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be printed and filled in, though the EMC has said an electronic version is in the works for spring 2018. The easiest way to submit the completed form is to scan it and email it to boardmeetings@brmemc.com, or fax the printed form to (706) 379-4834.

Up next is the Jan. 9 board meeting at 6 p.m., and members wanting to attend will need to have their forms submitted to

the EMC no later than Jan. 7 before 6 p.m.

Also in the Dec. 12 board meeting, the directors welcomed the president and CEO of Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange, who gave an informational presentation for the board – the EMC changed its insurance to Federated over the summer.

The board spent quite

a bit of time talking about IT infrastructure that Tuesday, going over plans to upgrade the EMC's phone system and certain hardware, "to ensure that we're able to meet our cyber and data needs into the future," said Nelms.

EMC Director Danny Henson was one of the four directors to vote no in October to opening the monthly board meetings to members, though he now has a more favorable view of the process.

"It has not impacted the way that we do business, period, which was the fear I had," said Henson, adding that he believes everything has gone really well.

Board President Cummings said the board is still looking for feedback on its member attendance policy.

"If anybody has any constructive criticism or comments, and you want me to let the board know about it, I want to hear from you," said Cummings. "Or, if you're somewhere else, you can tell one of the other board members, it doesn't matter.

"We just need that information so that we can make the open meetings as good for our members and our board members as possible. I think things are going well, and I just want them to keep going well. And I want people to be able to feel that they can come if they want to."

Email addresses for the board members are available on the EMC website, and Nelms said folks are more than welcome to call the EMC and ask to speak with him.

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"We're going to have to continue to refine what we do as a school system to serve the kids a little bit better every year," said Hill. "And to get kids a little more prepared for careers and a little more prepared for school if they want to go postsecondary, to technical school or college. That's the goal, is for our kids to be employable."

The board began its search for a new superintendent in mid-November, after Dr. Rayfield announced his decision to retire at the end of the 2017-2018 school year.

"I am very confident that John Hill will continue the tradition of excellence in education that Union County Schools is known for across the state of Georgia," said Dr.



Hill being congratulated by friend Camie George following the Dec. 12 board meeting. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

Rayfield in response to the board's decision.

Continued Dr. Rayfield: "John has a huge heart for all of our students and employees. He has the work ethic and

integrity to be successful in educational leadership. John Hill has earned my respect and will be a great leader for this community."

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a spot for many more children to benefit from the program.

"It's good to be able to be here and do it, to help out the kids," said Tanner. "That's the reason why we work all year, to try to get money to help them."

UCSO Deputy Mitchell Henderson attended Shop with a Cop with his girlfriend Kaley Raper, and he played a key role in raising money for Shop with a Cop this year, as all proceeds from the Nov. 18 #239 Turkey Trot 5K and Prayer Walk went to Shop with a Cop and the Sheriff's Give-A-Gift programs.

Following the shopping portion of Shop with a Cop, the kids went back to their morning meeting place that Saturday, the Union County Middle School, and had lunch courtesy Chick-fil-A.

On top of the Walmart shopping experience, each child who participated in the 2017 Shop with a Cop received a \$100 food card for use in a local grocery store.

Fellowship of the Hills Church also provided food baskets for each participant's family.

Clerk of Blairsville Municipal Court and Secretary to the Blairsville Police Department Cindy Neely would like to thank the community for making this year's Shop with a Cop possible.

Several local law enforcement officers were joined by family and friends to assist during the shop.



One of the goals of Shop with a Cop, besides the very important one of making sure needy children experience good Christmases, is outreach between law enforcement officers and the community they serve. Photo/Shawn Jarrard



As always, deputies from the Union County Sheriff's Office helped out with Shop with a Cop. Photo/Shawn Jarrard



Blairsville Police Chief Johnny Carroll helping Lisa Baxter pick out a present for a little girl during Shop with a Cop. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

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as some emergency notifications might only apply to certain parts of the county, like an isolated water main break.

Examples of other alerts residents can look forward to receiving include notifications about extreme weather, as well as information concerning city activities, water department alerts, and parks and recreation alerts.

In place since 2010, the alert system has been used most recently to keep residents up-to-date on Winter Storm Benji and Tropical Storm Irma, and even to get the word out that the recent Boiled Water Advisory had been lifted.

Signing up for the program can be done easily online by navigating to tinyurl.com/ucwens, at which point residents just need to complete the form that comes up.

Union County's Emergency Management Agency office has stressed the importance of completely filling out the form to include a local address so that localized emergency notifications can reach the proper residents.

For more information or to register for UCWENS by phone, call (706) 439-6091 on weekdays between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.

As previously reported, Union County Fire Chief and EMA Director David Dyer believes it's important that every single person in the county signs up for the service.

"We can get anything out via the notification system," said

Dyer. "The main alerts that we would do is stuff like (a) burn ban; hazardous materials, where people need to shelter in place, which means they need to shut their home down, don't bring any kind of outside ventilation into it for a while;

"Or if they need to evacuate, like Gatlinburg, which would be a perfect example, to evacuate all those folks during the fire. Winter storms, thunderstorms – NOAA alerts can come through this also."

Continued Dyer: "It's the quickest, fastest, easiest way that we can get information into peoples' hands. It's been proven that people will not take action

unless they have two sources of information.

"We know that people are watching TV, looking on the internet, getting their NOAA weather alerts. We would like to have a local area to where people can say, okay, I hear the media and the news and all this national stuff – now, we have a local element that's saying the same exact thing."

Part-time residents signed up for the alerts who, for example, travel to Florida during the winter season, will still get their Union County alerts – a good thing to keep out-of-county homeowners advised on what's going on near their properties.