

# Town Hall Meeting...from Page 1A

board of directors.

Secondly, the membership will be deciding whether or not voting for director candidates should be limited to each candidate's home county.

This second amendment was proposed on the floor of the 2017 annual meeting, and it would prohibit a member in Union County from voting on a candidate running in Towns

County, for example.

The membership will also be responsible for electing three EMC board members this year, one each in Union, Towns and Fannin counties.

Board member candidate forms were due back to the EMC's Nominating Committee by June 25, and the committee met on June 26 to make their final nominations.

Petition nominations were due by July 16, and the Credentials and Elections Committee is scheduled to meet on July 24, after which time the slate of all director candidates will be finalized.

Election packets will be mailed to members this year, each containing a ballot and election notice, and elections are expected to open the week

of Aug. 6 ahead of the big Sept. 8 annual meeting.

Also in the July 12 board meeting, the EMC heard from Austin Jett of Russ Blakely & Associates, an employee benefits advisor.

He advised the board that the EMC has been able to save \$160,000 year-to-date by switching from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association to Cigna for health insurance and related benefits.

During the Member Comments portion of the meeting, Charlotte Harper of Hayesville, North Carolina, spoke about some trouble she'd experienced recently with the EMC.

Harper, 75, had her power cut for two days at the end of June because she'd failed to get her husband Robert's death certificate in to the EMC following a 90-day notice to change the name on the account.

The ordeal resulted in Harper going nearly 48 hours without power and her daughter calling in a wellness check through the Clay County Sheriff's Office when she proved unreachable.

Ultimately, EMC employee Jon Cook went out to her house at 6 a.m. on Saturday, June 30, to help her fill out the proper paperwork, after which he reconnected her power.

EMC General Manager Jeremy Nelms announced in the July 12 board meeting that the EMC had altered its process for handling similar situations in light of Harper's experience.

Moving forward, as long as accounts remain paid, the EMC will no longer cut power after a period of waiting to receive a death certificate.

Nelms also announced that Cass Larson, Vice President of Pricing and Contracts with the Tennessee Valley Authority, will appear in the Aug. 14 regular meeting of the BRMEMC Board of Directors.

Larson will make a presentation on the upcoming changes to the TVA wholesale rate and conduct a Q&A session

with the board and staff.

Furthermore, the EMC is working to secure TVA CEO Bill Johnson's attendance at this year's EMC annual meeting in Union County.

TVA is facing criticism in the valley after proposing to raise its wholesale power rate for the sixth time since 2013, which will mean higher annual electric bills of about \$27 in passthrough charges for the average EMC power customer come Oct. 1.

The decision to increase the rate will be made in TVA's August board meeting.

And while the TVA has experienced stellar revenues over the past several years, it says the increases have helped to pay down debt and keep up with the costs of doing business.

"As you look at the long range financial plan, the one element of that plan that we have not yet achieved is getting to the point where we can pay down debt while continuing to invest in the system," said Jim Hopson, a spokesperson for TVA. "So, we're at a point where we have been doing very well financially, but all of that extra funding has been invested back into the system."

TVA's initial long range financial plan from 2013 called for annual increases through 2023, but Hopson said that the plan is always subject to change depending on financial determinations made by the board.

According to Hopson, the TVA is not trying to raise rates to the point where all debt is paid, but to get on "a trajectory to where the debt is going down, which means that the cost of servicing that debt goes down."

"And that's what leads us to the point of having stable, low rates for a longer period of time," said Hopson. "That's one of the things that the board is going to be looking very closely at as they make any decisions in the August board meeting."

The proposed rate increase comes at a time when



Mickey Cummings

TVA is working to get a better grip on fixed costs associated with delivering power by lowering wholesale energy rates 0.5 cents per kWh and establishing a corresponding revenue neutral grid access charge.

In response to TVA's rate plans, Board President Cummings asked his fellow board members in their July 12 meeting for support in drafting a letter to TVA regarding the proposed rate increase and rate change.

The letter will list the board's concerns and ask for follow-up from TVA in addressing those concerns.

Additionally, Nelms and several other local power company managers hosted a dinner for TVA Board Member A.D. Frazier of Mineral Bluff on Tuesday, July 17, to discuss their continued concerns with the overall financial direction of TVA, including the upcoming TVA rate increase planned for the fall.

In other EMC news, operation and maintenance costs are up year-to-date due to expenses incurred from several major weather events in the last year, including the series of thunderstorms in June that resulted in 24 broken power poles, 347 device outages and 32,360 affected meters.

The October board meeting has been moved from its special meeting date of Oct. 23 back to its original date of Oct. 9.



The Union County 4-H BB Team

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the community who sponsored and helped to make the trip possible by contributing to the 4-H BB team.

Another special thank you goes out to BB Team Coaches Mike Bottinelli and Chris McGee. Students between fourth

and eighth grades who are interested in joining the 4-H BB Team should contact the Union County 4-H Office at 706-439-6030.

## Free GED AM and PM Classes in Union County

Summer classes have begun at Union County Adult Ed. If you have been putting off getting your GED, now is a great time to make that happen! We offer daytime and evening classes Monday through Thursday. We also offer GED practice tests, prep classes, and ACCUPLACER remedial help. Work Source GA can assist with GED test-

ing and childcare costs, and a transportation stipend for eligible students.

Plan now to positively impact your future. Contact Paula Ary, Instructor, at 706-439-6321 or via email at: pary@northgatech.edu to make an appointment. We are located beside the Union County Public Library at the Shirley Miller Building, 38

Blalock Street, Blairsville, GA.

## Union/Towns Tea Party meeting

The Union/Towns County Tea Party now meets the 4th Tuesday of each month, 6:30 PM at the Community Center.