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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.

EMC Amendments...from Page 1A



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



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

Station 1...from Page 1A



The Union County Fire Department invited the community into Fire Station No. 1 on Saturday, Sept. 9. Photo/Lily Avery

everything that the county is able to get for us and we want to make sure that the community knows that.”

Chief David Dyer was more than happy to welcome the community to their Station 1.

“We want everybody to come see their fire station, come see the equipment and meet all the people that make each station happen,” he said, referring to the annual open houses.

“These open houses are all about fun, fellowship and having a good time,” Chief Dyer said. “The people that come to our open houses have been so generous by helping us financially. We really depend on those donations to make our fire stations as efficient as we possibly can. Every donation counts.”

The new truck is just

one of the many things those at Station 1 are grateful for. While a decreased size from the truck it is replacing, the new, more compact truck will allow for easier mobility on smaller roads, something that will come in handy driving through the mountains and small back roads in Union County.

“The truck we were using, it’s a 2004 model, and it’s a very good truck,” said Fortenberry. “But when you get on some of those smaller roads, and when our smaller vehicle is gone and we get another call where we have to back up the ambulance service, it’s difficult. “Getting that big truck into some of those smaller roads and driveways was tough. It’s big and cumbersome for what we need it for, so we got to downsize to this.”

Before Station 1 received the new truck, they had been

borrowing a smaller rescue truck from Station 4, since Station 1 receives the most calls. Now, there is no more need for borrowing and the new truck will be ready to roll out for calls in the coming weeks.

“Our brand new rescue truck is a 2017 Ford model,” said Fortenberry. “We just got our equipment placed on it and we’re waiting on the state to come certify it. Then, after that, we should be putting it into service within the next week.”

“It’s been a long time since we’ve been in a smaller truck, so it’ll definitely be an added benefit.”

Along with showing off the station’s latest fleet addition, those at Station 1 were also promoting volunteerism in the fire department, along with the UCFD’s newest program, the Union County Junior Fire Fighter Program.

Designed for adolescents from 15 years old to 18 years old, the program offers hands-on training in firefighting, search and rescue and medical responding. Applications for the program are available online at www.unioncountygga.gov, with meetings on the second and fourth Thursday of every month at UCFD Station 1, from 6 p.m. until 7:30 p.m.

“We have 11 interested right now,” said Fortenberry. “But we’re hoping to grow this program to increase awareness and interest in working in this field.”

This program not only provides early training and experience for those wishing to one day work or volunteer in the fire department, but it also raises awareness about the importance of volunteerism and giving back to the community.

“Union County needs volunteers,” said Fortenberry. “We’re in desperate need right now of people who want to give back to their community.”

“You need a clean driving record, a clean background, a high school diploma or GED and be able bodied. You just have to be at least 18 years old, but there’s something for everyone.”

For those interested in becoming a volunteer with the Union County Fire Department, visit UCFD Station 1 to pick up an application and learn more about how to get involved.

and put it on the 2018 ballot was approved by the membership.

A second amendment was proposed by former Towns County Republican Party Chair Chuck Luca. Likewise, it was given the seal of approval to place on the 2018 election ballot.

That amendment to the bylaws would change what the board hears in executive session, and would effectively open EMC board meetings to the membership if approved.

It would require the board to follow the state Sunshine Laws regarding executive sessions. Following state law would allow the board to go into executive session for only three reasons – personnel, real estate decisions, and litigation matters.

In other business, EMC General Manager Jeremy Nelms announced that TVA, or the Tennessee Valley Authority, would increase its rates beginning Oct. 1 by 1.25 percent. The increase means

each EMC customer’s bill would rise by \$1.40 a month.

Nancy Mitchell, general manager of TVA’s Customer Service for the Southeast Region, told the membership that TVA is working on a five-year plan that focuses on debt reduction, and reduction of power rates.

Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby broached the subject that she’s looking forward to helping Blue Ridge Mountain EMC in any way she can to sell the old headquarters located squarely inside Young Harris City Limits.

Several of the 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 Hiawassee. 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 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.