

August 27, 2014, Greater NY/Harlem YMCA – An impassioned community turned out in force for a public hearing with the USPS concerning the relocation of the College Station Post Office at 217 W. 140th Street. The unanimous message was: We need College Station open and here. The community speakers ranged from the oldest (94-years young Katherine Nicholson, who said she’s “old but not senile” and “can see that more people live here than before”) to the youngest (9-year-old Christopher Lane, who was worried that people would lose jobs). The Community Board 10 representative opposed the relocation because it would create a severe hardship for the many people who rely on walking.

The consensus was that the Postal Service made a farce of “community input.” There was no microphone, no recorder, and no official minutes of the meeting. The sense of the body was that Postal Service decisions on closing community offices were based on race and class, not volume. This part of Harlem has had an increase in people and businesses so why would downsizing target College Station?

In answer, Postal Service managers provided a one-page handout about “potential relocation.” They evaded questions about what or where the new location would be. But clerks working at the post offices involved told us it’s a “done deal.” Letter carriers have already been moved to Lincolnton Post Office and areas are being set up at Lincolnton for the move from College and Hamilton Grange Stations. College Station is slated to be closed, not magically lifted up and “relocated.”

Jonathan Smith, President of the NY Metro Area Postal Union, APWU, called out the USPS for “attacking and disrespecting the poorest communities” in the name of saving money. “The Postal Service was created to serve the people, not make profits. It is a Constitutional right.” Ideas to expand postal functions with banking, faxing, e-mailing that would help the community and make money are ignored.

Actor Ron Canada spoke as a longtime customer of College Station. He pointed out that the Postal Service is on “a suicide mission to help the privatizers,” and encouraged residents to contact Congressman Charles Rangel, and Senators Schumer and Gillibrand to say that the community will not stand for this cut of needed service. None of the elected officials had bothered to show up despite the attack on the quality of life of their constituents.

Mary Pannell of National Action Network vowed to go door to door to alert people to the impact of closing College Station. This is about privatization of public service. “Where there’s private interests, there’s usually corruption.” The Post Office has billions that it has been paying into the ridiculous requirement to prefund health benefits 75 years ahead for people who aren’t even born yet. Congress did this. And Congress can undo it.

Retired Mail Handler John Dennie quoted from the *Washington Post* expose of USPS real estate deals with CBRE to sell historic postal buildings. If College Station is going to be sold, why not use a local realtor. “They’re coming into Harlem to snatch up what belongs to Harlem.” Tyreta Foster, Esq. the owner of a boutique law firm in Harlem, needs the local post office because time is of the essence in her work. She asserted that ‘race’ is a factor in the closure of College Station Post Office and that they will not be able to take away local post offices in midtown and Wall Street because those communities will not let it happen. Ms. Foster encouraged everyone to write to all of their legislators as well as US Postal officials to

demand that College Station remain open and receive more funding for additional staff and self-service options.

To chants of “Who’s Post Office?” “The people’s Post Office!” the meeting came to an end. Jon Smith told the group, “Welcome to the fight. They came to the right place because Harlem knows how to fight!”

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