UNIVERSITY OF MAINE SYSTEM
Board of Trustees
Zoom Meeting

October 28, 2026
Zoom

Finance, Facilities & Technology Committee

Present: Committee Members: Emily Cain; Chair; Roger Katz, Patrick Flood, David MacMahon, Trish Riley, Michael Michaud, Barbara Alexander, Chris Gordon & Richard Rosen. **Non-Voting Members:** Blake Shepherd **Chancellor:** Dannel Malloy. **Presidents:** Joan Ferrini-Mundy, Raymond Rice, Jenifer Cushman, Jacqueline Edmondson, Deborah Hedeen & Leigh Saufley. **Faculty Representatives:** Clyde Mithcell. **System Staff**: Ryan Low, Carolyn Dorsey, Jeffrey St. John, Gretchen Catlin, Amon Purinton, Robert Placido. Katelynn Ronan & Elizabeth Stickler. **Other Participants:** Jenny Boyden, Jake Ward, Jacob Jandreau, Nate Harris, Steve Jensin, Justin Swift, Megan Desjardins & Del Dixon.

Committee Members Absent: none

Trustee Cain, Chair, called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. The Clerk performed a roll call of the Committee members present.

Deering Hall Renovations for Spruce Budworm Laboratory, UM
The University of Maine System, acting through the University of Maine (UMaine), requests authorization to expend $1,100,000 for renovations and laboratory equipment to Deering Hall to relocate, modernize, and expand the Spruce Budworm laboratory.

The UMaine Spruce Budworm Lab opened its doors in 2021 with support from the Cooperative Forestry Research Unit (CFRU) to monitor spruce budworm (SBW) populations. To predict SBW populations for the following year, tree branch samples are collected in the fall and submitted to the UMaine Spruce Budworm Lab. The Lab processes the branch samples and counts the overwintering stage of SBW, better known as an L2. L2 data is important for monitoring SBW activity and growing populations. Research has found that 7+ L2s per branch per sample site indicates that SBW populations have passed a threshold beyond which natural enemies (parasites, pathogens, weather) can no longer keep populations low and stable.

Funding is provided through the USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) 2026 Congressionally identified equipment grant and construction grant secured by U.S. Senator Collins at the request of the University of Maine.

The construction grant requires a $600,000 match. UMaine intends to satisfy this requirement through electrical infrastructure improvements, which are included in the previously authorized $25 million July 2024 electrical infrastructure project. These improvements support the Spruce Budworm Laboratory and other occupants of Deering Hall.

Combined grant funding and the proposed match total $1,700,000. The $600,000 matching investment remains within the previously authorized infrastructure project and is separate from the $1,100,000 requested through this item. This information provides Trustees with a complete picture of the laboratory investment and related infrastructure work in Deering Hall, while distinguishing previously authorized expenditures from the new funding authorization requested.

President Joan Ferrini-Mundy requested authorization for $1.1 million to relocate, modernize and expand the Spruce Budworm Laboratory on the fourth floor of Deering Hall. The laboratory analyzes branch samples to assess pest activity and outbreak risk, supporting the University's land grant mission. Work includes HVAC, plumbing and electrical upgrades and new laboratory equipment and workspace. The presentation identified $600,000 for construction and $500,000 for equipment through federal funding secured by Senator Collins. The construction match would be met through electrical improvements within a previously authorized $25 million infrastructure project.

RESOLUTION

On a motion by Trustee Michaud, which was seconded by Trustee Riley, and approved by a roll call vote for all Trustees present, the Finance, Facilities & Technology Committee approved the following resolution to be forwarded to the Consent Agenda for Board of Trustees approval at the November 16, 2026, Board Meeting:

> That the Board of Trustees accepts the recommendation of the Finance, Facilities, and Technology Committee, and authorizes the University of Maine System, acting through the University of Maine, to expend up to $1,100,000 for renovations and laboratory equipment to relocate and modernize Deering Hall for the future home of the Spruce Budworm Laboratory.

Lease of No. 9 Mountain, UMPI

UMPI requests authorization to enter into a lease agreement with the Aroostook County Sheriff's Office for public safety radio and communications use at No. 9 Mountain in Township D, Range 2, WELS, Aroostook County, Maine. The initial term would begin December 1, 2026, and end September 30, 2029. The draft provides for two additional 10-year terms by mutual written agreement, for a total potential term of 22 years and 10 months, ending September 30, 2049, if both extensions are exercised consecutively.

Megan Desjardins presented the item scheduled for President Raymond Rice. The proposed lease supports law enforcement, fire and ambulance communications and complements an existing State of Maine information technology agreement. No rent would be charged during the initial term; the Sheriff's Office would bear utilities, equipment, insurance and approved improvements. Trustees asked about ownership of the site and forgone rental income. The response emphasized public safety benefits and indicated that forgone rent would be negligible.

RESOLUTION

On a motion by Trustee Michaud, which was seconded by Trustee Riley, and approved by a roll call vote for all Trustees present, the Finance, Facilities & Technology Committee approved the following resolution to be forwarded to the Consent Agenda for Board of Trustees approval at the November 16, 2026, Board Meeting:

> That the Board of Trustees accepts the recommendation of the Finance, Facilities and Technology Committee and authorizes the University of Maine System, acting through the University of Maine at Presque Isle, to enter into a lease agreement with the Aroostook County Sheriff's Office for public safety radio and communications use at No. 9 Mountain in Township D, Range 2, WELS, Aroostook County, Maine, for an initial term beginning December 1, 2026, and ending September 30, 2029, with two additional 10-year terms by mutual written agreement, for a total potential term of 22 years and 10 months.

Gauvin Family Center for Cultural Arts Renovation, Wieden Hall, UMPI

The Gauvin Family Center for Cultural Arts occupies the auditorium wing of Wieden Hall on the University of Maine at Presque Isle (UMPI) campus. Constructed in 1960, with approximately 420 seats and 8,400 gross square feet, the facility has served the instructional and performance needs of the University and Aroostook County for more than sixty years without a substantial renovation, and the need for a major renovation has been recognized for roughly two decades.

The facility functions both as a university teaching and assembly space and as a regional cultural arts venue. The renovation is intended to preserve that dual role while creating a modern, accessible venue that can attract outside performances, conferences, workshops, school events, and community programming. The Center has historically hosted cultural arts events in collaboration with local schools, including educational sessions for students, and the University intends to revive and expand this programming as part of the Center’s renewed role as a regional cultural and educational resource. The University also intends to develop an operating model in which expanded outside use helps offset ongoing facility costs. The project does not add square footage. The design option currently selected provides approximately 330 seats, including six dispersed accessible seats, compared with approximately 420 today. The reduction accommodates current seating standards and accessibility requirements; the final seat count will be established as the design is finalized.

The project originates from a $4 million federal earmark awarded to UMPI in FY2024. UMPI engaged WBRC Inc. as the architectural and engineering firm to evaluate existing conditions, establish code requirements, develop a renovation scope, and create a project vision with campus stakeholders. WBRC issued its Building Evaluation in November 2025, and a concept cost estimate was prepared in February 2026**.**
Megan Desjardins returned with the project previously presented for information in August. The auditorium, built in 1960, needs accessibility and safety improvements to remain viable for university and regional use. The $7 million budget includes $4 million in federal funding and $3 million in UMPI resources, with fundraising intended to reduce use of reserves. Construction was anticipated from July 2027 through December 2028. In response to Trustee Katz, the presenter described a $2.2 million commitment and fundraising for the balance, and approximately $5 million in current capital reserves. President Rice joined and was available for additional questions.

RESOLUTION
On a motion by Trustee Michaud, which was seconded by Trustee Flood, and approved by a roll call vote for all Trustees present, the Finance, Facilities & Technology Committee approved the following resolution to be forwarded for Board approval at the November 16, 2026, Board Meeting:

> That the Board of Trustees accepts the recommendation of the Finance, Facilities and Technology Committee, and authorizes the University of Maine System acting through University of Maine at Presque Isle to proceed with the renovations of the Gauvin Family Center for Cultural Arts in Wieden Hall at a total project cost of $7,000,000.

Sullivan Recreation & Fitness Center Renovation, USM
The Sullivan Recreation & Fitness Center was constructed in 1968 and contains approximately 58,062 gross square feet. The facility is an aging building requiring significant capital investment to address current conditions and modernization needs. Based on the FY25 Gordian facility needs assessment, the building has a replacement value of $25,438,882.13, a current need of $9,968,189.84, a modernization need of $3,646,904.25, and a FY25 Net Asset Value (NAV) of 46%. Our June 25, 2025, Capital Plan presentation to FFT also included the Sullivan Gym Renovation as a key project.

The current configuration and space availability in the building are not conducive to the recreational and fitness needs of the modern student and the University community at large. The renovation would address these issues and the deferred maintenance of the building.

The University is currently exploring a potential public-private partnership (P3) as a possible approach to renovating and modernizing the Sullivan Recreation & Fitness Center. The building would continue to be available to the public as well as the University community.

The project is currently in the Request for Qualifications (RFQ) phase to identify and qualify potential bidders. Following evaluation of the RFQ responses, the anticipated next step is a Request for Proposals (RFP) process to select a successful bidder and determine whether a P3 partnership should move forward. The RFQ process is exploratory and does not commit the University to a P3 transaction, a specific project scope, a financing structure, or a selected partner. This facility provides a key service to the students, employees, and community members on the Portland campus and will be taken into consideration in the campus master planning that is beginning. The purpose of this informational item is to brief the Finance, Facilities, and Technology Committee on the facility condition, the potential renovation, and the current procurement process.

President Jacqueline Edmondson and Justin Swift presented this information item. USM was exploring renovation of the 1968 facility through a request for qualifications to identify potential partners, followed potentially by a request for proposals. The RFQ did not commit to the University to a public-private partnership. Limited University capital made potential private investment relevant, while the building would continue serving the University and public. Trustees asked how partner rights and operational influence would be negotiated and whether the RFQ sought qualifications or a project concept. Staff described the initial market-interest stage and later development of an RFP. Chair Cain directed questions about negotiations, valuations or sensitive financial terms to executive session.

Networkmaine Statewide Network Overview

Del Dixon, Associate Chief Information Officer for Infrastructure and Network Services, provided an informational overview of Networkmaine, the University of Maine System (UMS) service that operates Maine's statewide research and education network. The overview covers what the network is and who it serves, why the University operates it rather than a commercial carrier, the services members receive, how the program is funded and governed, what the System receives in return, and the federal policy risk the funding model carries, and it assumes no prior knowledge of the program. This item is presented for information only; no Board action is requested.

Chief Information Officer Robert Placido introduced Del Dixon's explanation of Networkmaine, operated through UMS IT with the Maine Department of Education, Maine State Library and State Office of Information Technology. It provides connectivity to approximately 900 schools and libraries across all 16 counties and supports university research connectivity. Shared purchasing, long-term fiber arrangements, a network operations center, security protections and assistance with federal paperwork reduce the burden on small institutions.

Dixon described network redundancy, including rerouting around an outage that morning, and exploration of additional northern connections. State and federal support are central to the funding model. Risks include federal E-rate policy, changes to eligibility-based discounts, and renewal of long-term network arrangements. UMS holds the contracts, making contingency planning important if external funding declines. Trustees discussed governance and the need to understand potential financial exposure. Staff would continue reporting through the CIO.

Cybersecurity Program and Student Aid Fraud Update

Steven Jensen, Chief Information Security Officer, provided an informational update on the University of Maine System (UMS) cybersecurity program and, at the Committee's request, on student aid fraud. The update covers the program's status and direction, the threats and top risks facing higher education, the advanced email security platform now live on every UMS mailbox, the System's approach to artificial intelligence, the three-year cybersecurity plan, and the national and UMS picture on student aid fraud. The program addresses its top risks in layers, most critical first. This item is presented for information only; no Board action is requested.

Steven Jenson described a phased cybersecurity program aligned with the NIST framework and aimed at a managed, maturing program by FY2028. Priorities include email security, identity modernization, endpoint and network protection, data security, staffing, incident response and a security operations center coordinated with network operations. Newly deployed email protection had removed more than 17,000 threats in its first ten days and nearly 44,000 by the day before the meeting. These were reported operational snapshots.

Jenson described AI as both an attack mechanism and a defensive tool. Proposed automation would require controlled tests, limited access, named ownership, logging, human approval and the ability to stop activity. Student aid fraud requires shared responsibility across admissions, financial aid, registration, billing, IT and security. A working group involving Vice Chancellor St. John and security leadership was evaluating background risk scoring, identity verification, product demonstrations and costs; no new product had been selected. Existing controls relied substantially on manual monitoring. Trustees asked about student and family education, institutional responsibility, verification gaps and measurable progress. Staff distinguished organized identity fraud from ordinary families completing aid applications and emphasized systemwide responsibility.

Trustees requested recurring security metrics. Staff proposed a future executive-session dashboard review to avoid exposing security details. Insurance coverage questions were also deferred for confidential discussion. Gretchen Catlin noted the Audit Committee's enterprise-risk role. Placido described recent vulnerability and certificate-response work, including rapid patching and functional testing with limited disruption; these comments were reports of operations, not findings independently verified by the Committee.

University Capital Plan Briefings - UMFK

President Deborah Hedeen introduced Chief Business Officer Jacob Jandreau. Vice Chancellor Low explained that campus briefings rotate to permit detailed discussion beyond the annual systemwide capital review. UMFK presented a five-year plan of approximately $17.2 million against an estimated $51 million ten-year reinvestment need. Roughly 55% of the five-year plan still required identified funding. Historic annual reinvestment of about $309,000 fell below the cited Gordian range of $1.5–$2.4 million; the Fox Auditorium project would increase near-term investment.

Priorities included completing Fox Auditorium, Cyr Hall systems and windows, the Sports Center, Lodge systems, paving, roofs, wayfinding and preparation for the September 2028 sesquicentennial. Jandreau reported approved energy-fund projects for a backup boiler and LED upgrades, approximately $1.4 million of unspent deferred-maintenance funds being reassessed,

and a federally funded computer training facility in the Old Model School. Master planning was expected to begin early in 2027. Potential window and greenhouse projects would return with more detail.

Trustees asked whether enrollment growth represented additional students physically on campus. President Hedeen reported continued in-person growth and corrected the residence-hall count to 161. Other headcount, percentage and FTE figures were not fully reconciled in the discussion and require confirmation against the forthcoming fall census report. Vice Chancellor St. John said the systemwide report would be distributed through the Clerk when ready.

Strategic Plan Tracking Update

Gretchen Catlin emphasized that capital investment supports operating efficiency, optimization of the physical footprint and campus strategy as well as deferred maintenance. Vice Chancellor Low reported that balanced budgets, realistic enrollment assumptions and evidence-based budget adjustments were incorporated into FY2028 instructions and forthcoming trustee presentations.

Finance, Facilities and Technology Committee Work Plan Reporting Items

Nate Harris presented the master-planning process with Goody Clancy and Harriman. System funding had enabled acceleration. UMaine and Machias work was under contract; USM, UMPI and UMA were next, followed by UMF and UMFK early in 2027. Campus analyses would combine instructional-space use, scheduling, physical condition and academic plans to identify investment, repurposing or disposition options. The FY2028–2032 capital plan was expected in February, with later-year priorities subject to refinement as studies progress. Presentation slides would be supplied after the meeting.

Trustees and Faculty Representative Mitchell emphasized informal student use, community gathering, employment schedules and athletics as factors that raw utilization data cannot capture. Harris described stakeholder interviews to supplement data and distinguished physical inspections from formula-based net asset value. Trustee Alexander asked for a subsequent discussion of criteria for allocating resources among campuses.

Vice Chancellor Low reported approximately 3,000 students and 1,500 employees enrolled in the ChatGPT system offering, with another enrollment push planned. Existing personal-account histories complicated migration. Employee credit allocations across three tiers would double within the existing system allocation; student allocations would remain under review. Training would continue, with additional credits used as an incentive. Trustees raised optional AI training, adoption rates and policy. A deeper policy discussion was planned for the December 16 meeting.

Executive Session

On a motion by Trustee Michaud, which was seconded by Trustee Flood, and approved by a roll call vote of all Trustees present, the Finance, Facilities, & Technology Committee went into Executive Session under the following provisions:

- 1 MRSA Section 405 6-C to discuss the condition, acquisition or disposition of real property or economic development if premature disclosure of the information would prejudice the competitive or bargaining position of UMS.

On a motion by Trustee Alexander, which was seconded by Trustee Flood, and approved by a roll call vote of all Trustees present, the Committee concluded the Executive Session.

Additional information about the meeting can be found on the Board of Trustees website: https://www.maine.edu/board-of-trustees/meeting-agendas-materials/finance-facilities-technology/

Adjournment.

Kayla Flewelling for
Elizabeth Stickler, Clerk