



UNITED STATES POSTAL INSPECTION SERVICE

BOSTON DIVISION

February 16, 2007

Mr. Steve Bennett
130 Sibley Road
Freedom Maine 04941

Dear Mr. Bennett,

On February 1, 2007, you spoke with Postal Inspector Michael Desrosiers, Portland, Maine, regarding letters that were part of an appeal process intended to arrive at the Freedom Town Hall on or before a specific deadline. The letters had not been delivered and you requested an investigation.

You advised that on January 4, 2007, the law firm of Rudman & Winchell, Bangor, ME, sent five letters of appeal dated January 4, 2007 (copy attached), via first class US Mail. Of the five letters, three original letters were addressed to Addison Chase, Chairman of the Board of Appeals; Cynthia Abbott, Town Clerk; and Nancy Bailey Farrar, Chairperson of the Planning Board. These three letters were addressed to those individuals at "Town of Freedom, P.O. Box 88, 71 Pleasant Street, Freedom, ME 04941". The three letters were intended to be received at the Freedom Town Hall by a January 6, 2007, deadline but had not been delivered by the Postal Service. The two remaining letters were copies of the January 4, 2007, letter, sent via the US Mail to you at your address in Freedom, ME, and to your daughter, Erin Bennett-Wade, at her address in Palermo, ME. Both of these letters were delivered and received by you and your daughter on January 5, 2007.

You further advised that on January 5, 2007, the same law firm sent five amended letters of appeal dated January 5, 2007 (copy attached), via first class US Mail. Of the five letters, three original letters were addressed to Addison Chase, Chairman of the Board of Appeals; Cynthia Abbott, Town Clerk; and Nancy Bailey Farrar, Chairperson of the Planning Board. These three letters were addressed to those individuals at "Town of Freedom, P.O. Box 88, 71 Pleasant Street, Freedom, ME 04941". These three original letters had not been delivered by the Postal Service. The two remaining letters were copies of the January 5, 2007, letter, sent via the US Mail to you at your address in Freedom, ME, and to your daughter, Erin Bennett-Wade, at her address in Palermo, ME. Both of these letters were delivered and received by you and your daughter on January 6, 2007.

The investigation into this matter included interviews of Steve Bennett, Addison Chase, Nancy Bailey Farrar, Cindy Abbott, Laurie Cox (Postmaster of Freedom, ME), Joe Gallant (Freedom letter carrier), Lynn McNamara (Rudman & Winchell), and Janet Meyers (Postmaster of Freedom, NH). Investigation has disclosed that of the five letters dated January 4, 2007, one original was sent via first class US Mail on January 4, 2007, to Addison Chase and four copies were sent to Nancy Bailey Farrar, Cynthia Abbott, Steve Bennett and Erin Bennett-Wade. Of the five letters dated January 5, 2007, one original was sent via first class US Mail on January 5, 2007, to Addison Chase and four copies were sent to the same individuals.

In a letter dated January 10, 2007 (copy attached), Cynthia Abbott, Town Clerk, advised she, "Received today January 10, 2007, from Rudman & Winchell the Original Appeal with 'Site Plan'". This is the letter dated January 4, 2007. Also attached is a copy of Cynthia Abbott's "Town Office Mail Log". The mail log shows that on January 10, 2007, Cynthia Abbott received three letters from Rudman & Winchell, the subject of which was "Appeal & Site Plan", which is the letter dated January 4, 2007. According to the mail log, the letters were addressed to Cynthia Abbott, Addison Chase and Nancy Bailey Farrar. Addison Chase has confirmed that he is in possession of the original letter dated January 4, 2007, which is date stamped as received by Cynthia Abbott on January 10, 2007. Cynthia Abbott and Nancy Bailey Farrar have confirmed that they are in possession of copies of the letter dated January 4, 2007, which are also date stamped as received by Cynthia Abbott on January 10, 2007.

Cynthia Abbott's "Town Office Mail Log" also shows that on January 12, 2007, she received three letters from Rudman & Winchell, the subject of which was "Amended Copy of the Appeal", which is the letter dated January 5, 2007. According to the mail log, the letters were addressed to Cynthia Abbott, Addison Chase and Nancy Bailey Farrar. Addison Chase has confirmed that he is in possession of the original letter dated January 5, 2007, which is date stamped as received by Cynthia Abbott on January 12, 2007. Cynthia Abbott and Nancy Bailey Farrar have confirmed that they are in possession of copies of the letter dated January 5, 2007, which are also date stamped as received by Cynthia Abbott on January 12, 2007.

According to Freedom Postmaster Laurie Cox, in June 2005, the Town of Freedom closed their P.O. Box 88 in favor of having mail delivered directly to a mailbox at the Town Hall at 71 Pleasant Street. The three letters sent to the Town Hall dated January 4, 2007, and the three letters sent to the Town Hall dated January 5, 2007, were all addressed with both P.O. Box 88 and the physical address of 71 Pleasant Street. As such, it was possible that the Postmaster might have sent the letters back to the mail processing plant in Hampden, ME, to attach a yellow sticker with the correct forwarding address for the Town Hall, and which would have caused a delay of delivery. Postmaster Laurie Cox however, has assured that did not happen, and that it is her practice to deliver mail to the Town Hall no matter what address appears on the envelope. Cynthia Abbott, Town Clerk, has advised that when she received the six letters on January 10 and 12, 2007, they did not have a yellow forwarding sticker on them.

Postmaster Cox recalled that in January 2007, Steve Bennett visited with her to inquire about the letters because they had not arrived at the Town Hall. Postmaster Cox did not know the date of Steve Bennett's visit, but she recalled seeing several letters from Rudman & Winchell shortly after his visit. Steve Bennett knew that he visited Postmaster Cox on January 9, 2007. It is possible that the letters Postmaster Cox saw after Steve Bennett's visit were the letters that arrived at the Town Hall on January 10 and 12, 2007.

The six letters addressed to the Freedom Town Hall dated January 4 and 5, 2007, are date stamped consistent with the dates in the Town Office Mail Log as having been received at the town hall on January 10 and 12, 2007, respectively. If the Town Office Mail Log is correct, it is not known why these letters were six and seven days late when the copies sent at the same time to Steve Bennett and Erin Bennett-Wade were delivered the next day by two separate Post Offices. The Postmaster of Freedom, NH, has advised that her office receives properly addressed mail from Freedoms in every state in the country. The Postmaster puts that mail back in the mail stream however, delivery of that mail to the proper address is delayed because it was misdirected to Freedom, NH. If that happened in this case, it would explain the delay, however no envelopes were retained therefore it is not possible to make that determination.

The investigation into this matter is now concluded. If you have any questions or require further information, I invite you to contact me at telephone number 207/871-8547 or P.O. Box 1907, Portland Maine 04104-1907.

Sincerely,

Michael Desrosiers
Postal Inspector

Attached copies
cc: Addison Chase