

## Buses...from Page 1A

and GPS for safety purposes, like the rest of the fleet, as well as air conditioning.

One of the oldest buses in the fleet is 27 years old, and though it still passes state inspections with flying colors, the age of the bus is certainly

showing.

In times gone by, buses were replaced well before they reached such a ripe old age as 27.

Back when the state used to fund school buses, up until the early 2000s, the

state would replace gas buses after they had run nine years on a route and one year as a spare, and diesel buses after 12 years on a route and a year as a spare.

And while it's true that the state sells bonds to help schools afford new buses, that doesn't automatically translate into a new bus when it's needed. This year, for example, the state was only able to provide enough money to purchase a third of a bus, which meant no bus purchase with that money.

Since funding is so hard to come by, the school system has relied on regular maintenance to extend the life of buses in order to make them last as long as they have.

Fortunately, county voters approved an E-SPOST referendum in 2013, which listed new buses for funding

should it be approved, and Union County Schools Superintendent Dr. Fred Rayfield and the board are making good on the promise of new school buses.

"Purchasing these buses is a big step to getting things back where they need to be," said Dr. Rayfield, adding that continued safety, reliability and consistency are all important reasons for the new bus purchase.

After the new buses arrive in December, the old buses that will be coming off routes will be divided up into those to become spares and those to be auctioned.

Also in the regular meeting, the board made a change to its school calendar, making the previously scheduled Teacher Work Day of Sept. 25 a regular school day for students, to make up for the

day missed due to the Aug. 21 total solar eclipse.

The board made another schedule change in its September regular meeting, this time to its own calendar, moving the October board meeting from Oct. 17 to Oct. 24, to accommodate the week

of Fall Break for students and staff.

Currently, the schoolboard does not have plans to make up the two days missed during Tropical Storm Irma, as those missed days occurred during a statewide declared emergency.



Union County Board of Education Chair Cindy Odom. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

## BRMEMC...from Page 1A

attorney, Cummings said.

"That committee consists of Roy Perren, Gene Mason and Danny Henson," Cummings said. "That group will work with our General Manager Jeremy Nelms to bring some names before the board to determine who our next attorney will be.

"We'll determine the prerequisites for that person and go from there," Cummings said. "In the interim, we've got some people that, if we need to, we can call."

Cummings said that Ford did not specify the reasons why he resigned.

Ford replaced Larry Sorgen as EMC attorney in 2015.

In other business, the *North Georgia News* and *Towns County Herald* newspapers have learned that the EMC board voted 6-2 to do away with subcontracting a right of way crew.

Prior to the annual meeting, the board voted 4-3 to hire Georgia Right of Way Cooperative to replace its in-house right of way crew. That decision was a main sticking point in the 2017 election of directors.

Nelms had said that the decision to subcontract work on its right of ways was a cost saving decision.

In other business, Cummings said that the board has already begun work with its policy committee regarding the two proposed amendments

to present to the membership in 2018.

At the annual meeting, former BRMEMC legal counsel Larry Sorgen proposed an amendment that would allow voters in each of the five counties in the cooperative's service area to elect their respective representative during the election process.

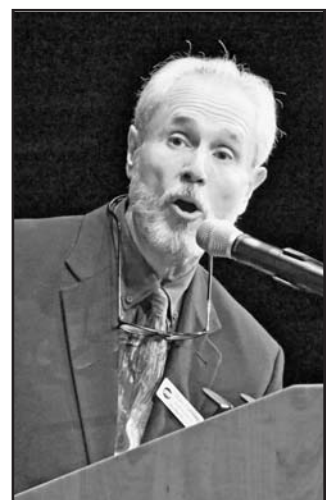
Currently, candidates are elected by voters in all counties in Georgia and North Carolina.

The number of representatives for each county is determined by the population it serves.

Union County has the largest served population, giving it three representatives on the board.

Towns County and Clay County, North Carolina, both have two representatives.

Fannin County and



BRMEMC Board Chair Mickey Cummings in the Sept. 9 annual meeting. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

Cherokee County, North Carolina, both have one representative.

A second amendment was proposed by former Towns County Republican Party

Chair Chuck Luca in the Sept. 9 annual meeting. Likewise, it was given the seal of approval by the membership to place on the 2018 election ballot.

That amendment to the bylaws would change what the board hears in executive session.

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

The amendment, if ultimately approved by the membership, would make all EMC board meetings open to the public.

Cummings said the board will hear comment from media professionals about open meetings during its Oct. 10 board meeting at EMC headquarters.

## Queen...from Page 1A

and 15-minute lightning delay and a brief blackout when the stadium lights went dark for 20 minutes, halftime finally arrived shortly after 10 p.m., and the announcement that had everyone on the edge of their seats was mere moments away.

Second Runner-Up senior Baylee Young and First Runner-Up senior Claudia Ledezma received recognition

prior to Palomo's coronation by none other than last year's Homecoming Queen Joanna Irvin.

The rest of the evening belonged to Palomo.

"I'm just very happy that my grade chose me, and proud to represent my senior Class of 2018. I love them all," she said.

This year's Homecoming Court was announced the week

before the big game, but a little later than usual due to school being closed on Monday and Tuesday of that week for Hurricane Irma.

"It's been hectic over the last week, but I wouldn't have it any other way," she said. "I love this class so much."

For more from the UCHS Homecoming festivities, visit the Sports Section in this week's newspaper.

## Humane Society...from Page 1A

fundraiser, the shelter also raises money through its two thrift stores in Blairsville and Hiwassee.

"All of the funds that we raise tonight helps up take care of the animals and supports the shelter," said Lisa McConnell, Mountain Shelter Humane Society Director. "This is our biggest event of the year and it just keeps growing and growing every year.

"This year, we're busting at the seams and we're at one of the biggest venues in the area. But I'd say this is a good problem to have."

While the Humane Society holds the event each year, it could not continue to be successful without the generosity and good will of those throughout the community who donate money, raffle items and purchase tickets to spend an evening celebrating man's best friends.

This year, more than 100 items were donated to be auctioned during the event, including the silent auction items and those sold during the live auction portion of the night.

"I think this is the biggest crowd I've ever seen," said Bob Levy, Mountain Shelter Humane Society Board President. "I've been involved with a lot of different humane societies throughout my life and this is by far the best humane society that I've ever been involved with.

"I mean this from the bottom of my heart. We have the best humane society east of the Mississippi and probably in the whole country. This is an amazing organization."

Founded in 1987, the Mountain Shelter Humane Society has spent the last 30 years working to find forever homes for the countless stray and abandoned dogs and cats in Union and Towns counties.

In the span of one year, the shelter provides care for more than 800 animals, giving each dog or cat that comes through those doors the best care available, providing vaccinations, neutering and spaying.

"Right now, we have around 80 pets at the shelter," said McConnell. "It's about 60/40, cats and dogs. We always have a problem with stray cats, so we really want to encourage people to get their



North Georgia Technical College hosted this year's Puttin' on the Dog. Photo/Lily Avery

animals spayed and neutered. It would help so much."

For those interested in adopting an animal, visit the Mountain Shelter Humane Society Monday through Saturday, from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m.

And community members who came out to support those animals last Saturday had a delicious meal, provided by Amazing Grace Catering and enjoyed the good food, and good Moonshine tasting courtesy of Granddaddy Mimm's, all to the tune of local country group, Borrowed Time.

As the night wore on, everyone danced, laughed and

enjoyed another successful Puttin' on the Dog to promote the furry friends at the Mountain Shelter Humane Society.

## DeBell graduates Valdosta State

Kyle DeBell of Blairsville, GA, has earned the Master of Library and Information Science from Valdosta State University. DeBell was among nearly 500 undergraduate and graduate students who completed the requirements for their respective degrees during the Summer 2017 semester.