

LMC prepared to hire project oversight team

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BENTON HARBOR — A top-ranked professional services firm from Berkeley, Mich., is Lake Michigan College's choice to oversee the renovations of its main campus at Napier Avenue.

LMC trustees unanimously agreed to hire Stantec for the job, and then negotiate a contract with the firm for construction management and design work, said Anne Erdman, LMC's vice president of administrative services.

"We're estimating a year for the design because the project is very complex. We think that construction would go through 2019," Erdman said. "It has to be done right. We think the programming at the beginning is what makes a project, and so do they. That's where we're going to spend our time."

President Emeritus/Acting CEO Bob Harrison said he expects Stantec to start preliminary design work in January, once both sides work out a contract and the board signs off on it.

"We'll start the negotiations with them, clearly define the expected outcomes, and negotiate the price. Then we'll start to craft out what the scope of work it will be. It's very exciting," he said.

Stantec emerged as the top contender after buying out Duce Simmons, which had done similar work for LMC, Erdman told the board Tuesday.

Stantec is also the top-ranked architectural firm among 300 in its field nationwide — "so this will be a known quantity that we're recommending to you," she said.

LMC received an \$8.5 million capital outlay grant from the state, which will allow the college to make numerous improvements at Napier Avenue.

The college had to match the grant amount.

Key aspects include the renovation of 50 classrooms and two lecture halls; collaborative learning spaces; and the creation of

a Career and Transfer Center, and Student Success Center.

LMC plans to issue \$10 million in bonds by next spring to help cover the construction costs of the Napier Avenue project and its long-planned Wine and Culinary Center, Harrison said.

In anticipation of that step, the board passed a resolution to allow LMC to recover costs associated with both projects, Harrison said.

"We'll be able to start spending some of the bond proceeds for those costs. It's pretty standard in public construction, where a public body will pass a resolution of this type," he said.

In another matter, the board adopted a policy requiring LMC's president to live within 20 miles of the college's nearest boundary — and do so within 60 days of hiring.

LMC is searching for a permanent successor to Harrison, who returned in his current position in May after the board fired Jennifer Spielvogel.

The board decided to make those expectations official after discovering — during the search — that it didn't have a residency policy, board Chairwoman Mary Jo Tomasini said.

"It's the board's desire that any future leader of this college would live in the district, as they have (done) in the past," she said.

"I think it's a really good idea, to get it in writing. It takes away that question," board Treasurer Judy Truesdell said before the vote.

The board accepted its audit from Rehmann Robson, which came back with a clean opinion — meaning, no weaknesses or recommendations — for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2016.

Rehmann found no material weaknesses in LMC's grants and financial statements, which showed "another strong financial operating performance for the college — with assets of \$90 million, liabilities of \$42.8 million, and a net position of \$45 million," the report stated.