

# LMC Board puts M-TEC up for sale

## Program will be folded into Napier campus

By **RALPH HEIBUTZKI**  
HP Correspondent

**BENTON TOWNSHIP** — Organizations' needs change all the time, which is why Lake Michigan College is ready to sell the M-TEC building and place its manufacturing technology program on its Napier Avenue campus, officials said.

LMC's Board of Trustees on Tuesday authorized President Bob Harrison to start negotiating the building's sale — and the release of its lien from the U.S. Economic Development Administration.

"What we've been doing in the building has been great," Harrison said after

Tuesday's special meeting. "The problem is ... to help manufacturers meet their hiring and work force needs, we need to attract more students into those programs. We'll have a better chance of doing that if we move the building to where the students are."

The other driving factor, as board members noted, is the original circumstances behind M-TEC's construction — and location by the Harbor Shores Golf Course — have markedly changed.

The original concept called for small manufacturers to locate around the center — which would have complemented its operations, Vice Chairman Paul Bergan said.

"There were going to be manufacturing sites all the way around — but, because

See **M-TEC**, page A7

# M-TEC

From page A1

of the brownfield (issue), they couldn't build, so the golf course was the only option," Bergan said. "The community thinks, 'they didn't make it work' – that's not the case."

Trustee Judy Truesdell said the center followed the same blueprint, which LMC pursued with its Bertrand Crossing campus in Niles. Bertrand Crossing is also in an industrial area.

"Clearly, no one had a crystal ball 14 years ago," she said.

Harrison said the center's isolation proved another key factor in the college's decision.

"It's not an issue with the building. It's not an issue with the programs – those have been very successful. It's really the geographic location," he said.

The college had been discussing the matter since last May with the EDA, which is a sub-agency of the U.S. Department of Commerce. The EDA awarded a \$579,520 grant in 1999 to help offset the center's construction costs, Harrison said.

"They finally told us, after a lengthy waiting peri-

od, what the process is. We're just making sure that we're clear about our next steps, depending on what happens," he said.

The EDA wanted the resolution from LMC.

If a sale takes place, board approval would still be required for site and design work of a proposed new manufacturing and technology center.

Harrison said it's too early to tell how appealing the center might seem to a potential buyer.

He said he expects to provide a more comprehensive update for the board by next month's meeting.

"It's hard to predict who might be interested, or who might not – you just never know," he said.

The board authorized an application to the Michigan Economic Development Corp. for funding through the Community College Skilled Trade Equipment Program.

Harrison said he expects the college to apply for \$1.5 million to \$2 million through the program.

"It would expand our capabilities for some of the new programs, like more CNC (machining). It's all within our strategic plan for manufacturing," he said.



Don Campbell / HP staff

**Bill VanHusan of Dowagiac demonstrates TIG welding in 2012 at Lake Michigan College's M-TEC building in Benton Harbor. LMC trustees Tuesday agreed to sell the building and move M-TEC to the main campus.**

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