



Vice Chancellor for Finance and  
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[www.maine.edu](http://www.maine.edu)

The University of Maine

University of Maine  
at Augusta

University of Maine  
at Farmington

University of Maine  
at Fort Kent

University of Maine  
at Machias

University of Maine  
at Presque Isle

University of  
Southern Maine

University of Maine  
School of Law

September 12, 2024

Hugh Townsend, Co-Chair  
Future of the Hutchinson Center Steering Committee  
93 Church St  
Belfast, ME 04915

Dear Mr. Townsend,

**Subject: Decision on Appeal Regarding Hutchinson Center RFP #2024-048**

This letter responds to the appeal submitted to me by the Future of the Hutchinson Center Steering Committee and Waterfall Arts (FHCS-C-WA) on September X, 2024 regarding the University of Maine Hutchinson Center Real Estate Offer (RFP #2024-048).

While I found the university's process had full transparency and integrity and adhered to long-standing public procurement policies, after a thorough review, I agree with your assertion that the evaluation criteria did not allow for due consideration of all materially relevant financial details associated with both the real property sale and the maintenance in perpetuity of the Networkmaine internet hub.

Specifically, in Addendum 4, the University of Maine System (UMS) stated that in the event of a real property sale, its existing Networkmaine hub within the Hutchinson Center would need to be relocated to a secured purpose-built utility building on the property in order to maintain internet connectivity for midcoast institutions. As the addendum noted, "This relocation, while involving initial investment, is anticipated to be less costly for the University of Maine System compared to relocating the hub off-site." While other respondents proposed favorable lease arrangements and access to the property, FHCS-C-WA's creative alternative offer to allow the hub to permanently remain within the existing building would significantly reduce the cost of site work, new construction and relocation for the System.

In ruling on your Aug. 19, 2024 protest as it relates to this point, the Executive Director of Strategic Procurement dismissed FHCS-C-WA's claim about "its value-added proposition" because the university's original RFP and related evaluation criteria had not taken so-called cost avoidance into consideration. While that is true, as Vice Chancellor for Finance & Administration, I uniquely appreciate that the avoidance of hundreds of thousands of dollars in relocation expenses presents clear financial and operational benefits that are decidedly in the best interests of the System and thus should have been valued in the criteria by which all proposals were scored. Though I found your other assertions to be entirely unsubstantiated, for this reason, I am obligated to rescind the original award.

I will be directing the System's Office of Strategic Procurement to work with UMaine to determine their desired next steps for soliciting offers to purchase or facilitate the transfer of the property, whether by facilitating a new RFP process, which would appropriately take into account both the real and potential value of all aspects of the proposals including those that related to Networkmaine, or listing with a pre-qualified commercial broker.

Please know that my final decision is specific to a single deficiency of the evaluation criteria and is not a reflection on the merits of the proposals submitted by any respondent or any other aspect of the university's process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'RL' or 'Ryan Low', written in a cursive style.

Ryan Low

Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration and Treasurer