

Rate Hike...from Page 1A

increases are, in part, meant to cover maintenance costs.

In recent years, however, such maintenance costs have shifted away from the industrial sector and increasingly onto residential customers, according to a January 2018 report by Synapse Energy Economics Inc., a research and consulting firm specializing in energy, economic and environmental topics.

On top of this increased burden on residential customers, TVA has also faced criticism over its rate practices following several years of strong revenue collections.

“Despite lower net power sales from extreme weather, reduced operating costs helped the Tennessee Valley Authority achieve its highest ever net income of \$1.2 billion for fiscal year ended Sept. 30, 2016, up \$122 million from 2015,” according to TVA.gov.

And last year, TVA announced that it was able to contribute \$800 million to its retirement system, all the while reporting a net income of \$685 million for the fiscal year ending Sept. 30, 2017.

Furthermore, the TVA rate schedule has drawn the ire of critics who point out that TVA President and CEO Bill Johnson is the highest paid federal employee in the country, making several times more than

even President Donald Trump.

In November 2017, the TVA Board of Directors raised Johnson’s base salary to over \$1 million a year, and including retirement and other benefits, Johnson will reportedly make more than \$6 million a year in total compensation moving forward.

Johnson’s pay is on par with average U.S. utility company CEOs, with the difference that TVA is a federally-owned agency of the USA.

At the 2018 annual conference of the Tennessee Valley Public Power Association Inc. in May, Nelms and other local power company representatives participated in a vote to recommend that the TVA decline to implement its upcoming rate hike.

That motion failed by a slim margin of 51.5 percent to 48.5 percent. And though it would not have been binding had it passed, it would have sent a clear message to TVA that a majority of local power companies were willing to stand up and fight for their customers.

The impending rate hike comes at a time when 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

revenue neutral grid access charge.

And there are other potentially troubled waters ahead for EMC customers, as the Trump Administration has pitched the selling of TVA assets at least twice this year, once in February and again last week.

Divestiture of TVA transmission lines would mean an investment of billions of dollars by new private owners, which would likely translate to increased power rates to recover that investment.

Earlier this year, TVA President Johnson responded to the Trump Administration’s proposal to sell TVA assets as outlined in President Trump’s 2019 budget.

“TVA was created by an Act of Congress in 1933, and Congress has always had the power to change the role or structure of TVA,” said Johnson. “Implementing the stated proposal in the President’s 2019 budget of selling TVA’s transmission assets would require Congress to act legislatively.

“In accordance with existing legislation, TVA will continue to pursue its mission of improving the quality of life for people in the region through our work in energy, the environment and economic development.”

TVA’s transmission assets include more than 16,000 miles of line “paid for by the power customers of the Tennessee Valley over the past 85 years,” according to Johnson and TVA’s

statement from Feb. 12.

“The TVA does not receive any funds from the federal government, but rather is completely self-funded from its power revenues and the public debt markets, and TVA’s obligations are not guaranteed by the federal government,” the statement continued.

Former President Barack Obama made a similar proposal to divest TVA assets in 2013, and President Ronald Reagan also expressed interest in privatizing TVA.

Talk among local power companies in the Tennessee Valley is that the rate hikes may be aimed at aggressively paying down TVA debts in order to put the company in a better position to divest.

U.S.Sens. Bob Corker and Lamar Alexander of Tennessee, both Republican, are opposed to proposals to sell TVA.

In other BRMEMC news, the board approved the co-op’s \$88 million FY19 budget in the June 21 meeting. The new budget will cover EMC operations between July 1, 2018, and June 30, 2019.

The board also voted to waive a 50-signature petition requirement by the membership to propose a bylaw change. This will ensure that the motion made from the floor in last year’s annual meeting will make it to the ballot ahead of the 2018 annual meeting.

Two proposed bylaw changes will appear on this year’s ballot.

Members will be asked to approve the definition of

“member in good standing” as anyone whose power is not currently suspended; and 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 candidates running in Towns County, for example.

The membership will also be responsible for the election of three EMC board members this year, and all candidate forms needed to be turned in to the EMC’s Nominating Committee by June 25.

At press time, six people had submitted their information for consideration by the Nominating Committee – three from Union, two from Towns and one from Fannin – and members of the Nominating Committee met on June 26 to make their final nominations.

Petition nominations are 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 meeting.

The Union County High School Jazz Band and Chorus will be the entertainment at

Shooter Jennings, Waymore’s Outlaws in concert June 30

By Shawn Jarrard
Towns County Herald
Editor

BLAIRSVILLE – What do Tommy Townsend, Shooter Jennings and new music have in common? They’ll all be present at Granddaddy Mimm’s Moonshine Distillery on Saturday, June 30.

Thanks to Mountain Roots LLC of Hiwassee and Granddaddy Mimm’s, the June 30 “Mountain Roots Revival” extravaganza will feature live music from Shooter, Townsend and the late Waylon Jennings’ own recording and touring band, Waymore’s Outlaws.

Also that evening, Blairsville native Townsend will be celebrating the release of his first solo album in years, called “Turn Back the Clock,” which promises two original songs, a few choice selections, and the Waylon Jennings classic, “Belle of the Ball.”

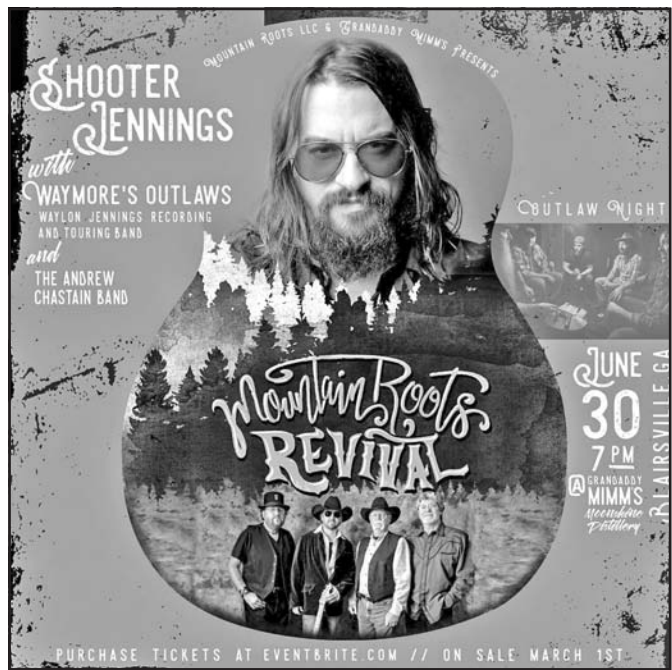
Produced by none other than Shooter Jennings himself, the album will experience wide release on July 6, so folks wanting to get a head start should plan on attending the June 30 album release party here in Blairsville.

As a bonus for those attending the release, Townsend will be selling 100 autographed copies of the album’s CD/vinyl combo from Shooter’s Black Country Rock Media record label.

“Vinyl is coming back,” said Townsend. “Everybody is doing vinyl now, and there’s record stores popping up all over the country that sell vinyl. There’s nothing sounds better than when you just put a record on, the warmth of it.”

Of course, the new album will also be available via digital streaming and download, and the first single, “Renegade Picker,” is already streaming on popular music services like Apple Music and Spotify.

Tickets for the June 30 event cost \$30 and are available at Eventbrite.com or at Granddaddy Mimm’s that day.



Shooter Jennings, Tommy Townsend and Waymore’s Outlaws will all be in concert at Granddaddy Mimm’s in Blairsville



Cover of Tommy Townsend’s new solo album, “Turn Back the Clock.”

The distillery will be open for business from 11 a.m. to 6 p.m., and the full evening of outdoor music kicks into gear with The Andrew Chastain Band at 7 p.m.

Following Chastain, Waymore’s Outlaws will take

the stage for their turn rocking Pappy’s Plaza, and Shooter Jennings will join the Outlaws to close out the evening with wall to wall Outlaw Country.

Guests must be 21 and up to drink, and no outside coolers are allowed.

“We’ll have beer, our mixed moonshine drinks for sale, and we’ll have food out there from Rib Country, so bring your appetites and lawn chairs,” said Townsend. “We really appreciate the community’s support.”

Visitors can follow the signs to parking at Shady Grove United Methodist Church. Parking costs \$5, and a free shuttle will be available to carry folks between the concert and their vehicles. All parking proceeds go to the church.

Granddaddy Mimm’s Moonshine Distillery is a family-owned business operated out of Union County and located at 161 Pappy’s Plaza.

Making moonshine is a family tradition, as Townsend uses the same basic recipes and methods as his grandfather, Jack “Mimm” McClure.

As for Mimm, he got into moonshining during the Great Depression, since there wasn’t a whole lot of work to be had back then in the mountains.

Bootlegging out of Young Harris in the 1930s became a way for Mimm to put food on his family’s table, and that tradition lives on at Granddaddy Mimm’s Moonshine Distillery.