

Protection Against Identity Theft versus More Mail Stops

The issues in regards to mailbox units began due to one of the two units at the E. Winston cul-de-sac being broken. Twelve members of our HOA effected by the 16 non-repaired mailboxes were required to go to the Post Office to pick up their mail for almost an **entire year**. The following is a brief review.

In order to solve this problem, the USPS made an offer by letter dated 26 April 2004. They gave us until 15 May 2004 to accept or reject the offer. This deadline for a decision was later extended until the end of May. The offer was to replace all NBU cluster boxes with **High Security Centralized Box Units (HSCBU) free of charge**. Here are some details:

- Currently there are 54 mail stops (30 for court homes and 24 for single family homes)
- 47 of the 54 mail stops have the NBU cluster boxes which are enclosed in stucco
- 7 of the 54 mail stops have stand alone Centralized Box Units (CBU); 2 of these would have been left
- 52 mail stops (47 with NBU cluster boxes and 5 with CBU) could have been consolidated into 13 stops
- Accepted offer result would be 15 mail stops (13 with HSCBU and 2 with CBU)
 - 6 stops for court homes
 - 11 stops for single family homes which are more spread out by design
 - 2 stops would be shared between court homes and single family homes

A simple YES or NO to the offer was all that was required. The inflammatory "Call to Action" postings were not necessary. In fact, they contained many errors in fact. Here are pros and cons of the offer:

Pros:

- **Over \$100,000 savings to the HOA** (replacement by HOA of 46 more mail stops with NBU cluster boxes over time can be estimated at approximately \$138,000 based upon the estimate of \$3,000 to replace the broken Winston cul-de-sac unit)
- HSCBU have never been broken into (**PROTECTION AGAINST IDENTITY THEFT**)
- HSCBU include an outgoing mail drop box

Cons:

- Consolidation of mail stops (actually there are pros (e.g. more exercise) and cons (e.g. less convenient) about consolidation)

Based upon the above, I gave my approval by email dated 20 May 2004 to accept the Post Office offer. Unfortunately, a formal vote was never taken and hence you will find no such vote in any minutes. Fred Huff has told me that an informal vote (4-0 against) was taken during a walk-through looking at the proposed locations. Since the deadline was missed, the USPS offered the HSCBUs to another community. **This was a missed opportunity to save the HOA approximately \$141,000 and relieve 12 members of our HOA from having to go to the Post Office to pick up their mail.**

Since the Winston mailbox still had not been fixed as of the 14 September 2004 board meeting, I managed to pass a motion approving up to \$3,000 for repair/replacement of the units at the Winston cul-de-sac at the 14 September 2004 board meeting. The only no vote was given by Dave Harp who continued to block repair/replacement of the units because he would not accept that it is the responsibility of the HOA. Based upon the documents I have read from the USPS as well as legal advice I have reviewed, there is no question in my mind that it is the HOA responsibility.

By January 2005, a couple of used NBUs had become available to the USPS as a result of another community taking advantage of the installation of HSCBUs. In order to help the people actually being hurt by the nonreplacement of the damaged NBUs, the USPS generously offered to install the used NBUs after PSMRA removed the stucco around the existing NBUs and provided independent supports for the attached electrical and irrigation equipment. USPS still maintains that all future repair/replacement of mail stops with NBUs are the responsibility of PSMRA.

At the 13 December 2005 Annual Meeting, it was brought up that there has been several recent mailbox thefts. It is a shame the majority of the Board did not approve the HSCBUs.