

# BRMEMC...from Page 1A

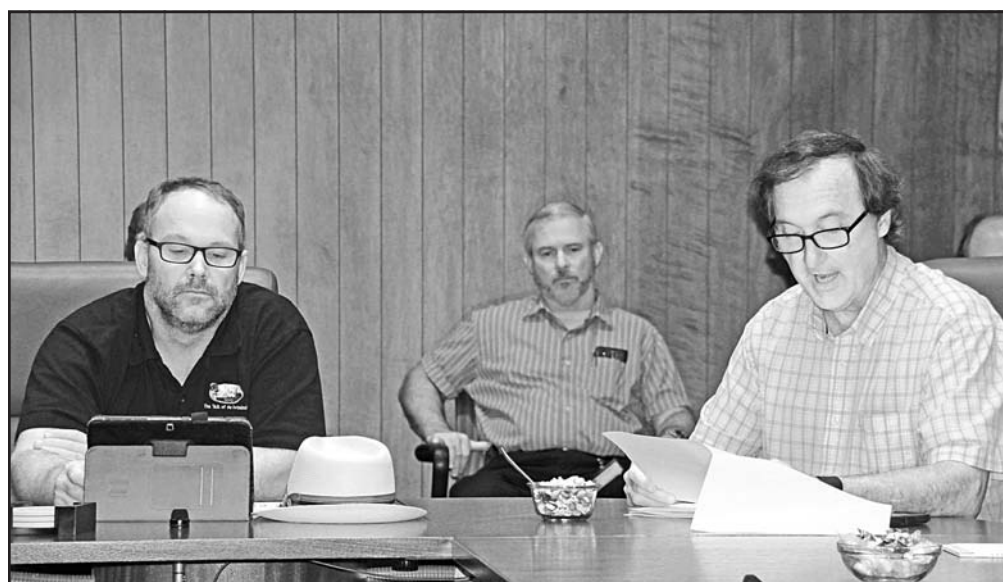
accounts receivable, inventory and parts, disposal of surplus property, funding of new facility building expenditure, bank deposit activity, heat pump loan activity and review of IRS Forms 990.

In conclusion, the auditors made several recommendations to the EMC based on their examination of the books, including: improving processes and procedures around the purchase order system; conducting inventory of assets on an annual basis; utilizing ACH when possible to disburse funds; gaining approval before ordering all parts; implementing an improved process for managing the disposal of surplus property.

“The board asks that the membership look at this figure as an investment,” said Perren, speaking on the nearly \$76,000 cost of the audit. “As the recommendations of DHG Forensics are implemented, savings should exceed the cost of the forensic examination over time.”

Board Vice Chair Mickey Cummings said in the meeting that, moving forward, the audit findings and recommendations will serve as specific guidelines for newly hired BRMEMC General Manager Jeremy Nelms.

“From my perspective, I think this just helps clear these dark clouds that have been hanging over this EMC for so



**Roy Perren, right, reads from a prepared statement concerning the outcome of the board-commissioned forensic audit of the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC. The board held a meeting with area media to discuss the findings on Friday, Sept. 2.**

long – it’s just helping to clear the air,” said Nelms on Friday. “It’s very encouraging to me to see that we can start out essentially with a clean slate.

“To know that the financial health has not been compromised at this EMC helps me to know that we can just move forward and get back to doing what we do best, and that’s serving our membership here in North Georgia and Western North Carolina.”

Perren agreed with Nelms that the audit should put to rest any fears about what may or may not be hiding in the

financial books of BRMEMC during its troublesome past few years.

“It’s time for us to move on to the future, a bright future here at Blue Ridge Mountain EMC,” said Perren.

The board will present the same information regarding the forensic audit to the membership in the Sept. 10 annual meeting, and Board Chair Steven Phillips said he’s looking forward to leading that meeting in a style similar to the three Town Hall Meetings the board held earlier this year.

“Instead of being

a lawyer that’s going to be running it, I, being the chairman of the board, I’m going to run the meeting, and each person on the board, they’ve got their part,” said Phillips.

Along with the new director candidates, the membership will also be voting on a policy change to bring the EMC another step into the 21st century.

“Now, if we have a board meeting, we have to send a letter out by mail instead of email, so we need to change that,” said Phillips, speaking on the ballot initiative.

## Hall of Fame...from Page 1A

President Libby Stevens. “The Agriculture Hall of Fame isn’t so much about the inductees, but it’s about when their grandkids see their names and hear that these were people

who were instrumental in this county.

“These people preserved our history and made the history for the county, making it possible for us to be the strong people that we are here in the mountains.”

Anne and Jimmy Spivia work a farm in the Choestoe Valley, where Jimmy’s family has been cultivating delicious fruits and vegetables for many generations. The Spivia duo has been active in the research of collard green growing seasons, as well as cabbage, squash and other like vegetables.

Due to the Spivia’s farming practices and exploration, local farmers now know the risks and diseases involved with growing collard greens during certain seasons, allowing for farmers to have a more prosperous harvest.

“It’s such an honor,” said Jimmy. “I didn’t expect this to happen. Honestly, I didn’t really know anything about it. I’ve been farming all my life. My dad farmed when I was growing up, so I learned how to work the fields from him.

“I love to see stuff grow, that’s why I love farming and working in the fields.”

While the Spivia’s have made their mark locally, Brenda Brookshire reached out regionally. Before the inception of the Union County Farmers Market, Brenda Brookshire was heavily involved in road farming, venturing as far as Atlanta to sell produce on the weekends. Brookshire has also been a leading contributor in the women’s cattle association, participating in the National Beef Cook-Off and serving as president of the Georgia Cattlewomen’s Association.

More than anything, Brookshire is best known for the hope and determination she instills in young female farmers in the area, especially those at the Woody Gap School where she frequently volunteers.

“Growing up in the mountains, what she does is a nontraditional job,” said Stevens. “What Brenda has been able to do is not a typical job for a woman to have. So, I am especially proud to induct her into the Hall of Fame.

“I’m proud that women have broken barriers and are reaching out to jobs like that. It lets other young women know that those are jobs available to them.”

Each of the 2016 Hall of Famers’ names joined a list of a select few on a plaque honoring like-minded individuals who have made a difference in agriculture development for Union County. The plaque will be on display in the Historic Union County Courthouse as well as the Union County Farmers Market.

“Getting the names of these people on these plaques is so important,” said Stevens. “These are the people who have been instrumental in preserving our ways and have recognized good farming methods, good agricultural practices.

“These people have contributed to our community in that form, and I’m so honored to be able to induct them into this Hall of Fame.”



**Patrons of the Union County Farmers Market on Saturday, Sept. 3, had plenty to do, as aside from regular market fare, the market played host to a tractor parade and an agriculture hall of fame induction ceremony. Photo/Lily Avery**



**Union County Historical Society President Libby Stevens hugs Brenda Brookshire after introducing her as a 2016 Agriculture Hall of Fame inductee.**