

# EMC...from Page 1A

itly," Taylor's debt.

Also, Minor's report reveals that Taylor's commercial account was placed on a received a loan through BRMEMC to pay for a capacitor bank, designed by the Tennessee Valley Authority to reduce power factor surcharges occurring on the Quarry account.

The loan was for \$25,000 to be paid over 11 consecutive months. The equipment was designed to reduce the Quarry's power factor penalties, which are imposed by TVA on customers who show significant spikes in demand.

In July 2009, Minor reports Taylor's commercial account began to miss payments for electric service and chronically missed payments until July 2011.

During the same time frame, Minor reports that Taylor also routinely failed to make payments on his residential account.

Former BRMEMC General Manager Joe Satterfield said that he requested the Quarry be taken off the cut-off list in mid-2008 to make sure the capacitor bank was working properly following

a complaint from Taylor that his power usage was not being reduced.

"That's not the first time we've done this with commercial accounts and it won't be the last," Satterfield told the newspapers.

Satterfield added that he was unaware that Taylor's residential account was delinquent.

Minor reports that while Taylor made a few large payments during Satterfield's tenure, none were sufficient to bring the account current until July 20, 2011.

That's when Taylor made a payment of \$52,652.90.

Satterfield retired in December 2009, at which time it was his belief that Taylor's debt was settled.

Minor reports that the debt continued to build until it was paid off in July 2011.

Minor reports the debt was at \$20,000 at the time of Satterfield's retirement.

Satterfield said that's possible, but it was for the remainder of the loan for the capacitor bank that was still on the books, not past due electric bills.

Minor reports that he believes the most significant

contributing factor to the Taylor debt "is the conduct of the previous general manager."

"His decision to personally direct that the Quarry be removed from the cut-off list and to allow Mr. Taylor to accumulate such a large debt, created a de-facto policy waiver that all employees appear to have respected (up until the disclosure of the debt by Chris Kelley)," Minor wrote to the board.

"When Mr. Satterfield retired at the end of 2009 (at which time the Quarry owed over \$19,000, and no payments had been made on Mr. Taylor's residential account since Sept. 1, it appears that everyone (employees) assumed the practice of permitting Mr. Taylor's accounts to accrue debt without terminating service would continue.

"Indeed, the continuation of this practice appears to have been automatic - as Mr. Akins does not appear to have pro-actively directed the employees to remove Mr. Taylor or the Quarry from the cut-off list," Minor reports.

However, Minor defends Akins' actions citing that he was new to the position, the debt was established under his long-serving predecessor, and were well ingrained in employee operations.

Satterfield responded, calling Minor's opinion just that, "an opinion."

"Mr. Minor has quite a few opinions," Satterfield said. "Opinions are not facts."

On the EMC website, the Board of Directors claim to have no previous knowl-

edge of the events involving their former president prior to April 2014.

They apologize to the membership and to anyone adversely effected by these events involving Taylor.

"It is our goal to put policies and procedures in place to prevent intentional or unintentional violations of the trust of the membership of BRMEMC," the Board of Directors writes on the EMC website.

The Board announces actions taken regarding the incident include acceptance of Taylor's resignation from the board, reaching a judgment and forbearance agreement with Taylor and Taylor.

The Board also reprimanded its General Manager Matthew Akins, and now requires a monthly review of a list of aged accounts receivable for accounts with a past due balance in excess of \$1,000.

Actions being considered by the Board of Directors include additional board training, especially in fiduciary matters, a review of Board of Directors' term limits (Taylor had served as president since 1997), begin a culture that permits direct communication to the Board concerning noncompliance of BRMEMC policies. The list also includes organizational chart review of all employees, establish a new policy to require Board approval of any contracts between BRMEMC and directors, establish a position of Chief Financial Officer and begin the process of looking

for a candidate, revise the auditor's engagement letter, revise the Whistleblower Policy, revise the Conflict of Interest Policy, and revise its policy No. 236 to allow the auditor to report directly to the Board of Directors, and encourage disclosure from employees to the auditor.

The utility company has more than 43,000 customers with more than 49,000 electric meters serving a five-county area that includes Union, Towns, and Fannin counties in Georgia and Clay and Cherokee counties in North Carolina.

The EMC will hold its annual meeting Sept. 13 at Anderson Music Hall in Hiawassee.

Among the items to address, the election of three members to the EMC Board of Directors.

Online voting is available at [www.brmemc.com](http://www.brmemc.com) until Sept. 10 at 4 p.m. Login information (identification number and verification code) is provided on the front side of each member's bill.

There are three members nominated by the Cooperative's Board of Directors. Brian Trout of Clay County, NC, Julie Payne of Towns County, and Lenny Parks of Suches are seeking reelection to the Board of Directors.

There are four persons nominated by petition of the Membership. They are Chris Logan of Brasstown, NC, Steven Phillips, of Towns County, Charles Jenkins of Blairsville, and Mike Patton of Blairsville.

Members from the five-county service area can vote for all three Board member seats.

Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Board of Directors appointed Trout as a Clay County, NC director in April 2014. He fills the unexpired term of the late Elois Anderson.

His opponent, Logan, currently is on the Board of Directors for the North Carolina Forestry Association, serving as Western Vice President of the North Carolina Forestry Association.

Payne was appointed by the EMC Board of Directors to fill the unexpired Towns County term of former Board of Directors' President Terry Taylor. Payne is a closing assistant for a local attorney's office.

Her opponent, Phillips, is the owner of Benny's Sanitation in Hiawassee, and also serves as a local radio personality in the Towns County area. He has served on the Board of Directors of Towns County FFA Alumni Board, and Towns County Food Pantry.

Parks has been an appointed Union County director for the past 11 years, and has been elected by his peers on the EMC Board of Directors to serve as Vice-President for the past five years.

His opponents include former State House District 8 State Rep. Charles Jenkins, of Blairsville, and Mike Patton, also of Blairsville, the owner of Patton Excavating, who has served on the Board of Directors for the Union County Board of Health, and Coosa Water Authority.

## Mountain Heritage Festival this weekend

Enjoy Labor Day weekend at the 13th annual Mountain Heritage Festival. Mountain arts & crafts, music, food, and traditions of the north Georgia mountains are in store for Saturday - Sunday of Labor Day weekend in Blairsville, GA.

Hosted by the Union County Historical Society and sponsored by United Community Bank and Jackson Insurance, the Mountain Heritage Festival celebrates the cultural heritage of the north Georgia mountains.

The festival features locally produced handcrafts, traditional foods, music, craft demon-

strations, a tractor parade, "old ways," and live animals. Demonstrations like quilting, spinning, basket making, chair caning as well as hands-on activities make this a trip for all to enjoy.

The event is August 30-31, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. at the Mountain Life Museum, one block south of the Old Courthouse on Hwy. 129 in Blairsville. The activities will be centered round the restored 1861 Payne family log cabin, the Mauney family barn, the Duncan family cabin, and other structures from Union County's past.

Free and open to the public, the Mountain Heri-

itage Festival is a unique event promising wholesome family fun and teachable moments for all ages. Call the Union County Historical Society at 706-745-5493 for additional

information. View our web site at [www.unioncountyhistorical.org](http://www.unioncountyhistorical.org). More information and pictures are available at <http://unioncountyhistoricalsociety.blogspot.com/>.

