping commercial goods to sending birthday cards. As times have changed, so have the demographics of those who most rely on the Postal Service. E-mail has replaced many of the personal dispatches that Americans used to send to a post office box. Competition from FedEx and United Parcel Service and other shipping companies has targeted the Postal Service's hold on package deliveries.

Still, lots of folks count on the Postal Service for important communications on a regular basis.

That's why the announcement that the downtown post office is on the auction block stirred such interest.

Postmaster Dana Urbanski said that the closure is possible because of the service's large facility on Hogan Lane. We're familiar with the post office there, and it's a nice, adequate structure. However, it's not exactly convenient for folks who live downtown or farther east and south.

Urbanski promised that selling the post office wouldn't affect mail service in the downtown area. The Postal Service could either use a portion of the existing building for P.O. boxes or could locate another site in the area to house them, the postmaster said.

That's a sticky issue that the Postal Service would do well to wrangle with sooner rather than later.

Folks need to know how and where they will get and send their mail on the eastern/southern end of town. If the answer to that question comes soon, much of the angst about the closing may go away. Time will tell.

Mayor Tab Townsell has said municipal government would like to have the building for its use. No doubt, the building would suit the city's purposes well. Money, of course, is an issue, but we've seen the federal government work well with municipalities in the past to work out some sort of agreeable deal on facilities such as a post office. So, we think an agreement is possible.

Before the next tenant takes over, though, the Postal Service needs to do a bit of public relations work. Officials need to allay fears that they are about to make mail service more difficult to attain for half of Conway.

If there is indeed a viable plan in place to provide services in the same area, then the problem solves itself. If there isn't a good plan available, and mail service ends up moving entirely to Hogan Lane, well, we envision more than a few upset folks.

Postal Service leaders should get to work quickly figuring out those details.