

Hot and cold

LMC seeks grant to support HVAC overhaul

By **RALPH HEIBUTZKI**
H-P Correspondent

BENTON TOWNSHIP — An \$8 million state grant could give Lake Michigan College a shot at making some major facilities improvements — but there are hoops to clear first.

LMC has until Nov. 1 to apply for the funding, which won't be available until the 2015-16 fiscal year, President Bob Harrison said. The state could cover half the cost of building improvements.

Board members voted to pursue the grant in Tuesday's meeting.

"It's been 10 years since we had a project like this, funded by the state — if you just took who's been the longest (without funding), then we would be high up on the consideration list," Harrison said.

State employees would work with the Legislature's Joint Capital Outlay in reviewing and ranking the applications, which is expected to take about a year, he said.

Although the process will be lengthy, a successful application will fund several major capital improvements to the Napier Avenue campus, which has been on the short list for awhile, Harrison said.

Leading that list is the college's roughly 40-year-old heating, ventilation and air-conditioning system. LMC has long wanted to overhaul the system but lacked the money, Harrison said.

If the grant arrives, and the changes could be made, the college would save about \$250,000 per year on energy costs, he said.

The college would look at "changing some of those large lecture labs, and focus on converting the library into a learning center," Harrison said.

Board action was required because the state had changed some of the original grant criteria, which had to be reflected in the final application, he said.

As part of the process, LMC had to document its partnerships with local businesses, community organizations and other educational institutions.

Those details, in turn, go into a report that the board must certify, "(to show) that we are in compliance with that requirement and that we provide strategic value to communities," Harrison said.

The report is complete and will be included in the college's final grant application package next month, he said.