State of New Hampshire

DEPARTMENT OF ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES
25 Capitol Street
Concord, New Hampshire 03301
(603) 271-3201 | Office@das.nh.gov

Charles M. Arlinghaus
Commissioner

Catherine A. Keane
Deputy Commissioner

Sheri L. Rockburn
Assistant Commissioner

May 22, 2026

Her Excellency, Governor Kelly A. Ayotte
and the Honorable Executive Council
State House
Concord, New Hampshire 03301

REQUESTED ACTION

Pursuant to RSA 99-E: 7, Suggestion and Extraordinary service Award Program, the State Suggestion and Extraordinary Service Award Evaluation Committee respectfully requests approval to award a net sum of five hundred dollars ($500.00) to Donna Ricker from the Department of Transportation, Bureau of Aeronautics effective upon Governor and Council approval.

EXPLANATION

The Suggestion and Extraordinary Service Award Program provides for monetary and non-monetary recognition to classified executive branch employees who perform extraordinary services or who provide original suggestions of substantial value to the State. RSA 99-E integrates each Department into the process of reviewing employee suggestions and service by incorporating the input of Departmental Award Evaluation Committees who are authorized to forward suggestions to the State Committee.

The State committee received a written submission from the Department of Transportation (DOT) nominating Donna Ricker, Aeronautics Program Accounting Technician, for monetary

recognition. Donna made a suggestion, on which she took action, that saved time, money and reduced administrative burden, for multiple state agencies, including DOT.

Through Donna Ricker's efforts, Liberty Utilities (both gas and electric) went live with ACH on October 20th, 2023. Now that they receive their payments electronically from the NH DOT, Bureau of Aeronautics, and other state agencies, Liberty is able to apply their payments timely and correctly using the emailed electronic remittance advices. This resulted in no more delays in processing due to lost checks and/or check stubs resulting in saving the State of New Hampshire money and hundreds of future hours of employee time.

Under RSA 99-E, a fund of ten thousand dollars ($10,000.00) has been established in the Governor' s Office for the implementation of this program. Maximum award amounts and a suggested table of monetary awards appear in the statute at RSA 99-E:7. In this case, the Committee has decided to recommend an award of a net sum of five hundred dollars ($500.00) to Ms. Ricker for extraordinary service outside of, or beyond the scope of, her regular job responsibilities.

Whether or not to issue any monetary award is a matter that is solely at the discretion of the Governor and Council. The Committee believes that this nomination presents an example of the type of extraordinary service that merits recognition under RSA 99-E. It therefore respectfully requests approval of the award contemplated herein.

Respectfully submitted,

Matthew G. Mavrogeorge
Committee Chair
Director, Division of Personnel

Charles M. Arlinghaus
Commissioner

RSA 99-E SUGGESTION AND EXTRAORDINARY SERVICE AWARD PROGRAM

The procedures and standards for Suggestion and Extraordinary Service Awards are set forth in RSA 99-E. Employees potentially eligible for award are classified executive branch employees.

Suggestion/Nomination Form

1. Department to which suggestion or nomination is being made:

   Department of Transportation and Department of Administrative Services

2. Name of the person or persons making the suggestion or nominated for extraordinary service (*Note*: If this is a nomination of, or suggestion made by, more than one person, please be sure to list ALL persons under consideration for award):

   Nominee's name: Donna L. Ricker

3. Is/Are the person(s) who made the suggestion or who performed the service being recommended for a monetary award, for non-monetary recognition or for both?

   Both

4. Job title or position of person(s) nominated or making the suggestion:

   Nominee's job title: Aeronautics Program Accounting Technician

5. Name of department, division, section and office, if any, in which the person(s) making the suggestion or performing the service is/are employed:

   Employed within: NHDOT, Division of Aeronautics, Rail & Transit, Bureau of Aeronautics

6. Name of the immediate supervisor of the person(s) making the suggestion or performing the service:

   Immediate supervisor: Danielle R. Plant Hutchinson, Aeronautics Program Supervisor

7. Please provide a detailed description of the suggestion or of the extraordinary service performed. If more space is needed, please attach additional pages.

SEE ATTACHED ADDITIONAL PAGES

8. Has/Have the employee(s) who made the suggestion or performed the service received any other form of monetary award or non-monetary recognition for the suggestion or service? Yes: ☐ / No: ☒ / Don't Know: ☐

If so, what form of recognition or award was received and when?

9. Is the person being nominated for award, or who made the suggestion, aware of the existence of this nomination? Yes: ☐ / No: ☒ / Don't Know: ☐

10. What is the date on which this suggestion was first made or on which the extraordinary service took place?

Date supervisor made original suggestion was 10/26/2023

11. If this submission relates to a **suggestion:**

A. Has the suggestion been implemented at this time? Yes ☒ / No ☐

B. If implemented, what were the results of the implementation (including any savings realized, revenue generated and method of calculation). If additional space is needed, you may attach additional pages.

SEE ATTACHED ADDITIONAL PAGES

12. Please state the date and time of the filing of this submission or nomination:

A. Date: Deceember 12, 2024

B. Time: 12:30 PM

13. Please provide any additional information that you believe would be of assistance in the committee's consideration of this suggestion or nomination. You may attach additional pages if needed:

There has been reduced communication to NHDOT, AP-Finance regarding checking the status of current payments to Liberty Utilities. As Liberty Utilities continues to reconcile DOT accounts, Donna is still a contact person for them and continues to have meetings with them about unprocessed payments for Aeronautics. Liberty Utilities is still researching where payments went and applying credit when they resolve an issue.

14. Please provide the following:

A. Name and work address, telephone and e-mail of any person or person(s) that you recommend be contacted for additional information about this submission:

Danielle Hutchinson: 7 Hazen Drive; 271-1094; Danielle.R.Hutchinson@dot.nh.gov
Shelley Winters: 7 Hazen Drive; 271-2449; Michelle.L.Winters@dot.nh.gov

B. If this submission has been made by a person other than the employee who made the suggestion or performed extraordinary service, the name and work address, telephone number and e-mail of the person or persons making this submission:

Shelley Winters (Director): 7 Hazen Drive; 271-2449; Shelley.Winters@dot.nh.gov

Please Note

This form is to be submitted to the Departmental Award Evaluation Committee in which the employee who made the suggestion or performed the service is employed.
Submission may be made directly to the State Suggestion and Extraordinary Service Award Evaluation Committee if there exists good cause for not submitting to a Departmental Committee. See RSA 99-E: 4, XI. Please also note that the whether or not to recommend a particular matter for award is solely within the discretion of the Committee. There exists no right or entitlement to the issuance of any award or recognition. See RSA 99-E: 9.

SESA's Departmental Committee Members

RSA 99-E SUGGESTION AND EXTRAORDINARY SERVICE AWARD PROGRAM

Departmental Award Evaluation Committee Recommendation Form

1. Please state:

A. The name of the department to which the committee making this submission is attached:
NH Department of Transportation

B. Names of the members of the Departmental Award Evaluation Committee making this submission:
Alexis Martin, Director of Policy & Administration
Jennifer Lane, Chief Communication Officer
William Cass, Commissioner

C. The name, work address, telephone and e-mail of the person preparing this form:
Alexis Martin alexis.a.martin@dot.nh.gov
7 Hazen Drive Concord NH 03301

D. If different from the person preparing this form, the name, work address, telephone and e-mail of the Departmental Award Evaluation Committee member to be contacted regarding questions about this submission:

2. To which of the following does this matter relate? (Please put "X" on a selection check box below)

☐ A suggestion made by an employee; or

☒ B. Extraordinary service by an employee

3. What is/are the name(s) of the employee(s) under consideration for award? [Employees eligible for award are classified executive branch employees. *See* RSA 99-E: 3]:
Donna Ricker

4. Please provide a short descriptive title for the suggestion or service under consideration (*e.g*. "suggestion for savings of funds spent on XYZ," "service on ABC project", etc.):

Reduction of employee work task time as well as elimination of inappropriately charged late payment fees to all SONH agencies using Liberty Utilities as a vendor.

5. Please provide a brief description of the suggestion made or the service rendered. Additional pages may be attached, if needed.

Through Donna Ricker's efforts, Liberty Utilities (both gas and electric) went live with ACH on October 20th, 2023. Now that they receive their payments electronically, Liberty is able to apply their payments timely and correctly using the emailed electronic remittance advices. No more delays in processing due to lost checks and/or check stubs. SEE ATTACHED FOR FURTHER INFORMATION.

6. Do you recommend this matter for award or recognition?

[X] Yes [ ] No

[*Note:* For "Suggestion Awards," eligibility criteria and standards are set forth in RSA 99-E: 5; For "Extraordinary Service Awards," eligibility criteria and standards are set forth in RSA 99-E: 6].

7. Please describe the committee's reasons for the conclusion set forth in question 6 above. If additional space is needed for your answer, please attach additional pages.

Due to Donna Ricker's willingness and determination to solve an existing problem, she succeeded in helping put an end to the ongoing payment issues with Liberty permanently not only for DOT, but for all state agencies, saving hundreds of future hours of wasted time, money and frustration.

8. If the committee recommends that an award or recognition be given, please put "X" on the following check box below ("A.," "B.," or both) that you recommend be issued:

☐ A. Non-monetary recognition. *See* RSA 99-E: 8.

If you recommend non-monetary recognition, please state (a) whether you recommend that this recognition be issued by the State Suggestion and Extraordinary Service Award Evaluation Committee; by the Governor and Council, or by some other entity, identify that entity; and (b) describe the format that you recommend the recognition take (certificate [including content]; announcement, etc).

☒ B. Monetary Award. *See* RSA 99-E: 7.

If you recommend monetary award, please state: (a) the dollar amount of the monetary award that you recommend [*See* RSA 99-E: 7, IX. for suggested amounts]; and (b) the basis for your conclusion as to the amount recommended, including any calculations as to savings or revenue, or other information which your committee believes may be of assistance in determining the appropriate amount of the award. If additional space is needed, please attach additional pages.

Per RSA 99-E:1 IX (b), the NHDOT recommends a monetary award of $250 due to the efficiency created for all of State of NH government.

9. If this submission relates to a **suggestion** made by an employee:

A. Is this suggestion original to the employee who is under consideration for award?

[x] Yes [ ] No

B. Has the suggestion been implemented? [*See* RSA 99-E: 5, III]:

[x] Yes [ ] No

C. If the suggestion has been implemented, please describe the results of the implementation, including the savings or revenue generated and the method of calculation thereof. If additional space is needed for your answer, please attach additional pages.

Per the State Treasury, the change has been implemented and is saving time and frustration. Implementation has also resulted in the elimination of cancelled or reissued checks to the vendor.

D. If the suggestion has been implemented, does your committee believe that implementation of the suggestion on a wider scale (such as in other offices, departments, etc.) would result in additional benefit to the State?

[x] Yes [ ] No

E. If your committee believes that implementation of the suggestion on a wider scale would result in additional benefit to the State, please describe the reason or reasons for this conclusion. If additional space is needed for your answer, please attach additional pages.

Change has been implemented throughout government as of October 23rd.

10. Is a complete copy of your award nomination file attached hereto?

[x] Yes [ ] No

[*Note:* RSA 99-E: 4, VI. requires that, upon reaching a conclusion as to an award submission, your committee submit to the State Award Evaluation Committee a complete copy of all documents contained in your award nomination file]

11. Date Submitted: December 12, 2024

Please Note

A departmental award evaluation committee must, within 60 days of receiving a suggestion or nomination, inform the person making the submission whether or not it recommends award or recognition; or that it requires additional, specified time and/or information in order to reach a determination. See RSA 99-E: 4, V. This form ["SESAP-2"] is to be completed by the Departmental Evaluation Committee and submitted to the State Suggestion and Extraordinary Service Award Evaluation Committee for each determination made.

PLEASE FORWARD THIS FORM, TOGETHER WITH A FULL COPY OF YOUR FILE, TO:

State Suggestion and Extraordinary Service Award Evaluation Committee
c/o Chairperson,
Division of Personnel
25 Capitol Street
Concord, NH 03301-6313

RSA 99-E SUGGESTION AND EXTRAORDINARY SERVICE AWARD PROGRAM

ADDITIONAL PAGES

Department of Transportation and Department of Administrative Services

Nominee: Donna L. Ricker

7.) Please provide a detailed description of the suggestion or of the extraordinary service performed. If more space is needed, please attach additional pages.

Introduction

The State of New Hampshire, including the NHDOT, Bureau of Aeronautics, uses Liberty Utilities as a vendor for electricity. Over the last few years, Liberty Utilities continually were not posting payments to the correct state accounts, including the Bureau of Aeronautics account, but instead were applying payments incorrectly to various other State accounts. This consistent error was making it very difficult to track the Bureau's payments to Liberty Utilities. The delay and confusion with Liberty Utilities processing state payments caused the State to have additional late fee charges in various amounts ranging from $1.06 to $2.91 on each state invoice. According to the NH Department of Administrative Services, Bureau of Purchase and Property, "Basically all state agencies utilize the utilities. Some have multiple accounts, as they have multiple locations or are large agencies." Essentially, this issue has been affecting many state agencies for some lengthy period of time.

Issue with Liberty Utilities

The Bureau of Aeronautics noticed in October 2022, that the Liberty Utilities invoice was updated to a new format, and it was noticed that late fees were being applied to the account. Ms. Ricker contacted Liberty Utilities to get a copy of our complete billing records. The Bureau of Aeronautics from June 2021 to August 2023, incurred $36.40 in late fees even though all invoices were paid in full. Using the provided billing records, Ms. Ricker took the initiative and conducted a comprehensive audit on the Bureau of Aeronautics Liberty Utilities account. During the audit review, she noticed that there was a balance forward appearing on the invoices dating back to June 2021, and this amount also included late fees.

During the June 2021 to August 2023 timeframe, there was a total collective balance forward cost of $3,576.00, even though the Bureau of Aeronautics provided documentation from the State financial database showing payments were made in a timely manner. Liberty Utilities never applied the correct payments to the Bureau of Aeronautics account.

Sequence of Events

On December 01, 2022, Ms. Ricker called Liberty Utilities and spoke with a customer service representative who stated that September, October, November and December's invoices were not paid, and there was a total amount of $168.67 that also included late charges. The late charges were for the 4 months that Liberty Utilities claimed were not paid. Ms. Ricker explained that September, October, and November's invoices were paid, and she could provide payment information from our state financial system to document those payments. December's invoice was the current invoice, and that payment was pending and paid on December 13, 2022. Ms. Ricker requested for a full accounting on the Bureau of Aeronautics account of past due invoices in writing and also requested to speak with a supervisor. The customer services representative told Ms. Ricker she would put in a "ticket" to have a supervisor contact her at a later date. A Liberty Utilities supervisor never contacted Ms. Ricker. After numerous conversations with Liberty Utilities customer support, Ms. Ricker did not waiver in her efforts, but continued to seek a resolution by regularly contacting them to get assistance to resolve the payment/fees. After many attempts to resolve the issue, the Liberty Utilities customer service representatives were still not addressing Ms. Ricker's concerns. Liberty Utilities were extremely reluctant to fix the problem and make the necessary changes to alleviate all the errors on the account.

Recognizing that her attempts were becoming futile, Ms. Ricker knew she had to find another way to address the problem. Ms. Ricker conducted her own independent research to find a contact at the NH Public Utilities Commission (PUC), who is the utility regulators in the State. In September of 2023, Ms. Ricker contacted the PUC to advise them of the situation that Liberty Utilities was continuously misallocating State payments. In addition to the PUC contact, Ms. Ricker was also able to locate the Liberty Utilities Financial Annual Report to find the correct contact information for the New England Regional Manager. Ms. Ricker emailed the New England Regional Manager and included the PUC contact to advise that she has been in contact with Liberty Utilities customer service department for almost a year to resolve unprocessed payments with no result.

Resulting in Ms. Ricker email she received a positive reply from the New England Regional Manager with a contact at the Liberty Utilities Corporate Office. Now that Ms. Ricker had the attention of the right people who could make positive change regarding the invoicing, a final resolution with Liberty Utilities was becoming reality. The final solution, spear headed by Ms. Ricker, was to have Liberty Utilities enrolled for ACH/direct deposit payments and it was finally implemented on October 25,2023.

Final Solution and Recognition

Ms. Ricker role was pivotal in initiating communications between Liberty Utilities and the State of New Hampshire, Department of Treasury to set up direct deposit for **all** State of New Hampshire agencies. Liberty Utilities is now currently receiving all payments for all state agencies through ACH Direct Deposit. This action was vital to the State of New Hampshire, to remove a persistent problem, and to reduce continued employee time and costs due to the late fees and applying multiple state payments incorrectly to Liberty Utilities accounts. Please see the letter below from Sylvia Yeaton, the NH Assistant State Treasurer describing the on-going situation with Liberty Utilities. Ms. Yeaton also provides a note thanking Ms. Ricker for her determination and hard work to resolve the persistent issue with Liberty Utilities.

The State's standard method of payment is ACH/direct deposit for quick more efficient processing. Liberty Utilities reluctance to accept ACH/Direct payment was costing the State time, money, and personnel resources to address all of the payment errors and inconsistencies on a daily basis. Ms. Ricker recognized quickly that the payment issues with Liberty Utilities could not continue and that something needed to happen to end the cycle of errors. Ms. Ricker deserves recognition in resolving this on-going problem between the State and this vendor.

This billing issue with Liberty Utilities was not isolated to the Bureau of Aeronautics but was systemic throughout all State agencies that used Liberty Utilities. For this reason, Ms. Ricker should be recognized, that her hard work not only benefited the Bureau of Aeronautics but the State as a whole.

11B.) If implemented, what were the results of the implantation (including any savings realized, revenue generated and method of calculation). If additional space is needed, you may attach additional pages.

<u>Statewide Cost savings as this was not just a DOT issue:</u>

- State of New Hampshire, Department of Treasury could not provide an exact amount of how much a paper check cost vs. ACH payment, however NH Treasury did advise that the state would save MORE on labor and time costs as the employee breakdown is as follows:
    - Employees from each bureau at each state agency conducting research into what invoices have been processed and paid and then contacting NH Treasury with their finding.
    - NH Treasury employees with conducting research into check requests which result in either cancelling the paper check and/or cancelling the paper check and reissuing the payment.
    - Per NH Treasury, getting Liberty Utilities signed up for ACH payment method helps a lot of state employees with research into their Liberty Utilities account as payments will not be misallocated and processed in a timely manner.
- Printing and mailing paper checks multiple times as Liberty Utilities would invoice "past due" on their invoices and incorrectly apply payments to multiple state accounts OR advise Liberty Utilities never received payment.
- With having an ACH payment method, the state no longer will be incurring late fees as the payment method goes directly to the vendor.
- The state should no longer have to rush payments though to avoid late fees.
- The state should no longer need to void payments due to a paper check getting "lost in the mail". This saves on state employees work time as multiple state agencies get involved to void a paper check.
- The state will save on funding and employee work time as payments will be processed in a timelier manner with ACH payment method, instead of processing duplicate payments that show up at "past due" on invoices.
- The state will no longer have Liberty Utilities show up at a job site to terminate the power source due to unpaid invoices.
- State agencies should no longer receive shut off notifications from Liberty Utilities due to invoices not being paid.
- State employee work time will be reduced as researching the status of payments to determine if payment was cashed or if an invoice was processed will be eliminated with the ACH/direct deposit payment method.
- The state will receive late fee credits to their accounts when Liberty Utilities did not apply payment in a timely manner or applied payment to an incorrect account.
- Liberty Utilities is currently working on reconciling NHDOT accounts and applying misappropriated payments to the proper accounts.

Results for implementing ACH payment method vs. paper check

- The state was able to get a dedicated contact person at Liberty Utilities so contacting customer service will no longer be an issue and state employees won't have to explain their account issues every time they call or email.
    - Liberty Utilities now has a team dedicated to working on all State of NH accounts to get reconciled when notified by the state agency.
- All payments are now reconciled through the Liberty Utilities, Londonderry, NH office instead of Headquarters based in Chicago, IL
- A dedicated email was set up for the remittance advice (check stub) for Liberty Utilities, so payments are applied to correct accounts – no more misallocated state payments.

13.) Please provide any additional information that you believe would be of assistant in the committee's consideration of this suggestion or nomination. You may attach additional pages if needed:

As a result of Ms. Ricker's continued efforts to get Liberty Utilities to reconcile Aeronautics' accounts, the workload for checking the status of current payments has been reduced for the Accounts Payable staff within the NHDOT/Bureau of Finance and reducing the workload of research, cancelling and reissuing payments to Liberty Utilities at the NH Treasury Department. As Liberty Utilities continues to reconcile Bureau of Aeronautics account, Ms. Ricker is still a contact person for them and continues to have meetings with them about unprocessed payments for Aeronautics. Ms. Ricker is also the contact person for other NHDOT bureaus who are auditing their Liberty Utilities account, and she guides them on what she did in her audit and who her contacts are at Liberty Utilities and the PUC. Liberty Utilities is still researching where payments went and applying credit when they resolve an issue.

As of February 22, 2024, NHDOT, Bureau of Aeronautics and Liberty Utilities issues of "missing" payments were resolved. Ms. Ricker contacted NHDOT, Bureau of Finance who then contacted the NH Treasury Department to cancel the last 3 remaining payments that had not been cashed and to reissue as an ACH payment. However, there was still an amount due that consisted of late fees. Ms. Ricker had a conversation with the PUC around noon on February 22, 2024 regarding the late fees. The PUC advised Ms. Ricker they would reach out to Liberty Utilities to get an answer. The PUC called Ms. Ricker around 1:15pm and advised they had spoken with Liberty Utilities and all the remaining late fees would be waived and waived late fees should show on the next bill. Ms. Ricker thanked the PUC and the PUC replied *"… this issue seemed to cause Liberty Utilities to fix a much larger problem than just with the Bureau of Aeronautics*."

Ms. Ricker's hard work and determination not only effects NHDOT, but it effects all state agencies who have accounts with Liberty Utilities. Getting this vendor set up to receive ACH/direct deposit saves state agencies work time with reviewing unpaid invoices and saves on voiding/reissuing paper checks.

Ms. Ricker should be rewarded for going above and beyond to get a statewide issue resolved. Ms. Ricker did not accept this issue as being the norm as something she just had to live with. Instead, Ms. Ricker stepped up and found a solution, not only for the Bureau of Aeronautics, but for the state as a whole, saving both time and money for everyone involved.

GOING THE EXTRA MILE

A Note of Appreciation and Thanks

On behalf of the State Treasury and accounts payable teams across all state agencies, I would like to express my appreciation for the hard work and persistence shown by Donna Ricker of NH DOT in helping to get Liberty Utilities on board with receiving ACH vendor payments rather than receiving payments by check.
Due to the fact that state vendor payments are aggregated by vendor, multiple state agency payments to the same vendor are included on each check with a breakdown of amounts listed on the check stub. In this instance, the vendor was having ongoing challenges with cashing checks timely and applying payments correctly, resulting in quite a mess for state electric and gas accounts. Checks were going uncashed resulting in multiple agency requests to Treasury to cancel and reissue checks. This went on for some time, but thanks to Donna's persistence in working with the Liberty Utilities account representatives, she was able to clear up the issues with the NH DOT accounts and put Treasury in touch with the key people at Liberty for ACH enrollment.

I am happy to report that Liberty Utilities (both gas and electric) went live with ACH on October 20th, 2023. Now that they receive their payments electronically, Liberty is able to apply their payments timely and correctly using the emailed electronic remittance advices. No more delays in processing due to lost checks and/or check stubs.

Due to Donna's willingness and determination to solve the problem, she succeeded in helping put an end to the ongoing payment issues with Liberty, permanently – not only for DOT, but for all state agencies, saving hundreds of future hours of wasted time and frustration! I know that I speak for all agencies when I say, "I am so grateful that you went the extra mile – Thank you Donna!"

Sincerely,

Sylvia Yeaton
Assistant State Treasurer