

More of much the same

LMC board sets budget for year starting Friday

By RALPH HEIBUTZKI
HP Correspondent

BENTON TOWN-SHIP — For Lake Michigan College, a flat state funding climate ensures it'll start the 2016-17 fiscal year with a budget that looks comparable to last year.

LMC Board members unanimously adopted a budget Tuesday that calls for \$32.1 million in revenue and expenditures for the new fiscal year, which starts on Friday.

"Really, it's not all that different than the year we're just finishing," said LMC's president emeritus/acting CEO Bob Harrison.

On the revenue side, LMC anticipates \$15.5 million in property taxes, followed by \$10.5 million in tuition and fee revenue, and \$5.5 million in state appropriations, figures show. Those three areas represent LMC's largest revenue categories.

On the expenses side, much of the money will flow toward labor costs (\$20.9 million), followed by depreciation and amortization (\$4.3 million), travel/communications (\$1.7 million), and rent, utilities and insurance (\$1.1 million).

Other major highlights include a better than expected showing in health insurance premium costs, which are only going up about 5 percent, "so we're really pleased with that," Harrison said.

Harrison said he is looking forward to the Aug. 23 opening of the long-awaited Hanson Technology Center, which will combine all the college's technology programs under one roof at its main campus along Napier Avenue.

The new building was a major focal point of the college's \$7.5 million "Campaign For Tomorrow" fundraising effort.

"That's going to be a big deal. We continue to focus on making students successful," Harrison said.

LMC broke ground last spring for the new center, which it expects will increase enrollment in its technical programs by 10 percent.

The college is exploring the idea of a capital millage to address some long-standing needs — including an overhaul of its heating and ventilation systems at its Napier Avenue campus.

Current proposals being kicked around include a 0.24-mill levy for 20 years, or 0.48 mills over 10 years, "but those are still really soft numbers," Harrison said.

Any formal action is still a long way off because the college hasn't finished crunching the numbers, and weighing the pros and cons of pursuing such a proposal, Harrison said.

"We've got a citizen's committee exploring the potential, and we've done some research on that. I expect a recommendation will come to the board in the next several months, about whether to go forward or not (with the request)," Harrison said. "So we're still looking at that."