

*a home for
musical
friendships*

October 13, 2016

NHPUC OCT14'16 PM 4:03

Martin P. Honigberg, Chairman
Public Utilities Commission
21 Fruit Street
Concord, NH 03301

Re: DG 16-769: Concord Steam Corporation Petition for Emergency Rates and to Discontinue Service

DG 16-770: Liberty Utilities (EnergyNorth Natural Gas) Corp. d/b/a Liberty Utilities and Concord Steam Corporation Joint Petition for Approval of an Asset Purchase Agreement

Peggy Senter
president

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Gary M. Shirk

Hannah Murray
faculty representative

Dear Chairman Honigberg:

On behalf of the Concord Community Music School's Board of Trustees and its faculty, staff, students and audience members, I am writing in regard to the above-referenced docket items. The Music School has been a customer of Concord Steam since 1987, when we acquired our current facility at 23 Wall Street and 24-26 Fayette Street. We are requesting that the PUC require Liberty Utilities to create a fully funded grant to assist charitable organizations with the cost of conversion from Concord Steam to gas-powered boilers as a condition of approval of Liberty Utilities' purchase of Concord Steam assets.

As all of our downtown colleagues have expressed, the time pressures that this situation has created will be an extreme hardship for our organizations in both staff and financial resources. With a 23,000 square foot facility that consists of three joined buildings with different heating needs (built in 1890, 1910 and 2001), the Music School's heating conversion requires not only the substantial surprise capital expense, but a good deal of research and planning. The staff and board time as well as the major funding are resources that will be drawn from programs that serve a large constituency.

The Music School's mission of inclusion and artistic excellence is supported by a \$1.6 million budget, of which 50% comes from contributed income. With a small staff and a dedicated board, we are already stretched to raise the charitable dollars that support an outstanding faculty of 50 musicians and the 59% of our 1400 students who receive free or reduced cost instruction because of financial need. Included in these numbers are 400 students each week who have developmental disabilities and mental health needs. The Music School represents the cultural sector on the Welcome Concord Steering Committee, working to create more inclusive opportunities for new Americans. Our 150 concerts each year, many of them free, and our daily activities bring 130,000 visitors to

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Full Member
National Guild for
Community Arts
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downtown annually, adding to the economic vitality of the city. All of these charitable efforts require a tremendous amount of fundraising; therefore, many of the funding sources one might imagine are already supporting our charitable programs.

I would like to take this opportunity to applaud Concord Steam and the Bloomfield family for their decades of generous support and involvement in the community. Peter and Pansy Bloomfield have each served multiple terms on the Music School's board since its early years, and Peter has chaired our Building Committee through three construction projects and continued to advise on building issues annually. Their annual financial support has placed them in major donor categories for many years, with Concord Steam sponsoring annual scholarship ensembles for gifted students. Concord Steam and the Bloomfield family contributed to each of our three capital campaigns at a leadership level. Because of this generous support for the arts organizations that have helped downtown thrive, the Capitol Center for the Arts and the Music School submitted a successful joint nomination for the Bloomfield family for a Governor's Arts Award.

Liberty Utilities has the opportunity to become the kind of generous corporate citizen that will carry on Concord Steam's legacy. We respectfully urge the PUC to require Liberty Utilities to create grant funding that will help the non-profit and faith community avoid serious financial damage because of the rapid transition from Concord Steam to gas, so that we can continue to carry out our respective missions.

We applaud Sen. Feltes for his leadership on our behalf, and we thank you as members of the PUC for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Peggy Senter". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Peggy Senter
President

copy/
Jennifer Melkonian, Chair, Board of Trustees
Senator Dan Feltes
Tom Aspell, City of Concord