

## Membership...from Page 1A

membership expressed a desire to see broadband expanded throughout the cooperative.

Nelms told the group that the broadband division is outperforming even the electric utility division of the cooperative.

"Our broadband division is outperforming even our electric utility division in the operating margin per consumer," Nelms said. "With that, we plan to continue to expand our broadband in the future."

The membership held its annual meeting for the first time at a location other than Anderson Music Hall in Hiwassee. This year, the annual meeting was held at the Union County Schools Fine Arts Center in Blairsville.

Member Mary Jean Boyette complimented the board for the accommodating facilities to hold the annual meeting at, however, she was



Union County High School's jazz band and chorus students entertained meeting attendees before the start of the big event. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

less complimentary about the refreshments served at this year's meeting.

"I want to say that whoever made the decision to switch the donuts from the ones served at the Music Hall messed up," she said. "The

donuts this year are stale, and I like my coffee hot, not lukewarm."

Mickey Cummings, president of the Board of Directors, thanked the many members that attended this year's annual meeting.

## Hiwassee Council...from Page 1A



Cub Scout guests in the Sept. 5 meeting of the Hiwassee City Council. Photo/Lily Avery

throughout the city has decreased significantly.

During the Aug. 28 City Council work session, out of 2,285 meters there were only 13 misread meters that month, which is less than 3 percent of all meters in the city. This is a substantial decrease to the 15 percent of meters having been misread only months prior.

Hiwassee Mayor Pro Tem Anne Mitchell addressed this issue during last week's council meeting – her first meeting serving as mayor pro tem – saying that this is a huge step in the right direction and she hopes it continues to decrease until no meters are being misread and customers improperly charged.

"We had only 13 misreads

on the water meters this month," said Mitchell. "The water leak study was finished and we had 11 minimal leaks in 45 miles and I believe that we talked about going ahead and getting another 45 miles done to see where they are.

"And the leak study is free."

The leaks can be repaired easily and will not be of any major cost to the city.

Also during the meeting, the Council voted to remove Ordiales from all city accounts, leaving Hiwassee City Clerk Cenlya Galloway and Hiwassee City Police Chief Paul Smith as signatories for the accounts.

In other City Council news, the first candidate forum was announced for all

those running for Hiwassee City Council and Hiwassee Mayor.

The candidates include the following: Liz Ordiales and Barry Dearing for Hiwassee Mayor; Amy Barrett for Post 1; Jay Chastain Jr. and Patsy Owens for Post 2; Nancy Noblet and Anne Wedgewood for Post 5.

Sponsored by the Towns County Chamber of Commerce and the Towns County Homeowners Association, the forum will take place on Monday, Oct. 2, at 6:30 p.m. at the Towns County Civic Center.

Residents can participate in early voting for these positions beginning on Monday, Oct. 16.

## Mayor Gibby...from Page 1A

has expressed excitement to work with the mayor moving forward.

As to why Gibby decided to run for a third full term as mayor?

"I'm not finished," said Mayor Gibby. "In the nine years I've been mayor, we have upgraded and completed our infrastructure projects (water and sewer), so now we're ready for some economic development and the next phase. I want to be a part of that.

"There's some things I would like to get done. We're working on sidewalks in the City ... and I'd like to see us get to the point where we have some more businesses, we have some places for people to walk to and live, play, work."

Another thing the Mayor said she's looking forward to is helping the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC in any way she can to sell the old headquarters located squarely inside the city limits.

Mayor Gibby addressed the issue of the building, which has been vacant for

several years, at the Sept. 9 annual meeting of the EMC membership, and she said that will remain a focus.

Council Member Kelley has been on City Council for many years now, and coupled with his love of Young Harris, service through the holding of local office is somewhat of a Kelley family legacy.

After all, Kelley's grandfather was a former mayor of the City, his mother a former Mayor Pro Tem and Young Harris City Council member, and his uncle was a former Ordinary of Towns County, an office akin to the modern-day commissioner.

"I remain committed to helping the City of Young Harris grow and develop in the proper way, and to assisting in providing municipal services to the citizens of Young Harris," said Kelley.

Continued Kelley: "We've got a lot of plans and we've got an active council, and I would really like to see the community become more involved, so we're going to try to have some more community

activities."

Both Kelley and Mayor Gibby share the common vision of Young Harris as a close-knit village, where residents can walk, ride bicycles and feel safe with their children and grandchildren inside the City.

Kelley also said that he welcomes the continuation of a positive relationship between the City and Young Harris College.

For his part, Keys is glad to be returning to the council with at least two terms of prior service.

"I'm local, and I just want what's best for the City of Young Harris," said Keys.

And when it comes to Nation, she said she'd always thought about running for city office, but didn't take the leap until after her retirement from the college.

"I'm willing to be helpful any way I can, and I do like Andrea, she's an amazing mayor, so it will be great to work with her," said Nation, adding that she has friends on the Council and looks forward to working with her elected counterparts as well.

## Elected...from Page 1A



Hardworking employees of the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC registering members ahead of the annual meeting at the Union County Schools Fine Arts Center on Saturday, Sept. 9. Photo/Lowell Nicholson

45,903 members, only 1,837, or 4.37 percent of the membership, cast ballots in this year's election.

In Union County, Henson received 794 votes, Jenkins collected 425 votes, Karen Pirie tallied 228 votes, and Tommy White received 184.

In Towns County, Rogers bested Waldroup 852 votes to 637. In Clay County, Ledford received 550 votes, Preston Cabe received 526, and Logan tallied 502 votes.

"I thought I could win if I worked hard," Rogers said. "I felt confident that I had enough support to win a seat at the director's table. But, you never know how many people are going to vote. You just have to put it in the Lord's hands. I felt like we (he and Waldroup) were on a level playing field – neither of us were the incumbent."

After being elected that Saturday, Henson said he would lead the charge to reverse the decision to subcontract right of way work to Georgia Right of Way Cooperative.

"It's time to get down to business," Henson said. "We plan on stopping the subcontractors. That's our main goal. This is a nonprofit cooperative, and we need to be employing the people in our

counties. We need a right of way crew that we can depend on when the time comes that we need them in an emergency."

Rogers acknowledged that both he and Waldroup were on the outside looking in during the campaign for the Towns County director's seat.

"It feels good to be a member of the board of directors," Rogers said. "There's more to it than what I thought there was when I first started, but I'm ready to get to work."

Ledford said he was confident that he would come out on top in the three-man race for the Clay County director's post, and he, too, said it felt good to be elected.

"I hope we can get everyone on board to do the right thing," Ledford said. "I kind of always thought I'd win, but I wasn't expecting that big of a margin (he won by 24 votes). I figured it would be a little closer."

All three new directors were disappointed by the voter turnout for this election.

"I think it had a lot to do with not having paper ballots," Henson said. "All of our members deserve to be heard. It wouldn't have hurt anything to stick those paper

ballots in everyone's power bill. Not everyone has the internet. That's the way it needs to be next year."

Rogers said that many voters were confused and worried they wouldn't get to cast their ballots.

"There were a lot of people that had conflicts in trying to vote in this election," Rogers said. "It may have saved some money by not printing paper ballots, but paper ballots are the only way a lot of people will vote."

After the election, the board of directors elected officers for the coming year.

Mickey Cummings returns as president of the board of directors for the 2017-2018 year. Ray Cook will serve as vice chair and policy chair, Roy Perren as secretary, and Cory Payne will serve as treasurer.

As it stands, Cummings, Gene Mason, and Henson represent Union County; Rogers and Perren represent Towns County; Payne and Ledford represent Clay County, North Carolina; Larry Williams represents Fannin County; and Cook represents Cherokee County, North Carolina.

## Equifax...from Page 1A

of Social Security numbers instead of the usual four used for security purposes – as a way for people to determine if their personal information was part of the data breach by hackers.

Those interested in using the Equifax website, located at [www.equifaxsecurity2017.com](http://www.equifaxsecurity2017.com), are advised by the Federal Trade Commission to make sure that they access the site through a secure computer on an encrypted network connection.

Individuals affected by the data breach will receive the following message through the website:

"Based on the information provided, we believe that your personal information may have been impacted by this incident."

The Federal Bureau of Investigation is looking into the Equifax hack, but what should vulnerable consumers do to protect themselves now that it's likely their personal information was stolen by hackers?

There's no quick fix, according to Equifax, which has shifted the burden largely back to individual consumers to monitor their own financial situations more closely and regularly after the hack.

"We recommend that consumers be vigilant in reviewing their account statements and credit reports, and that they immediately report

any unauthorized activity to their financial institutions," according to Equifax.

"We also recommend that they monitor their personal information and visit the Federal Trade Commission's website, [www.ftc.gov/idtheft](http://www.ftc.gov/idtheft), to obtain information about steps they can take to better protect against identity theft as well as information about fraud alerts and security freezes."

Equifax is offering all U.S. consumers a year of free credit file monitoring and identity theft protection, independent of whether an individual's personal information was stolen in the hack.

Those who opt for the free year of credit protection services through Equifax should keep in mind that the information stolen will be at the disposal of criminals for decades to come, after all, people keep the same names, Social Security numbers and dates of birth throughout their lifetimes.

From here on out, vulnerable Americans will need to maintain a closer watch on their financial affairs than ever before, at least until such a time that consumers have a better way of establishing their identities for credit purposes.

"This attack on you and me, carelessly allowed to happen by Equifax, is so

severe and so extreme that it will require a lifetime of change on your and my part," said financial guru Clark Howard.

Howard and other consumer advocates have said that the only way to remain safe from the consequences of the hack is to institute a credit freeze with all three major credit reporting agencies so that criminals become unable to use people's identifying information against them.

Consumers interested in finding out more about establishing a credit freeze can visit <http://www.consumer.ga.gov/consumer-topics/credit-freeze>.

"Georgia's credit freeze law provides Georgia consumers with the ability to place a freeze on their credit file for only \$3, or a total of \$9 for each of the three major credit-reporting agencies: Equifax, Experian and TransUnion," according to the website.

"Each temporary lift – commonly called a "thaw" – to allow access to the consumer's credit file also costs \$3, and is available electronically within 15 minutes of request, keeping on-the-spot credit an option for shoppers.

"If you are the victim of identity theft, there is no charge for a credit freeze. Placing a credit freeze is also free to senior citizens 65 or older, but they can be charged \$3 for lifting or removing the freeze."