

Post-Consolidation, a Community PO is Squeezed

By Annalise Silivanch

Should you have a chance to visit Disney Cruise Line's corporate-owned island in the Bahamas, Castaway Cay, the first thing you'll encounter walking off the ship's gang plank is a replica post office. Of course, being on a day-trip tourist island, it's a fake. And yet, its placement reveals what people need to feel connected to the world. In the brick-and-mortar world of small, aging NJ post offices in an electronic world, this connection is a struggle, and Glasser is no exception.

Glasser's tiny post office is celebrating another summer of service to Hopatcong residents after scrutiny in a recent United States Postal Service feasibility study. Last August the USPS announced they would reduce the office's hours to twice-weekly service, including a half-day on Saturday. But postmaster Nancy Gonzalez now has to squeeze five days' worth of work into two days a week—the schedule the USPS settled upon for now. In the USPS' words, the Glasser Post Office was “right-sized.” But residents don't agree.

As a 20 year employee, Gonzalez serves as an unofficial postmaster of the location. While it only services between 50 and 60 homes, its resident roll and pedestrian traffic swell in summer. What's more, the office services approximately 160 post office boxes for residents who don't receive mail truck service. As Gonzalez likes to describe it: “We're the smallest post office, in the smallest town, on the largest lake (in the state.)”

The transition from full-time operation to two-day service has been a difficult one, said Gonzalez. “It has really changed in the past couple of months,” she said. She now manages a cache of outdoor boxes for people to access when the post office is closed. “Every day now is crunch day and sometimes I go down there on my own time and work on things,” she said. “What makes it okay is the people. They're also my friends and neighbors because I live right up the road from the post office and I can walk to work.”

Gonzalez may soon split her work week between two postal locations once she hears from the USPS.

Meanwhile, it's not clear that the office's future is secure. In the past few years, residents have stepped up to voice their concerns, and their support for Gonzalez. “The Glasser Post Office has been a safe haven for me throughout the years,” writes Hopatcong resident Candice Smith, in a forum that supports the office. “Nancy...always lends a helping hand to this harried mom of three.” She adds, “This office serves a small but important part of our community.”

For those interested in learning more about the history of the Glasser post office, the office has a collection of articles on its wall, and the Hopatcong Museum at Lake Hopatcong State Park includes additional information.

Meanwhile, a new property owner has added fresh landscaping to the post office and the restaurant next door, including new stone walls. “Soon you won’t believe (the building’s) from the 1920s, Gonzalez said.

For now, patrons will still be able to enjoy Glasser Post Office’s quaint, personal service with a touch of lake life.

“People come off the lake in their bathing suits, or come in while walking their dogs,” she said. “I have doggie treats under my desk. I was trained 20 years ago and then if someone didn’t have 49 cents for a stamp you got an IOU. We’re still pretty unique.”