

Starting from scratch

LMC launches national search for next president

By **RALPH HEIBUTZKI**
H-P Correspondent

BENTON HARBOR — Lake Michigan College is ready to start fresh and launch a second national search to find its next president.

This time around, however, LMC is working with the Pauly Group, a firm that specializes in community and technical colleges — whom the board unanimously agreed to hire at a special meeting Tuesday. Trustee Stephen Small was absent.

In doing so, the board ruled out offering the job to Robert Spohr, vice president for student and academic affairs at Montcalm Community College, LMC Board Chairman Mary Jo Tomasini said.

“We visited his school and we heard great things about him, but really, it came down to the board feeling that he wasn’t ready at this time,” Tomasini said. “He’s an outstanding individual, and he will be an outstanding president, but he weren’t confident that he was the right fit for Lake Michigan College.”

The board further made its decision based on the community input it has gotten so far, Tomasini said.

“We also felt that the community wanted us to go out and do another national search, so I feel like we’re being responsive to what we’ve heard from the community,” she said.

Spohr was the other fi-

nalist in the search that led to the hiring of former president Jennifer Spielvogel. The board fired her May 5 amid allegations of unauthorized spending and unprofessional conduct.

Spielvogel has since sued the college for breach of contract, contending the board micromanaged her and undercut her authority during her brief tenure at LMC. A court date hasn’t been set.

The board then asked former president Bob Harrison — who retired in December 2015 — to return until LMC settles on a successor. Harrison is serving as president emeritus/acting CEO, for which he’s earning \$5,000 a month.

The board authorized spending up to \$63,437 for the new search. That figure includes \$45,000 for the Pauly Group of Springfield, Ill., plus related expenses — like candidate travel.

Overall, the college expects the impact on its budget to be neutral because it doesn’t have a full-time president with benefits on its payroll.

The board decided to begin taking resumes in August, and continue doing so until it fills the job.

Much of Tuesday’s meeting focused on the specifics of what to do and how to do it.

The discussion opened with a general question from Tomasini.

“What do we want to do differently from last time?” she said.

“The outcome,” Vice President Michael Lindley responded.

See **PRESIDENT**, page A8

PRESIDENT

From page A1

“We’ve all taken a lot of heat for decisions that we’ve made,” Tomasini said.

Tomasini said the Pauly Group’s specific expertise in community colleges should make a difference – versus its last search, when it ran national ads, and then vetted candidates with the help of its previous firm, and an internal committee created for that purpose.

“When you look at these other firms, they do a lot of four-year (college and university) work, and things like that,” she said.

Tomasini, Lindley and Secretary Debra Johnson are the board members who will work with the Pauly Group and the new search committee, once it’s up and running.

The next order of business is firming up the actual search timeline, which means Harrison will likely serve through year’s end – and possibly into the start of 2017 – depending on

how the search goes, Tomasini said.

“The important part of this (approach) is, we’re not going to rush,” she said.

The Pauly Group should prove helpful in filtering out candidates who aren’t suitable, said Tomasini – who said she has gotten some unsolicited calls from would-be candidates.

“There’s a lot of walking wounded out there,” she said.

“There’s a perception that this is a pretty easy job,” Harrison said.