

LMC dorm opens today

LMC has been turning down applicants

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BENTON TOWNSHIP — Lake Michigan College's student housing complex, Beckwith Hall, is about 60 to 70 percent full as it enters its first semester

And officials are satisfied with that figure, for now.

Clinton Gabbard, vice president of Student Affairs, said the college projected 130 residents for Beckwith, when it officially opens today to welcome students. The semester begins Tuesday.

Gabbard said after Tuesday's board meeting that 220 applications came in for the 64,000-square-foot, 188-unit building, which LMC dedicated in July.

"We're getting people every day. There were some people who weren't academically ready — if they weren't ready to take college-level classes, they couldn't get in. There were certain people where we said, 'You know what? This probably isn't in the cards for you,'" he said.

The total estimated cost is \$8 million, which the college is financing through bonds that it'll repay from student housing fees over 30 years.

LMC is satisfied right now with where its investment stands, Gabbard said.

"We're feeling good about it. We keep wringing our hands and saying, 'We should be full,' and Capstone — the

organization that's been consulting with us, all the way — is saying, 'Are you kidding? This is incredible. You'll never have to fill up from scratch again.' They're very positive."

Gabbard said he expects a ripple effect to bump up Beckwith's occupancy rate in time. As an example, he cited about 20 or 30 student athletes who moved in early, "because their summer commitments started then," he said.

He said the ripple effect should make itself felt as word gets around about the range of amenities at Beckwith, such as its outdoor gathering areas for beach volleyball and disc golf.

"Because these are fully furnished from the get-go, they're (students), not going to be hauling couches. They're going to be carrying boxes and stereos," he said.

In other business, Gabbard reported that LMC has hired Kalamazoo resident Marta Lehman as its new volleyball coach. He couldn't recall who Lehman is replacing.

"We've had a series of one-season coaches, and we need some stability (for the program)," he said.

Lehman has also applied for several full-time jobs at LMC, which would deepen her roots here if she's successful, Gabbard said.

"Getting somebody employed in another capacity goes a long way because they start seeing their coaching as an aspect of what they're doing. If she's successful at getting a position, she would do volleyball (coaching) part-time," he said.