

EMC...from Page 1A

cost adjustments, likely making 2019 the last year for the TVA Board to approve a rate increase as part of its 10-year financial plan.

Fuel costs have come down largely due to a shift in recent years away from coal and toward nuclear and renewables, contributing to relatively flat power rates since 2013.

And after major investments to drive down costs associated with power delivery, TVA now feels comfortable enough with its fuel and transmission capabilities to go ahead and start aggressively paying down debt to set the stage for continued low rates in the future.

"We want TVA to be in the strongest financial health position so we can have lower rates going forward in the long term," said Larson.

BRMEMC General Manager Jeremy Nelms said he was thankful to Larson and his associate, Candyce Hitchcock, for joining the board in the Aug. 14 meeting.

"While the majority of the communication was consistent with what local power companies in the Valley have been hearing over the past several years," said Nelms, "I was encouraged to hear in such a public forum as our open board meeting that TVA does not see the need for the last

three rate increases in its 10-year plan, those last three being 2020, 2021 and 2022."

As previously reported, TVA President and CEO Bill Johnson will be attending the BRMEMC Annual Meeting on Sept. 8 to make prepared remarks.

Unfortunately, Johnson will not be available to answer public comments during the Q&A portion of the meeting.

"However, he has committed to joining the board prior to the annual meeting and discussing the concerns enumerated in our letter with the board and management of the EMC," said Nelms.

The EMC board will meet next in the annual meeting, which will see the election of three director candidates and the potential adoption of two bylaw changes.

Up for election this year are three director seats, one each in Union County, Towns County and Fannin County.

The bylaw amendments include setting the definition of "member in good standing" for the purposes of becoming or remaining an EMC director, and whether or not to establish district voting for director candidates.

If approved, the phrase "member in good standing" will be defined as any member who has not lost his or her right

to receive electric service from the cooperative.

Concerning district voting, currently, EMC board directors are elected at large, where every member in each county can vote for the directors in every other county.

The board makeup is based on county population and includes nine total directors: three directors from Union County; two directors each from Towns County and Clay County, North Carolina; and one director each from Fannin County and Cherokee County, North Carolina.

Should members vote to approve district voting, starting next year, they will only be able to vote for candidates running in their home county.

Election packets complete with election notices, paper ballots and voting instructions were mailed to members the week of Aug. 6, and mail-in ballots must be received back by Sept. 6.

Online voting opened the week of Aug. 6 via DirectVote.net/BRMEMC, and online voting will close on Sept. 6 ahead of the annual meeting.

Members will also be able to vote in person at the annual meeting, which will be held at the Union County Schools Fine Arts Center on Saturday, Sept. 8, beginning at 8 a.m.

Van Horn...from Page 1A

Annex located at School Street. As a result, sound inside the main practice room has risen to unsafe levels, requiring band members to wear protective earplugs when they play.

Money has been donated for the erection of a new building, and the college needs the city to issue a building permit before construction can begin.

The new building will be located in the grassy area behind the Annex at School Street and Sycamore Street.

Gray explained that the college is hoping for a 2019 spring semester opening of the building, adding that the new practice area will be soundproof and face away from residences.

Deb Edwards of the Young Harris Planning Commission also attended the August council meeting, and she discussed the current state of the permitting process.

Edwards said the college had complied with all permit requirements and planning commission recommendations with the exception of providing a drainage plan for review by the city engineer.

Mayor Gibby informed the council that the city had been working with the college on the drainage issues, and that they expected a finalized plan to be forthcoming.

The planning commission recommended that the building permit be approved after the drainage plan is provided to the city, and the council tabled the permit until the Sept. 4 regular meeting.

"I appreciate the work of what you do," said Van Horn. "Having been in a number of small towns, at Brevard (College) and other places, I



Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby on Aug. 7.

Photo by Shawn Jarrard

realize the difficulty of your role. We're here to be a support to the city and to the county, and we want you to keep that in mind.

"Anything we can do to be an asset to what we're doing community wise, let us know. We do want to follow all the rules and regulations, and we want to be a good partner and a good community builder as well moving forward."

Also in the meeting, the council decided to impose a 91-day moratorium on land disturbance permits, building permits and special-use permits, with an exception for single-family detached housing permits, effective Aug. 7, 2018.

In the meantime, the planning commission will be working to clean up the city zoning ordinance to get a better handle on drainage issues associated with construction.

The council has retained the ability to rescind the moratorium should they choose,

and the tabled permit for the new YHC band building will not be affected by the moratorium since the application was made prior to the moratorium going into effect.

In other business, the council discussed accepting the rollback millage rate of 2.890, which is 0.075 mills lower than last year's rate.

The rate is being lowered due to the addition of a few properties that increased the tax digest, and the amount of taxes to be levied under the new millage rate - \$28,710 - is \$898 less than total taxes levied in 2017.

This new rate will be finalized in the Sept. 4 regular meeting at 7 p.m. inside Young Harris City Hall.

The council has experienced a number of quorum-related issues in the last month or so, due in large part to the vacant sixth council seat and requirement of four councilmembers to make a quorum.

Going forward, the council will consider getting rid of the sixth seat and decreasing the number needed to make a quorum, which would require state legislative action to change the charter.

Recently, however, several interested parties have expressed interest in being appointed to the vacant seat, and the council and mayor are considering how best to proceed with potential nominations.

On Sept. 4, just prior to the 7 p.m. regular city meeting, the council will hold two public hearings inside city hall.

The first public hearing, concerning the Young Harris Apartment water/sewer rate structure, will occur at 6:45 p.m., and the second, concerning changes to the city sign ordinance, will occur at 6:50 p.m.

School...from Page 1A

Tuesday evening.

And everyone showed an interest in seeing, among other things, the results of the renovations that were completed over the summer break.

High School Principal Dr. Connie Hobbs said the focus at the very beginning of the school year is making sure all students get into their correct classes.

Beyond that, the focus is on student success.

"We want to continue with our academic achievement, increase our scores and increase our graduation rate each year," she said, adding that the high school became a Title I school last year.

The bar has been set pretty high, said Dr. Hobbs, as the 2017-2018 school year saw an increase in scores and the graduation rate, and both the football and soccer teams went to the playoffs for the first time.

And over at the middle school, Principle Erica Chastain said that her goal in the upcoming year "is to continue focusing on student achievement and becoming the best middle school we can become."

Chastain said there are no new faculty this year, and that they can't wait to continue working with the established clubs and organizations.

"We're looking forward to growing the junior Future Business Leaders of America club," said Chastain.

Elementary School Principal Dr. Sandy Page said her focus this upcoming school year is on technology for students, teachers and parents, as well as safety.

The schools will be utilizing a new systemwide, dedicated social media platform called Living Tree, where teachers can communicate with students, parents and other teachers.

Faculty wise, teachers will focus this year on constant professional development and safety, said Page, and they will have access to another new systemwide social media platform called Simple K12, allowing them to network and compare notes.

Teachers will also be able to utilize Google Classroom this coming year, which will enable them to give assignments during bouts of inclement weather. This means elementary students will all have laptop computers, and make-up days will be



Buses arrived on the first of school with plenty of happy children ready to hit the books.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson



This Jeep Grand Cherokee caught fire shortly before lunchtime on the first day back for students on Thursday, Aug. 16. Fortunately, the Towns County Fire Department was able to quickly extinguish the blaze.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

minimized, she said.

With all the social media and internet material available to kids these days, Page said she is adamant that students and teachers interact online.

"I think we're doing our children an injustice if we don't have interaction with them," said Page. "And we have our own school resource officer at the elementary. I'm so glad that

we have our own now."

For her part, new SRO Sally Tanner was elated to be on board at the schools.

"I'm thrilled. It's what I've done for the last 10 years," she said.

Tanner served as an SRO at Union County Schools before going to work for Towns County Sheriff Chris Clinton in 2017.



Towns County School Resource Officers Sally Tanner and Donnie Jarrard during the Aug. 14 Open House at the schools.

Photo by Mark Smith

Nichols...from Page 1A

game a long distance over the mountain.

"The first ways to get into Tate City were through animal trails," said Nichols. "There wasn't much of a road, and very seldom would you be able to get a wagon over that mountain."

Nichols then explained that the popularity of the area became of interest to the foresters because of the abundance of virgin timber on the mountains.

"The citizens of the town didn't need the timber much except to build houses," said Nichols. "The forestry service came down from the northern areas after hearing about the large amounts of forest."

One of the timber

companies run by Mr. Tate named the community.

Apart from the history of the town, Nichols told tales of his grandparents and their lifestyle throughout the developing time period.

Many members of the area could not afford doctors, and the hospitals were too distant for them to rely on, which led residents to turn to remedies passed down by older generations.

One of the remedies Nichols talked about included sassafras that his grandmother used to help heal a wound on his foot.

After his presentation, Nichols took questions from attendees and further explained his past in the small town.

Following the meeting, attendees were encouraged to engage in conversation about the rich history of the area while enjoying snacks.

The host of the meeting, the Towns County Historical Society, aims to preserve the history of the area and keep it memorialized for future generations to appreciate.

The organization hosts meetings such as this one every second Monday of the month at 5:30 p.m., and the society is always accepting new members to help remember the county's history.

For information regarding Towns County history or on how to become a society member, visit TownsCountyHistory.org.

Enchanted Music on the Square

That perennial favorite (now under a new name) Southern Journey Big Band, formerly Sentimental Journey Jazz and Swing Band, will bring back sweet memories of times gone by!

This Saturday, August 25, from 6:30 - 8 p.m. on the Hiawasse Town Square, this 20 piece ensemble, directed by Richard Petty, who hails from the Gainesville, GA area will bring new songs and sounds to our appreciative audience. The band has a new vocalist and a new repertoire.

This is an evening of music you won't want to miss. We are always honored to have them perform on our Town Square!

Bring your lawn chair, and your family and friends and perhaps plan to have your dinner. The VFW Auxiliary will be selling delicious grilled hamburgers, hotdogs and chicken breasts (marinated in soy and ginger!)

If weather threatens to cancel the performance we will move inside to the Civic

Center, behind the Courthouse. Call 706-781-9917 after 5 p.m. to get an update on the rain venue.

These concerts are presented to the people of Towns County and surrounding areas, by a small group of dedicated volunteers. The performances are funded by audience donations and this season, with support from the Georgia Council for the Arts. Come out and join an enchanted evening of Big Band music. See you on the Square! T(Aug22,F3)SH