



## The News is that There Isn't Any Yet

Postal news is like any other kind – sometimes there's a lot to report, other times it's quiet.

Whether because everyone was busy preparing for last week's National Postal Forum or for some other reason, the usual flow of developments has been less than usual, but that doesn't mean there aren't big issues awaiting resolution and reporting.

### Undecided cases

The Postal Regulatory Commission has yet to rule on the Postal Service's proposal, filed last December 20, to eliminate Bound Printed Matter and increase the weight limits for Marketing Mail. Because that proposal remains unresolved, the price change filed by the USPS on April 9 includes proposed rates under two scenarios: if elimination of BPM is approved and if it's not.

There is no statutory or regulatory deadline by which the commission must issue a decision on the BPM matter, and the PRC reflected that when it urged the Postal Service to submit two versions of its proposed rates.

Meanwhile, there is a clock on the pending price change. In its official notice acknowledging the filing, the PRC set May 9 as the deadline for filing comments on the USPS proposal. Under its regulations, the commission has 21 days from the end of the comment period to issue its decision, so the PRC's deadline is Friday, May 30.

If the BPM proposal remains undecided at that time, and barring any legal or mathematical errors in the USPS filing that could cause a delay, the rates and price structure in the commission's decision would reflect the *status quo*, i.e., with BPM and Marketing Mail as they are now.

Should the PRC's eventual decision on the BPM proposal not be supportive, the prices in the upcoming decision on the rate case would be unaffected. Conversely, if the PRC approves the elimination of BPM, the USPS would need to file for new prices accordingly. (The Postal Service's "alternative" prices – reflecting the elimination of BPM – were included in the rate charts provided in the April 21 issue of *Mailers Hub News*.)

### Leadership

Traditionally, the Postmaster General is the keynote speaker at the NPF's opening session on Monday morning. However, that became problematic when Louis DeJoy was ousted on March 24, only five weeks before his on-stage presence was expected at the NPF. However, the NPF leadership adapted and Acting PMG Doug Tulino was pressed into service to deliver the opening remarks, supported by a succession of other executives.

The underlying issue, of course, is who will be the *next* PMG.

Despite the intrigue surrounding DeJoy's departure, it had been anticipated to occur later this year anyway, based on his February 18 notice to the Governors of the USPS that it was time for them to start looking for his successor. How far their plans had advanced in the month before he left is unknown, but they had reportedly engaged a search firm to identify and vet candidates. DeJoy's early exit likely kicked that process into high gear.

The governors have held a flurry of closed-door meetings in recent weeks, perhaps to interview finalists, as the number of Sunshine Act notices suggests.

The governors may not have felt the need to produce a new PMG just to have someone to lead-off the NPF. Nonetheless, the buzz at the Forum centered around likely candidates, with industry attendees quite consistently having a favorite, while fearing a wild card being chosen for political reasons.

Meanwhile, the Board has posted a notice that it will meet in closed session on May 8, and hold a public meeting on May 9 to report the financial results and service performance scores for the second quarter (January-March). Such a two-day meeting is normal at the end of a quarter.

Whether they'll announce the new PMG then – or not – is unknown. There's no little chimney atop USPS Headquarters, as is installed on the roof of the Sistine Chapel to announce the election of a new Pope, so there'll be no white smoke if a PMG is chosen. We'll have to await the Postal Service's press release to learn the news – eventually.