

The Post and Courier

College of Charleston's Fountain Walk lease plans shot down by Budget and Control Board

• [Diane Knich](#)

- [Facebook](#)
- [Twitter](#)
- [LinkedIn](#)

• Posted: Friday, June 28, 2013 4:49 p.m.

UPDATED: Friday, June 28, 2013 7:06 p.m.

• Text size: A A A

• [Tweet](#)

• [E-Mail](#)

• [Print](#)



[Leroy Burnell/Staff](#) The state Budget and Control Board voted against the College of Charleston leasing space at Fountain Walk near the aquarium. [Buy this photo](#)

The state has shot down the College of Charleston's plan to spend more than \$9 million to rent temporary classroom space in a privately owned waterfront office building, largely because the school didn't seek proposals from other landlords.

The college wanted to expand to Fountain Walk, a commercial property on the Cooper River adjacent to the South Carolina Aquarium and within walking distance of the downtown campus.

The college's request included leasing 41,000 square feet of academic space for \$9.1 million over the next seven years. But the state's Budget and Control Board voted 3-2 against allowing the school to move forward with the plan.

The college planned to use the property as "swing space" while it renovates the Rita Liddy Hollings Science Center and the Simons Center for the Arts, and to lease the space from R.E.R. Investments Limited Co. John Rivers, one of the company's owners, has close ties to the college and is a previous donor.

College of Charleston spokesman Mike Robertson said school leaders worked with the South Carolina General Services Division to identify suitable property near the campus. The process it used fully complies with the South Carolina Code of Laws, he said, which does not require the school put out a request for proposals.

School leaders previously have said it's challenging to find large amounts of space available for rent on the peninsula. The Fountain Walk property has enough space to meet the college's needs, and it's close to campus.

But Richard Eckstrom, the state's comptroller general and a Budget and Control Board member, said he was concerned that the college didn't seek bids or proposals from other building owners.

"The question was asked: Had the university gone through any competitive process? It hadn't ... My thought is any university should be practicing best business practices, and that almost always requires competitive procurement," Eckstrom said Wednesday.

He also said the college plans to lease space for a fitness center in a new private dorm being built adjacent to the campus. He thinks the school should consider using the fitness center space for classrooms. "It's possible that the space right there adjoining the campus could be modified to use for academic purposes. That's an essential function of the university, whereas the health club is nonessential," Eckstrom said. "It's nice but it's not essential to accomplish the public mission of the university."

Eckstrom, Gov. Nikki Haley and state Treasurer Curtis M. Loftis Jr. voted against the college's plan, while Sen. Hugh Leatherman and Rep. W. Brian White supported it.

Robertson said the college now is seeking other space to lease to make possible the critical renovation of the science center. "This renovation will meet urgent science education needs that are essential to the future of Charleston and South Carolina. A portion of this lease also would help meet the immediate needs of the College's Department of Computer Science."

John McDermott contributed to this report.

Reach Diane Knich at 937-5491 or on Twitter @dianeknich.

Comments { }

- Post A New Comment
- Notice about Commenting