

LMC purchases under fire

College says that trustees acted within institutional policies

By **TONY WITTKOWSKI**
HP Staff Writer

BENTON TOWNSHIP — Former Lake Michigan College president Jennifer Spielvogel's lawyer says the community college violated its ethics policy by paying more than \$212,000 over the past five years to a trustee's business.

Brad Glazier, Spielvogel's lawyer, said documents showing then-Board Chairwoman Mary Jo Tomasini's design company was being paid by the college for merchandising services came to light through his work on a lawsuit between LMC and its former president.



SPIELVOGEL



TOMASINI

According to a document outlining the purchases between LMC and Competitive Edge, the \$212,000 in charges included merchandise such as jewelry, pens, golf towels, wine and beer glasses, shirts and jackets. Competitive Edge is a promotional products supplier based in Stevensville.

The document includes the dates in which these items were ordered, which ran from Jan. 6, 2011 to Aug. 17, 2016. While Tomasini remains a trustee, she served as board chairman for part of the five-year period.

"I would like to see the board comply with their own policies. It's important for a public institution to be transparent, and I don't think they are being transparent with the purchase of these products," Glazier said in a phone interview Friday. "It's troubling to us because the policy states trustees can't do business with the college, unless it is made public and is approved by the board."

Glazier said he asked several trustees during a deposition for Spielvogel's lawsuit against the college —

including Tomasini, Chairman Michael Lindley and trustees Paul Bergan and Debra Johnson — and was told they had not voted on the purchases at a board meeting, and they were not made public.

However, LMC released a statement saying trustees have acted within the institution's policies and procedures as they are not involved in "day-to-day purchasing decisions at the college."

The statement said the role of each trustee is to approve the annual bud-

get and not individual line items — such as promotional material.

"Ms. Tomasini has never misused her role at the college as an unpaid volunteer trustee," the statement read. "In fact, she does not direct or participate in any transactions between Lake Michigan College and Competitive Edge. As a college alumni, she and her firm have made almost \$130,000 in donated personal and professional contributions. In addition,

See **LMC**, page A8