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issue in the next couple of months.

Speaking on transparency, Phillips noted that he has submitted minutes to the last couple of board meetings for publication in the *North Georgia News* and *Towns County Herald* "because we did bring to a motion to open the board up to the public and the members and the employees, and of course, they voted us down on that. I don't see a problem, and most of the boards that I've ever been to are open. And I think it'll come in time, I really do. I think it'll come in time."

In response to a question about the next election cycle, Logan told those in attendance that it will be at the annual meeting in September.

"I think the way that it works, there's nine board members, there's three that go up for election every year," said Logan. "So, you're stuck with us three for three years."

Sam Fullerton, co-founder of the Mountain Movers and Shakers, likened the new board to Republicans and Democrats trying to work together in a clearly partisan arena, and asked how these new board members would resolve that issue.

"If they come up with something that we think is good, hey, we're supporting it," said Jenkins.

Jenkins' new colleagues echoed this sentiment.

"I don't want to trash the board that's there now, I really don't," said Phillips. "We're trying to work with them, and we have been. We've been working with them."

And Phillips fielded a question about the current petition that is circulating to remove the other six board members and Matthew Akins' leadership.

"I think everybody in the room, if you don't know by now, you're a hermit,"

said Phillips. "I've been accused of being behind it, but I'm not. I know about it, and I'm not signing the petition because I'm on the board. But yes, there is a petition going around, there absolutely is."

There was some concern at the meeting over the customer service charge attached to each bill - what exactly did it represent?

"I know it makes me wonder, well, when you hear customer service, you're thinking of, or I'm sitting here thinking, okay, I'm paying \$18 for somebody to sit in this office and answer questions or - that's really not what it is," said Logan. "The way it's been explained to me, that's the actual cost of every line out there, of all the infrastructure, and even the building. That's the cost of the whole thing."

Logan also talked about the reason why members do not receive capital credit, un-

like other EMCs.

"You can go into all of this very elaborate answer, but there's an answer," said Logan. "We buy power from TVA and TVA alone. We buy power from nowhere else, and we do not generate power. And a lot of these other EMCs, they may even have a generating facility, where they actually generate their own power themselves."

"The TVA, in our contract, the EMC's contract with TVA, it says - everybody's familiar with the TVA in here? They're actually government owned. They say that you cannot give back capital credits if you buy power from TVA."

So, what if there is "leftover money," as Logan puts it?

"You can either put it back into the infrastructure, pay down long-term debt or get your tier rating, the rating that the REA and other people go by to lower your rates,"

said Logan. "You've got three options to do that: infrastructure, lower rates or pay down long-term debt."

And the amount of debt currently held by the BRMEMC surprised Logan once he had gotten a look at the numbers.

"It is a tremendous debt load," said Logan. "And for us three members to get up here and make any changes, we've got our hands tied right now with all of this debt. So, what I would like to do is start focusing to get some good strong leadership in there, and start focusing on bringing down the operating costs."

"And then, at the end of the year, if there is any profit or - you can't really call it profit because we're a nonprofit, but if there's any leftover money, for lack of a better word, we've got to get that long-term debt down, get our tier rating down."

Before the meeting was

adjourned, the new board members wanted to make sure that everyone knew who to blame for the BRMEMC's situation in recent years: upper management and the board of directors.

"I have one thing I'd like to say before we get out of here, and this is something that's really a problem we're having," said Phillips. "You've got the employees at the EMC over there. These guys and girls work hard every day, and they've got a job, that's what they do. They go over there in the morning, they clock in, they do their job and they go home."

"They're not the ones that y'all need to be jumping on. A lot of them take a lot of heat, and a lot of it's because they've got their EMC logo on their shirt. These are good people, and all they want to do is make a living, feed their families."

We Are Atill Here Memorial Kickoff set for Jan. 19

The children giggle as their breath hangs in front of their faces and mothers repositions blankets around the youngest as the embers glow and the light from the fire grows dim.

As the children settle around the feet of the elder he begins as he has for generations, the same as the elders before him did for thousands of years... "this is what the old man told us when I was just a boy."

The children listen intently as the elder tells, "How the deer got its antlers," "Why the opossum's tail is bare."

"How fire came to be" and "How the People learned to make medicine."

Countless other native fables were told by elders in an effort to not only to entertain, but also to educate the youngest generations on how to handle themselves.

Some would have us believe that these same stories are no longer passed on, but remain as interesting tales found



Haley Grizzle, of Suches, and Kathie Garrett of Blairsville, are the faces of "We're Are Still Here."

in children's books sold in Native American tourist shops.

Others tell school age children that the descendants of the Muscogee Creek and Cherokee peoples who once inhabited our mountains and our community no longer live here.

That the tribal members have been relocated to live in tribal communities on "reservations" in Oklahoma and North Carolina.

If the truth be told there ARE members of our community who embody the spirit of

their ancestors and still maintain their ties with their ancestral homelands, they are still here.

Haley Grizzle, a sophomore at the Woody Gap School in Suches and a member of the Eastern Band of Cherokee In-

dians located in North Carolina, and Kathie Garrett, an office manager for Amedisys, and member of the Muscogee Creek Nation of Oklahoma both call Blairsville, Georgia home.

The two of them have graciously signed on to become the face of the project "We Are Still Here" Memorial.

Ancestral differences aside, no animosity remains as the two have struck a fast friendship that has allowed them to forget their age old differences and finds them in unison in promoting the memorial and focusing on the message that "We Are Still Here."

The memorial, to be placed in Meeks Park in the fall of 2015, will be a bronze statue of a Native American stick ball player.

Stick ball is an ancient game that was played by both the Muscogee and Cherokee people and is still played today in tribal communities.

The memorial is an effort to bring attention to Blairsville

in a positive light by inviting the United Keetowah Band of Cherokee Indians, the Cherokee Nation, the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians and the Muscogee Creek Nation back to Blairsville for the unveiling, all the while promoting the Blairsville community to the world.

A town hall meeting will be held at the Haralson Civic Center at 6 p.m. on Jan. 19 to kick off the fund raising efforts for the project and to enlist the help of the community in the promotion of the project and is open to all interested.

Kathie Garrett and Haley Grizzle will be on hand to answer questions as will the executive committee of the project.

The "We Are Still Here" promotional video will be debuted to the public for the first time at this event.

Further updates for the memorial project will be broadcast via the Facebook page, *Blood Mountain We Are Still Here*.

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