

[Gov](#) / Willow Post Office

Letter to Dianne Horbochuk, Alaksa District Manager, USPS with summary of response at end.

Dear Ms. Horbochuk,

On behalf of the Willow Area Community Organization (WACO) I am writing to begin a dialogue between you and the residents and members of WACO. There are three current, expressed concerns and while the postal staffs have done their best to explain your decisions and processing, we simply are not able to yet understand, nor agree with what seems to be your decision making process. Since these decisions are yours, we would like to hear from you. We also hope that we can influence two of your decisions that we understand are not yet finished.

The most important concern is about the staffing of the post office. It is our understanding that in response to a request from your staff for more help, you have come up with the idea to shorten the post office hours. In the first place, the workload is growing steadily despite the use of Internet and phone ordering and deliveries via UPS (Fed Ex Ground does not come out this far). Some facts might be helpful for you to see that the original request is really quite appropriate in addition to the usual mail counts that you likely conduct on some regular basis. In 1990 the census here was about 900. By 2000 the census was approximately 2500. Extrapolation, some simple math about the usual number of folks in a household, and the list of mailings that the borough recently used for Willow residents and landholders suggest that the census is now approaching 3500. In the second place, we have huge numbers of folks that come here for all the usual recreation: fishing, hunting, hiking, sledding, 4-wheeling, dogmushing, camping, etc. This part of the state is the playground for all of Southcentral and a huge out-of-state tourist area. The post office always plays a significant role in every community, especially ours, for information and help to our guests. We support our postal workers, watch them as they race through each day, and request that you provide the help that they have requested.

The second issue, related, is the hours of the post office. This seems quite short sighted with no apparent explanation or rationale as to how that will help with staff workload. The numbers will not be changing in terms of workload. And as a community with a large number of commuters for work, we respectfully request that you leave the hours the way they are. The vast majority of us need to spend between 30 and 90 minutes each way on the road. Using the post office if you shorten the hours limits our ability to be efficient in our lives with regard to mailing needs.

And last, it has come to our attention that one member of our community has been given a post office box for free after he solicited the intervention of Lisa Murkowski. How and why did this happen? If some of us are eligible for free boxes, we all need to know where and why. Certainly, at least his neighbors and likely quite some number are also eligible for a free box. This has really rankled folks out here, the perception of favoritism based upon complaint and intervention by our US Senator. When the price goes up for the box, this is likely to really become a problem. And it begs the question, are some number of Willow residents and landowners due a refund for how many years of inappropriate charging?

We want and expect to hear from you about these issues. We invite you to come before the next WACO meeting, May 7. The whole community has the right to hear from you about your decisions and the data that has led to them. Please contact our secretary Pat Madigan regarding time, place, etc. In the meantime, if we can provide more information that helps describe the dramatic changes out here and the impact on the post office from the community's point of view, please contact me or Pat.

Sincerely, Linda Oxley Chair

Cc: Jackie Casler

Senator Lisa Murkowski

Senator Charlie Huggins

Representative Mark Neumann

Assemblyman Tom Kluberton

Ms. Horbochuk replied on May 22nd, a summary of which is presented below.

1. There will be **no** change to Willow hours of operation.
2. Policy guidelines for “Free Box rate” are:
Customers may qualify for free (Group E) post office box service if their physical address or business location meets all of the following criteria:
 - a. The physical address or business location is within the geographical delivery ZIP code boundaries administered by a post office.
 - b. The physical address or business location constitutes a potential carrier delivery point of service.
 - c. The USPS chooses not to provide carrier delivery to the physical address or business location.
 - d. The customer does not receive carrier delivery via an out-of-bounds delivery receptacle.Only one free (Group E) post office box may be obtained for each potential carrier delivery point of service. Group E customers are assigned the smallest available box that will reasonably accommodate their daily mail volume. Eligibility for Group E boxes does not extend to tenants, contractors, employees, or other individuals receiving or eligible to receive single-point delivery to a hotel, college, military installation or transient trailer park.
3. Each request for Group E rates is evaluated on its individual merits. Many customers are technically eligible for delivery (ie: they can erect a box and get delivery if they want to, even if they choose not to). If we choose not to provide delivery service, then they will be eligible for Group E rates until such time as carrier delivery is extended to them.
4. PO Box rents are not refunded based upon Group E eligibility.