

EMC...from Page 1A

what's in the best interest for the members."

As is customary, the board met for a quick meeting following adjournment of the annual meeting, during which time the directors selected new board leadership from within their ranks.

Ray Cook of Cherokee County, North Carolina, was chosen to serve as board president, and he is taking over from Mickey Cummings, who officially left the board at the close of the 2018 annual meeting.

Cook served as vice president of the board in the year leading up to the 2018 annual meeting, and he is now in the third and final year of his first full term on the EMC Board.

"The biggest thing is to just try to keep the board acting as one," said Cook. "I thought Mickey did a good job, and I want to try to continue that and keep all nine members acting as one, and going forward, continue to make it a good thing."

In the coming year, Perren will maintain his longstanding role as board secretary; Bert Rogers of Towns County will step into Cook's former role as vice president of the board; and Cory Payne of Clay County, North Carolina, will carry on in his role as board treasurer.

Also in the meeting, the results of the two bylaw amendment proposals were announced: District Voting was defeated with 2,965 "no" votes to 1,797 "yes" votes, and the definition of "member in good standing" was approved with 4,397 "yes" votes to 428 "no" votes.

No district voting means that EMC director candidates will continue to be elected at large by all of the voting membership, and for the purposes of becoming or remaining an EMC director, 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.

Probably the biggest highlight of the 2018 annual meeting, aside from the results of the election, was the guest appearance by Tennessee Valley Authority President and CEO Bill Johnson.

Johnson came to discuss the yearly rate increases TVA has imposed since 2013 as part of its 10-year financial plan to cut energy costs and reduce debt.

The TVA Board passed another 1.5-percent wholesale rate increase in August, which will amount to a 2.4-percent upward adjustment on TVA's



TVA President and CEO Bill Johnson addressed the BRMEMC Membership at the 2018 Annual Meeting.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

portion of wholesale power costs come Oct. 1.

"I got to TVA five and a half years ago, and we were on the brink of catastrophe - something had to be done," said Johnson. "So, we made a simple plan, and here was the plan: we're going to reduce our own spending; we're going to remake our generation fleet so that we make electricity cheaper; we're going to bring our debt down."

"We are allowed under (federal law) to have \$30 billion of debt. We had gotten to \$27.5 billion."

Since the plan was implemented, TVA has been able to shave about \$1.8 billion a year off fuel and O&M costs, meaning they're now ready to tackle their extensive debt service.

"We also said at the beginning of this plan we're going to raise rates 1.5 percent a year as long as rates remain as competitive as they were when we started, competitive meaning compared to others in the region," said Johnson. "So, what's happened?"

"Our local power company rates have gotten more competitive than they were five years ago. Now, I don't kid myself, I know nobody likes rate increases ... but rates have gotten more competitive."

Due to overperformance in revenues and cost-cutting measures thanks to the 10-year plan, TVA leadership signaled recently that it will likely only implement one more rate increase, thereby forgoing the final three years of increases originally outlined in the plan.

During his Manager's Report, BRMEMC General Manager Jeremy Nelms stated that a cybercrime had been committed against the EMC in

July, and that customer banking information had been the target of the attack.

Fortunately, Nelms said security experts investigating the matter believe that no personal information was compromised, and he reassured the membership that the EMC is always working to harden itself against future attacks.

Both Johnson and Nelms emphasized the history of the TVA and Blue Ridge Mountain EMC in their comments, as this year marks the 85th and 80th anniversaries of these organizations respectively.

In closing, Cummings, in his final remarks as an EMC director, offered words of kindness to the membership and the many EMC employees he'd come to know in his time on the board.

"The past three years I've served on this board have been enlightening and educating and a lot of hard work," said Cummings. "But I want you to know how much I appreciate the opportunity to serve you. And at this time, I want to take this opportunity to thank the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC employees for all the hard work that they do."

"I promise you, just being involved in some national meetings that we go to and seeing other employees, there is not another group of employees in the nation that I've seen that are a harder working group than those guys and gals back there in the back of the room that keep your power on. So, let's give them a round of applause."

Entertainment was provided that day by the Union County High School Jazz Band and the Union County High School Chorus Ensemble.

Annual meeting refreshments included water, coffee and Krispy Kreme donuts, and many door prizes were given out after the meeting adjourned.



More than 200 people attended the annual meeting this year, which saw the election of two new directors, the re-election of one, the adoption of one bylaw amendment and the rejection of another.

Photo by Lowell Nicholson

Homecoming...from Page 1A



The 2018 Football Homecoming Court at the Sept. 6 bonfire, where Trent Bradshaw was crowned Homecoming King.

Photo by Jarrett Whitener

while the students prepare for the Homecoming football game on Friday night and the dance on Saturday."

Younger students played tag and other games while enjoying the two bounce houses set up just for them as they awaited the sunset to mark the beginning of the bonfire.

The hundreds of attendees patiently anticipated the introduction of the 2018 TCHS Homecoming Court, and when dusk arrived, the wait was over.

"We wanted to welcome everyone to the 2018 Homecoming football festivities we have," said Football Head Coach John Cornett. "We have a remarkable set of Towns County's finest students for this year's candidates."

These candidates were made up of Towns County senior boys and girls, including:

Trent Bradshaw, escorted by Jenna Coker; Brett Denton, escorted by Tori Van Tassel; Lane Denton, escorted by Kristen Byers; Andrew Griffin, escorted by Erika Spano; Jake

Parker, escorted by Kenzlee Denton; Blaine Rogers, escorted by Taylor Cornett; Lance Sewell, escorted by Emily Williams; Tyler Swanger, escorted by Carly Woodard; Will Travis, escorted by Kaitlyn Crowder; and Walker Winn, escorted by Ella Bury.

Each of these seniors were voted onto the 2018 Football Homecoming Court by their fellow students, because each of them holds traits and values that exemplify the ethics of the school system.

Furthermore, each of these students has his or her own set of plans and goals for the future that the community fully supports them in.

With the anticipation high after the introduction of the court, next, everyone eagerly awaited the results of who would be named 2018 Homecoming King.

And the honor went to... Trent Bradshaw, who is quarterback of the football team.

Bradshaw is the third in his family to receive the honor

of being Homecoming King at Towns County High, behind his two older brothers, Brett in 2010 and Garrett in 2013.

"It feels pretty good" said Bradshaw. "I really appreciate it."

Following the crowning of Bradshaw, the band played more music for the crowd to enjoy while the bonfire ignited.

The Towns County community members all gathered in celebration of the event and in preparation for the football game to follow on Friday, which would be against the Andrews Wildcats of North Carolina.

The Homecoming Queen was announced during the game, and all the students participated in the big Homecoming Dance on Saturday night.

During school all last week, students in every grade got to dress up for various themed days to celebrate Homecoming and demonstrate maximum school spirit.

Habitat...from Page 1A



Hiwassee Mayor Liz Ordiales and Towns/Union Habitat Executive Director Bryan Thomas in the Sept. 8 High Heels and Hard Hats Gala.

Photo by Jarrett Whitener

to try these things out."

The casino night theme is a first for the organizers and brought the attention of attendees who were curious about the event that offered something new.

Guest received \$5,000 in play money to use at the tables, where they could play popular casino games such as poker and blackjack.

With everyone off at a table, it was time for the winnings to commence.

Crowds of attendees gathered at each table to try their luck with winning, and each player attempted to gain the competitive edge as they joined others.

Some players won frequently while others lost it all, though everyone had fun for a good cause.

Cheers and shouts echoed through the room as people got the cards they needed to get the 21 or to beat their opponents, and this rush of winning led them to continue playing.

Players who finished their games could cash out at the tables for raffle tickets to drop in jars for a chance to win a large prize.

These prizes included a shotgun, a kayak, a breakfast and dinner overnight stay at the Harrah's Casino in Cherokee, North Carolina, a dinner with Chef Danielle Carter, and a date night basket, which included coupons for free meals at local restaurants.

The event also featured a silent auction of donations given to the Habitat for Humanity by local organizations and businesses.

included an hour airplane flight, a leaf blower, a fishing class, parts from Rose Auto Accessories, a gun safety class, jewelry, local outlet products, cakes, artwork, lottery tickets, and many more opportunities and items that attendees of the event could have the option to bid on while they took a break from their games.

The purpose of the event was to support the Habitat for Humanity and help them to complete another home build for a deserving local family.

"We needed the funds to do this project that we are working on, and we have asked the community to come out and support us in this task," said Thomas. "We want to be able to do more than one house a year, but right now we aren't able to do that."

The organization does participate in a few side projects, however, that help community members in need navigate and feel more comfortable in their homes.

With their large-scale project underway, the organization looks for community assistance in any way possible.

"We really appreciate what all these people have done to help us," said Thomas. "We have a strong group, and I want to see us stay there."

The gala will return next year, but the group has not decided if it will be another casino night.

For more information on Habitat for Humanity events and to learn how to assist the organization, visit TownsUnionHabitat.org.