



The Vineyards of Saratoga

February 8, 2021

Senator Dianne Feinstein
One Post Street Suite 2450
San Francisco, CA 94104

Senator Alex Padilla
333 Bush Street Suite 3225
San Francisco, CA 94104

Congresswoman Anna Eshoo
698 Emerson Street
Palo Alto, California 94301

Re: United States Postal Service Broken Neighborhood Mailboxes at The Vineyards of Saratoga

Dear Senators Feinstein and Padilla and Congresswoman Eshoo:

Enclosed please find a letter to Rhonda Garcia, Supervisor/Customer Service with the United States Postal Service in Saratoga, California. The United States Postal Service has been refusing to repair their neighborhood deliver boxes in our community since mid-December 2020. The USPS has owned and maintained their mailboxes for almost 50 years in accordance with the USPS Domestic Mail Manual Section 508 2.1.3 – also enclosed.

The Vineyards of Saratoga is a common interest development of 165 homes that was constructed in the early 1970s. We are predominantly a community of seniors that are especially vulnerable during this pandemic. Those of us with broken mailboxes are required to go the Saratoga post office and stand in line to receive our mail.

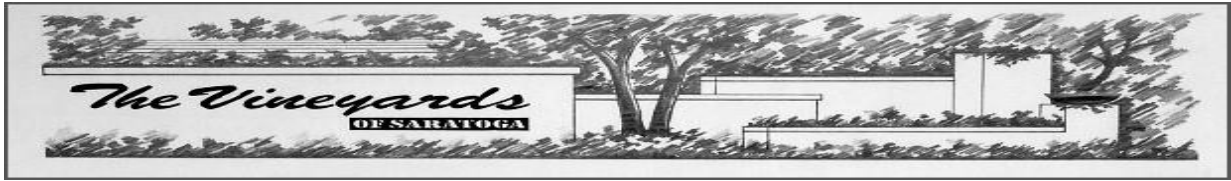
Please help us hold the United States Postal Service accountable for maintaining our mailboxes as required and deliver our mail in accordance with postal regulations and federal law.

Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

James W. Foley, President
The Vineyards of Saratoga
408-777-9917

president@vineyardsofsaratoga.com



The Vineyards of Saratoga

February 5, 2021

Ms. Rhonda Garcia
United States Postal Service
19630 Allendale Ave.
Saratoga, CA 95070

Re: Neighborhood Delivery and Collection Boxes on Vineyard Lane at The Vineyards of Saratoga

Dear Ms. Garcia:

With the assistance of some of The Vineyards of Saratoga Board members, I have looked through the early Vineyards files for information regarding mail delivery to no avail. I have been an owner at The Vineyards since 1975. At some time, over the years, I know that I have seen correspondence from USPS regarding their ownership of the mailboxes. It may have simply been a notification from USPS to Vineyard's residents related to the mailboxes that were replaced by USPS in the late 1980s. I still have paper documents in storage somewhere. Those documents are too voluminous to wade through.

One of our residents is an original owner. I had a discussion with him about the history of mail delivery at The Vineyards. The first few residents had door-to-door delivery after which a community mailbox with "slots" was provided. The Vineyards was built in phases. After enough residents had occupied their homes, USPS started installing "Neighborhood Delivery and Collection Boxes and Parcel Lockers" as described in the USPS Domestic Mail Manual in lieu of door-to-door delivery. There are still a couple of garages at The Vineyards with mail slots for the original door-to-door delivery. In the late 1980s the original "Neighborhood Delivery and Collection Boxes and Parcel Lockers" were replaced by USPS. From the very beginning USPS has always had the keys and has always installed, maintained, and controlled the "Neighborhood Delivery and Collection Boxes and Parcel Lockers" in accordance with the requirements of the USPS Domestic Mail Manual.

Another document that was reviewed was The Vineyards Reserve Study. The Reserve Study includes an inventory of every item in The Vineyards that is the responsibility of the Homeowners Association – roofs, fences, walkways, pavement, lights, etc. It is a document that is mandated by law for Common Interest Developments and updated yearly. The Reserve Study is based on actual physical inventory that was constructed by the developer, Cal-West, as the first properties were sold and the homeowners association formed. Nowhere in that original inventory is there an item for mailboxes. They have never been part of The Vineyards "inventory." Other entities, AT&T, PG&E, CATV, WVSD, also have facilities (boxes, conduit, wires, etc.) that are their sole responsibility and are not in The Vineyard's "inventory."

Over the last almost 50 years The Vineyards has never had any relationship whatsoever with the USPS – contractually or otherwise. There are simply no documents defining any relationship. If USPS has any documentation defining any specific relationship between USPS and The Vineyards, a production of that document(s) may prove useful. USPS may also consider this email as a request for relevant information under the Freedom of Information Act. The Homeowners Association has never had any interaction with USPS until this broken mailbox maintenance issue surfaced around 5 years ago at the instigation of USPS. The homeowners association does not have an address or even receive mail at The Vineyards or on Vineyard Lane.

**USPS Mailboxes
5 February 2021**

After much investigation, deliberation, and aggravation, The Vineyards Board of Directors has decided that the "Neighborhood Delivery and Collection Boxes and Parcel Lockers" have never been nor ever will be the responsibility of The Vineyards. It is the responsibility of USPS to deliver mail by all necessary means to The Vineyards residents as proscribed by federal law. This can be done door-to-door, in USPS boxes/facilities - however USPS chooses. USPS needs to make appropriate arrangements with Vineyard's residents for mail delivery as defined in federal law. Please note that The Vineyards has 165 residences. Eventually some component of all of these mailboxes will fail, rendering them useless. It is conceivable that in the future the Saratoga post office may have to service an additional 200+ people per day picking up their mail at the Saratoga post office facility.

As far as The Vineyards Homeowners Association is concerned, this matter is now closed. We will be informing our residents accordingly.

Sincerely,



James W. Foley, President
The Vineyards of Saratoga
president@vineyardsofsaratoga.com

Personal Note: I own a home in another community at Lake Tahoe. We have Neighborhood Delivery and Collection Boxes and Parcel Lockers virtually identical to those of The Vineyards. USPS installed and promptly maintains those boxes even in a harsh environment in accordance with the requirements of the USPS Domestic Mail Manual.

Copies to: Jeanna Voit, Postmaster, Saratoga
Richard Keppeler, Manager of Post Office Operations
Senator Dianne Feinstein
Senator Alex Padilla
Congresswoman Anna Eshoo



508.2.1

- d. The USPS may request from the OBC copies of written agreements or any other documents or information needed to determine compliance with these standards. Failure to provide requested documents or information might be basis for suspending delivery service to the OBC under the procedures set forth in [1.8.2](#).

2.0 Conditions of Delivery

2.1 City Delivery Service

2.1.1 Establishment

City delivery is provided according to USPS policies and procedures, the characteristics of the area to be served, and the methods needed to provide adequate service. Requests or petitions to establish, change, or extend city delivery service must be made to the local postmaster.

2.1.2 Accommodating Customer Hardship

Changes in the type of delivery authorized for a delivery point may be considered if service by existing methods imposes an extreme physical hardship on the customer.

2.1.3 Customer Maintenance of Receptacles

Customers must provide authorized mail receptacles or door slots, except for mail receptacles authorized by the USPS to be owned and maintained by the USPS. The purchase, installation, maintenance, and replacement of mail receptacles used by customers for mail delivery are not the responsibility of the USPS. **However, the USPS may authorize neighborhood delivery and collection boxes and parcel lockers to be purchased, installed, maintained, or replaced by the USPS.**

2.1.4 Businesses

Mail receptacles or door slots are not required at businesses and offices that are open and have someone on hand to receive the mail when the carrier calls.

2.1.5 Receptacles With Locks

If a lock is used on a mail receptacle, the receptacle must have a slot large enough to accommodate the normal daily mail volume.

2.1.6 Door Slot

A door slot for mail must meet specific criteria:

- a. The clear rectangular opening in the outside slot plate must be at least 1-1/2 inches wide and 7 inches long.
- b. The slot must have a flap, hinged at the top if placed horizontally, or hinged on the side away from the hinge side of the door if placed vertically.
- c. When an inside hood is used to provide greater privacy, the hooded portion must not be below the bottom line of the slot in the outside plate if placed horizontally, or beyond the side line of the slot in the outside plate nearest the hinge edge of the door if placed vertically.