

# More money, fewer students

LMC board gets report on numbers, retains tax level

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BENTON TOWNSHIP — To keep up with its cost of doing business, Lake Michigan College will again levy its full operating millage this year.

LMC Board members authorized the college Tuesday to levy the full 2.0 mills, from which it expects to generate about \$16 million in property tax revenue for the current fiscal year, which ends June 30.

The money accounts for just over half the \$33.7 million in total estimated revenue LMC expects to collect this year, according to figures prepared by the college.

However, due to Headlee Amendment-mandated rollbacks, that figure will likely shrink to 1.7584 mills by the time LMC adopts a new budget this spring, said Kelli Hahn, vice president of financial services.

"That's what we collect. We levy it every year, and then, they roll it back. It's just procedural," Hahn said.

State law requires institutions like LMC to estimate by the third Monday in April how much tax money they'll need — and outline their other estimated sources of revenue — for the 2016-17 fiscal year.

LMC expects to collect \$10.9 million through tuition and fees, followed by state appropriations (\$5.4 million), other funding sources (\$1.3 million), and non-credit tuition and fees (\$141,000), its figures show.

Enrollment is currently between 3,200 and 3,300 students — though the figure isn't final, "because a lot of high school students haven't registered yet" in dual enrollment programs, LMC President Jennifer Spielvogel said.

Overall, enrollment is off by about 2 percent last year. That figure is lower the enrollment declines other community colleges are experiencing, Spielvogel said.

"It's where we expected to be," she said.

Most other major budget indicators are running ahead of last year, said Hahn, who briefly updated the board on how those numbers are looking. All figures are through Dec. 31, 2015.

Current property tax collections are running at \$12.5 million, or \$123,000 over budget, and \$571,000 above last year, Hahn said. One key factor was the state's reimbursement of Renaissance Zone funding, which accounted for about \$45,000 of the total gain, she said.

Tuition and fees are running at \$5.3 million, which is \$106,000 under budget, and \$51,000 below this time last year, according to Hahn's report.

That figure reflects a 2.4 percent decline in overall billing hours for the fall 2015 term — though it's somewhat offset by a 7 percent gain in middle college and direct credit hours, she said.

Non-credit tuition stands at

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\$125,000, or \$75,000 over budget, and \$80,000 over last year, Hahn said.

Most of that money is generated through work force training and development programs, "with community education making up the difference," Hahn's report stated. Much of the boost in non-credit tuition comes from increased business and manufacturing offerings, plus "increased local employer demand for customized training in such areas as industrial

technology skills," Hahn stated in her report.

Another bright spot for the college is its auxiliary operations category, which includes its conference and event services, Mendel Mainstage, and its Beckwith Hall student housing complex.

Beckwith Hall's occupancy is now running at 163 students, or about 80 percent of capacity, which occurred due to "greater than expected" fall occupancy, Hahn said.

Miscellaneous fees and revenues are also running over budget, "primarily due to strong ticket sales at student productions," she said.