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Towns, and Fannin counties in North Carolina.

Cherokee counties in North Carolina.

The EMC will hold its annual meeting Sept. 13 at Anderson Music Hall in Hiwassee.

Among the items to address, the election of three members to the EMC Board of Directors.

Online voting is available at www.brmemc.com until September 10th at 4 p.m. Login information (identification number and verification code) is provided on the front side of each member's bill.

There are three members nominated by the Cooperative's Board of Directors. Brian Trout of Clay County, NC, Julie Payne of Towns County, and Lenny Parks of

Suches are seeking reelection to the Board of Directors.

There are four persons nominated by petition of the Membership. They are Chris Logan of Brasstown, NC, Steven Phillips, of Towns County, Charles Jenkins of Blairsville, and Mike Patton of Blairsville.

Members from the five-county service area can vote for all three Board member seats.

Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Board of Directors appointed Trout as a Clay County, NC director in April 2014. He fills the unexpired term of the late Elois Anderson.

His opponent, Logan,

currently is on the Board of Directors for the North Carolina Forestry Association, serving as Western Vice President of the North Carolina Forestry Association.

Payne was appointed by the EMC Board of Directors to fill the unexpired Towns County term of former Board of Directors' President Terry Taylor. Payne is a closing assistant for a local attorney's office.

Her opponent, Phillips, is the owner of Benny's Sanitation in Hiwassee, and also serves as a local radio personality in the Towns County area. He has served on the Board of

Directors of Towns County FFA Alumni Board, and Towns County Food Pantry.

Parks has been an appointed Union County director for the past 11 years, and has been elected by his peers on the EMC Board of Directors to serve as Vice-President for the past five years.

His opponents include former State House District 8 State Rep. Charles Jenkins, of Blairsville, and Mike Patton, also of Blairsville, the owner of Patton Excavating, who has served on the Board of Directors for the Union County Board of Health, and Coosa Water Authority.

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received.

"Your story last week was accurate, I just think some folks were taking it a little differently and that's why I wanted to clarify this," he said.

Langley also wanted to clarify that everything to date is considered an inquiry, not a criminal investigation.

"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," Langley said.

"Likewise, to my knowledge the Attorney General's Office has not opened their own investigation, but I have sought their advice regarding the matter," Langley said. "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," Langley said. "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."

Taylor resigned as president of the Board of Directors on April 17 following a public firestorm regarding his unpaid electric bill of more than \$48,000.

The EMC Board appointed Julie Payne to serve Taylor's unexpired term on the board of directors for Towns County.

BRMEMC Board Vice President, Lenny Parks of Suches, is the acting board chair

for the nine-member board.

However, there's another debt, according to documents obtained by the newspapers. BRMEMC denies that it loaned Taylor money to pay for equipment designed to lower his electric usage. Documents obtained by the newspaper show that BRMEMC discussed the loan in executive session in April.

Also, a bill dated June 10, 2014 shows Taylor owes \$62,354 in additional debt. That leaves a balance of \$107,998.43 owed to the cooperative, according to the documents, which includes 1.5 percent interest on a monthly basis.

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most two years on their part. We had to deal with budget cuts and other issues, but it's accomplished and we're certified," said Young, letting out a sigh of relief that was 24 months in the making.

"Anyone who has ever dealt with the government or the environmental protection division knows what I'm talking about."

The lab personnel consists of Jennifer Maier, Jason Maier, and Randall Thomas. The laboratory team has accumulated over 42 years of combined experience in the water industry, and in particular, in laboratory testing procedures. Jennifer Maier is the laboratory supervisor. She has a degree in Biology and is a State-certified Water Laboratory Analyst as well as a Class I Water Treatment Operator. Jennifer and Jason Maier along with Thomas have attended many seminars, conferences and training events over the years to stay current on the new microbiological parameters and laboratory techniques.

"We have to adhere to both federal and state regulations," Jennifer Maier said. "Twice every year we have to hire a third party to send us blind samples for us to test to make sure all of our testing is right on."

The laboratory is outfitted with state of the art equipment designed specifically for microbiological analysis of drinking water. The lab is certified to analyze drinking water for the presence of bacteria (both coliform and E. coli) as well as pH, alkalinity, iron, manganese, fluoride, and chlorine residuals.

"That's a big issue," Young said. "People want to know if they have harmful bacteria in their water from a private well. Especially in rural areas of the county like Suches."

Bacteria analyses will cost \$25 per sample during normal business hours (Monday through Thursday 8 a.m. - 4 p.m.). Any sample brought in after hours or holidays will cost an additional \$5. Each additional testing parameter (pH, iron, etc.) will cost \$5 each. Sample bottles will be provided as well as instructions for proper sample collection and handling procedures.

According to Jennifer Maier, from the time testing begins on a sample it takes approximately 24 hours before the results will be available.

For anyone interested in testing, the NWA has sterile bottles (approximately 100 ML) that must be used, which are available at the Notla Water office on Pat Haralson Dr.

"There are a couple of different methods that we use to determine the quality of the water but none of them take too long," Jennifer Maier said. "The water must incubate for 24 hours then we will pull it out and read the results."

The closest lab of this kind outside of Union County is located in Ellijay and Young urges everyone in northeast Georgia, not just Union County residents, to take advantage of the labs' top-notch facilities.

"We're hoping for business from Hiwassee, Towns



Staffers explain the new microbiological laboratory. Photo/Todd Forrest

County, Young Harris, maybe Blue Ridge and McCaysville," Young said. "We're certified to give emergency samples with the health department in Murphy (NC). We're looking into becoming certified in North Carolina, but right now we can provide services to private wells that

are from out-of-state."

Please feel free to contact the lab with any water quality questions or if you are interested in having your water tested. You may visit the facilities by Nottely Dam, call the lab at (706) 835-2550, or contact them by email at: notlalab@brmemc.net.