

DEDICATED TO THE PROMOTION OF TOWNS COUNTY

OPINIONS & COMMENTARY

Straight Shooting

When we write a news story, we give you the details of information that we have uncovered about any given subject.

Our story last week about an inquiry, or "probe" by the Georgia Bureau of Investigation regarding the debt by former BRMEMC President of the Board of Directors' Terry Taylor was spot on.

A story in the Clay County Progress in Clay County, NC reported that EMC investigation is not confirmed.

That was the Progress' headline. I'm told they have as much information as our two newspapers. Why they finally chose to write something now, well, only they know the answer to that question.

If the North Georgia News and or Towns County Herald tells you that something is going on, believe it. We're not going to report something that isn't happening.

I received information once again from Enotah Circuit District Attorney Jeff Langley last week.

He said: "I did not intend to communicate that either (GBI or the Attorney General's Office) was conducting any kind of full scale investigation of conduct by the EMC. I have spoken with the GBI about this matter. The GBI did what is often referred to as "an assistance rendered" response, which means a Special Agent with the GBI met with and interviewed a complaining witness and received documents about the allegations in this matter, but at this time they have not initiated a criminal investigation.

"Likewise, to my knowledge the Attorney General's Office has not opened their own investigation, but I have sought their advice regarding the matter. I have also requested a copy of the EMC's internal investigation upon it being completed.

"I rarely comment to the press about matters at this stage, but I understand the public's concern and interest. Therefore I want to be very accurate in explaining that steps are being taken to inquire into this situation, but these steps should not be taken to suggest any determination has been made as to any criminal action," Langley said.

We're not an alarmist news organization. Our stories are based on facts.

Once again, we're shooting straight and bringing you the news as we complete the gathering process. Thank you for your patience.

Straight Shooting

Charles Duncan



Letters to The Editor

Dear Editor,

On Saturday, August 2, an urgent notice was issued to approximately 400,000 residents of Toledo and Lucas County in northwest Ohio who received treated drinking water from the City of Toledo. The message: DO NOT DRINK THE WATER. DO NOT BOIL THE WATER. The cause of the water crisis is what's known as a Harmful Algal Bloom (HAB) in Lake Erie and it's located right beside Toledo's water intake.

This is exactly the kind of thing that the Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition is working to prevent in the future in Lake Chatuge! This crisis is happening because, in the words of one of my colleagues in Ohio, local governments and residents have been "kicking the can" for decades, refusing to do what needs to be done to reduce nitrogen and phosphorus levels draining into the lake for decades.

The algae blooms grow in warm temperatures on an excess of nutrients (phosphorus is the main concern) in the water and when the problem is bad enough, concentrations of a toxin called microcystin that is found naturally in algae increase to a level that makes us sick.

In 2007, the watershed coalition published a plan for the Lake Chatuge watershed that contains recommended strategies for reducing nutrient pollution draining into the lake. Using funds from a GA 319(h) Nonpoint Source Pollution Program grant, we have been working for the past three years to start reducing nutrient levels in the lake, but we must continue this work if we want to keep Lake Chatuge safe.

Installing best management practices (BMPs) to slow and treat runoff from all kinds of land uses (agricultural, commercial and residential areas), fixing leaking or failing septic systems (and maintaining your system regularly), supporting the City of Hiwassee in its efforts to add nutrient reduction to its wastewater treatment plant, and maintaining membership in the watershed coalition are all ways you can help!

Think you won't be affected because you have a well? Almost all of the businesses along US 76 rely on treated drinking water from the City of Hiwassee's intake in Lake Chatuge. Oh and by the way, they can't use Lake Erie for recreation while these blooms are happening either.

The Lake Chatuge Watershed Action Plan and more information about recommended nutrient reduction strategies are available on the watershed coalition's web site: www.hrwc.net/lakechatugeplan.htm.

Let's not have people 20 years from now saying of us, "Well, they just kicked the can down the road and now we can't drink the water."

Callie D. Moore, Executive Director Hiwassee River Watershed Coalition

Dear Editor,

Management of BRMEMC

In theory, we 43,000 or so members own the BRMEMC. However, in practice our ownership is largely limited to paying debts incurred by the manager and a 9-member board of directors. The board hires the manager and members theoretically elect the board. Unfortunately, the system for selecting directors is so flawed they are in fact hand picked by management and we, the owners, have little choice in the matter.

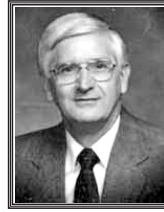
Here's how the system works. BRMEMC picks a committee that decides who will be nominated. The committee nominates only one person for each position and that is almost always the incumbent. So we members can only vote for whomever the committee selects meaning that management, not the owners, picks the board. Once voted in, members commonly serve for 10 years or more and can be expected to rubber stamp management decisions, even those not in the best interests of us owners. Many of us are appalled by controversial actions by the manager and board including: 1) Location of unsightly substations, 2) Purchase of prime real estate at historically high prices, 3) Construction of extravagant headquarters building, 4) Massive debt, over \$113,000,000 and growing and 5) Recent revelations that a former Chairman of the Board was wrongly allowed to incur a debt of over \$107,000 of our money. When we protest such poor decisions at the annual meeting, management tiptoes around the issues and nothing gets done about matters of serious concern to members. Our bills just keep going up to pay for their misdeeds.

This year we have a

chance to start building a new board that could make a difference. As usual, BRMEMC's committee has nominated one person for each of three vacancies (members serve 3-year terms and 1/3 of board is elected each year). Also, as usual, all three nominees are incumbents who bear at least some responsibility for matters like the recently reported Terry Taylor scandal. However, four "newcomers" through great personal effort have managed to get their names on the ballot. Since the committee would not nominate them, they each went the extraordinary route of getting petitions signed by approximately 115 members to allow their names on the ballot. This procedure is so unusual that Mr. Sorgen, counsel for BRMEMC, told us he could not remember when the last contested election occurred.

The widely publicized Terry Taylor scandal clearly demonstrates that neither the present 9-member board of directors nor the manager is doing their jobs. Board members who knew about the indebtedness of their former Chairman in the amount of \$107,000+ and did nothing about it are likely guilty of criminal negligence. Board members who did not know about a matter of this magnitude are incompetent and unfit to serve in positions of responsibility. I am convinced that to deal effectively with the Taylor scandal and other grave matters facing BRMEMC "new blood" is required. I urge each of you to carefully consider this matter and vote for new board members who will listen to our concerns and manage our co-op accordingly.

Wm. Ronald Gibson



"IT'S ON MY MIND.." Danny H. Parris

Not here, but here

Over the years I have met some strong personalities, both men and women! (Most of them of Baptist background.) Nearly all Baptists have strong personalities. That's the reason there are so many of them. One fellow from the mountains was caught moon shining and was sent to prison. After a few days in prison he wrote his mom a letter saying, "Dear Ma, it's here like it is down there, nearly all Baptists." Some of these strong personalities have been preachers, staff members, politicians, teachers, con people and some ordinary folks from the market places of life. People with strong personalities make their presence known. Sometimes they get to be annoying, upsetting and just plain obnoxious. In fact, they can become a thorn in the flesh. At the same time, they can be a motivating force, inspirational and a tremendous challenge. Strong personalities are usually "take charge" people. A lot of them will rush in to situations where angels fear to tread. But they get things done even if it is not always good. They are not passive people.

Peter had a strong personality. He didn't always say the right thing nor do the right thing but he couldn't be quiet and inactive. Once, at the most holy moment, he wanted to start building three tabernacles. On another solemn occasion with our Lord, he became an ear slicer. Strong personalities may at times mess up, but overall they are out front and on the cutting edge of great things that are successful. Many of them are pioneers. You can tell because

of the arrows in their backs. People with strong personalities die just like everyone else but even when they are gone they are still here.

I am sure that you have known individuals, maybe a family member, that even though they were dead they still controlled what went on in the family. I have also known churches that seemed to be influenced more by the dead than the living. I heard about an aristocratic, antebellum middle Georgia woman who was getting on in age. She was a classic steel magnolia who controlled what went on in the "big house." Driven by the fear that she would die before her rich husband she decided to take charge of matters. She hired one of the best artists from Atlanta and brought him to the plantation. She told the artist that she wanted a portrait of herself that looked like she did when she first married. He agreed and told her to dress in her best. She decked herself in her finest. The artist positioned her in her best pose with her hands gracefully holding a fan so that her 5 carat diamond ring was very prominent. She instructed the artist to paint her forty years younger and to paint her ring 10 carats larger! He agreed that he could do both but he wanted to know why she wanted him to paint a 15 carat diamond that she never owned. She explained to the artist that when she died she knew her husband would immediately marry a younger woman and that he would give the 5 carat diamond ring to her. But she said, "I want her to go crazy searching the big house trying to find this 15 carat diamond."

Certainly, we ought to so live that we would be a positive influence in this life. Even when we are not here, we will continue to be here if we have lived our lives in the will of God. Being dead, yet speaking.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR SHOULD BE E-MAILED OR MAILED TO:

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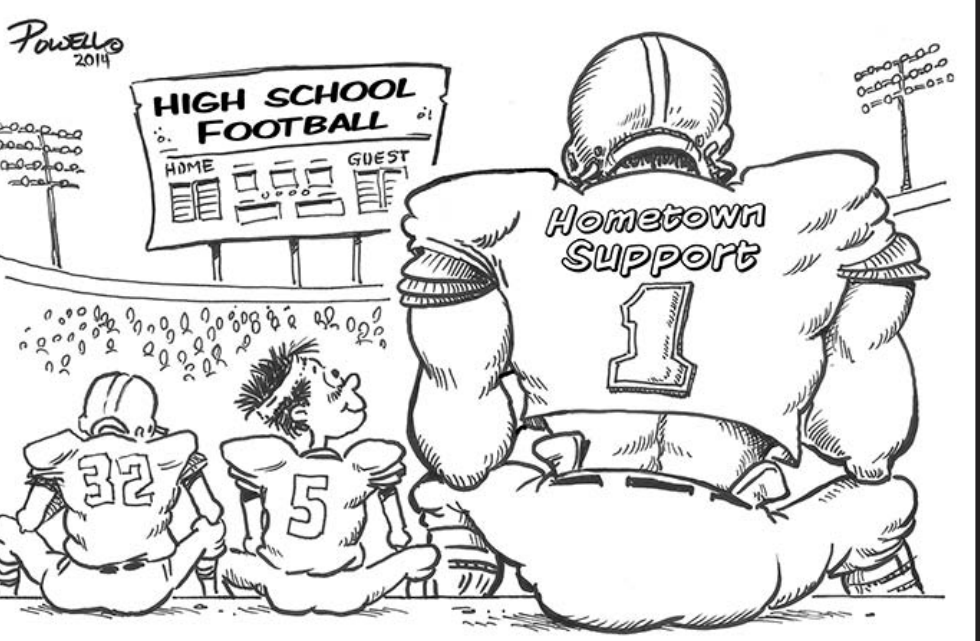
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