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Utica Community Schools issues layoffs to 35 teachers

Student enrollment continues to decline

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The Utica Community Schools Board of Education on June 27 unanimously approved the laying off of 35 full-time teachers in response to declining enrollment throughout the state's second-largest school district.

"This is a necessary step in getting our expenditures and revenue in line, but it is something that we don't take lightly," said Carol Klenow, Board of Education president.

According to UCS Spokesman Tim McAvooy, the district has experienced significant enrollment declines as a result of falling birth rates in Macomb County and the state of Michigan.

"Total enrollment for 2016-2017 is projected to be 27,683, a decline of 440 students," McAvooy said. "The district is expected to experience a reduction of nearly 1,132 additional students over the following four years."

According to district officials, this will result in an annual funding loss of \$12 million.

With that in mind, the Board of Education agreed to implement several adjustments when it unanimously adopted the 2016-2017 general fund

budget totaling \$277.6 million on June 13.

"The adopted 2016-2017 budget, which meets all contractual and state legal obligations, while maintaining the district's core academic and extracurricular programs, was balanced through budget reductions, cost containment, revenue enhancements and the use of fund equity - or reserves," McAvooy said.

Some of the approved adjustments in the budget include: the elimination of three ad-

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*UCS Spokesman
Tim McAvooy*

ministrative positions, energy cost reductions, reduction of high school campus monitors through establishment of secured entranceways, reduction of a clerical position, technology reductions, an audit of employee dependent health care, enrollment-based staffing adjustment, reassignment of English Learner teachers, operational efficiencies, reduction of digital learning platform, the transfer of Community Education funds to the operating budget (\$600,000), and increased rates for school age child care, athletics and facility usage.

"(The board's) action (on June 27) was necessary to implement the enrollment-based staffing adjustments approved by the Board of Education when it unanimously adopted its budget on June 13," McAvooy said.

The new budget takes effect on July 1.