

EMC...from Page 1A

and deliberation, the Board of Directors has rejected your clients' demand that the Board assert the alleged causes of action against the General Manager and the six specifically named directors, as set forth in your correspondence of November 6, 2014. No action has been taken, at this time, upon the other demands made by your clients and set forth in your correspondence as such demands do not relate to causes of action that may be asserted on behalf of Blue Ridge Mountain Electric Membership Corporation."

EMC directors Steven Phillips, Charles Jenkins and Chris Logan abstained from the directors' vote to reject the membership demands, the newspaper has learned.

On Monday, Director Phillips said the EMC board took no vote regarding General Manager Akins.

"We didn't take a vote about Matthew Akins," Director Phillips said. "The only vote was in regards to the six named board members. Director Jenkins, Director Logan, and myself abstained from that vote."

The derivative action will be filed on behalf of EMC members Krista L. Gooch, Larry Williams, Todd and Helen Kimsey, Jerry O'Connell, Andrew E. Stephens, Barbara Moss, Dr. Marcia Schultz, Floyd Schultz, and Wes Hopgood, according to the demand letter.

The 10 members' derivative action, which will now move forward, seeks to have Akins dismissed for allowing former BRMEMC President Terry Taylor and his Taylor and Taylor Construction to accumulate significant balances

with BRMEMC without requiring payment or informing the EMC's Board of Directors, according to a derivative action demand letter filed by the membership group.

Also, the membership group alleges that the decision of Akins and the six directors named in the action response, to continue providing service to Taylor and his commercial operation in the face of significant balances violated the intent of BRMEMC policies, according to the action response obtained by the *North Georgia News*.

The action response, prepared by the membership group's legal counsel Gearhiser, Peters, Elliot & Cannon, PLLC, also alleges Akins violated BRMEMC policies by failing to timely communicate Taylor and his commercial operation's failure to pay BRMEMC to the EMC Board of Directors.

The membership group also alleges a violation of BRMEMC's whistleblower policies related to the demotion of Chris Kelley from the position Director of Operations on March 18, 2014. The date of the demotion, according to the membership group, is strong proof that Akins - with the knowledge and approval of the six named directors - violated BRMEMC's whistleblower policies.

Kelley notified some of the EMC Directors of Taylor and his commercial operation's outstanding balance on at least three occasions, the last of which occurred on March 13, 2014, according to the action filed on behalf of the membership group.

"On March 18, 2014 - a scant five days later - Akins de-

moted Kelley. The timeline of these events is strong circumstantial proof that Akins ignored Policy Bulletin No. 606 designed to protect employees like Kelley 'from reprisals or victimization for filing reports (of improper or illegal conduct) in good faith.'

"Indeed, such reprisals and victimizations have continued even though Kelley is no longer an employee of BRMEMC. After Kelley left BRMEMC to accept a position with another employer, Gene Coker - Kelley's replacement as Director of Operations --contacted Kelley's current employer to complain about the actions of Kelley's family members at BRMEMC's Annual Meeting in an obvious attempt to convince the employer to terminate Kelley," according to the action response from the membership group.

The action response also alleges that Akins should be terminated for sending inappropriate e-mails to all EMC employees.

The action response alleges that Sorgen should have advised the Board of Directors about Taylor and the Quarry's outstanding balance in May or June 2013 rather than merely telling Taylor to resolve the balances, as referenced in the \$30,000 Steven Minor report.

The action response includes a brief reference that Allen may have left important information out of BRMEMC's annual audit, and should be dismissed.

The action response warned that the membership group intends to file a derivative action on behalf of BRMEMC against Akins and the six named directors and

seek all available remedies at law and equity, including reasonable expenses and reasonable fees of attorneys under O.C.G.A. Section 46-3-272.

Also, on Page 3C of this edition of the *North Georgia News*, the minutes from the Sept. 29 EMC Board of Directors' meeting are included, brought to our readers as a public service from the *North Georgia News*, Towns County Herald and BRMEMC Director Steven Phillips.

Promise...from Page 1A

graduate, that we're going to stick with them, and we're going to help them find opportunities either in the military, either in college or either going to work full time," said Mike Beatty, who formerly acted as commissioner for the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, and currently heads up GPP.

Union County Development Authority Executive Director Mitch Griggs highlighted the relationships already built within the community.

"The idea is to work with our local partners here, get the kids on a track where we place them with area businesses in a work environment," said Griggs. "They go to school part of the day, they work part of the day. And we teach them the skills that they need to not only work today, but for a future life. A condition of the program, however, is that they have to stay in school."

This year marks the first year that the Great Promise Partnership will become available to the business community at large, though Blairsville was the second site in the state to receive the program.

One of the Blairsville businesses that has already benefited from the Great Promise is Advanced Digital Cable, which has had the opportunity to employ a couple of students already.

"Your thought process in your mind is, I'm helping someone," said Director of Personnel Joseph Gobles of ADC. "And if they stay with you, great. If they stay and make this a career, phenomenal. That's exactly what you would love to happen. However, it's about mentoring."

Gobles introduced Brandon Lichey, a young man from the high school who started work for ADC under the Great Promise Partnership. Lichey needed a job to pay for his bills, but his grades started to fall from working



Former Department of Community Affairs Commissioner Mike Beatty talks about the Great Promise Partnership. Photo/Shawn Jarrard

late hours. Since beginning the program, Lichey's grades have seen an improvement and he gets home earlier in the evening.

"It's a two-way street," said Griggs. "The kids are coming in and being productive workers for the businesses, and of course, the business will be providing opportunities for the kids as well."

Union County Superintendent of Schools Gary Steppe highlighted what the high school has done to prepare students for work upon graduation.

"Probably one of the most important things we've done - we, with the help of Jennifer Ludlum, who is our Work-Based Learning coordinator and our CTAE director, we have really emphasized on trying to match students with businesses that they can go in and do a good job," said Superintendent Steppe.

Griggs also thanked John Phillips, director of Georgia Mountains Workforce Development out of Gainesville, Ga.

"The Workforce Invest-

ment Board is the regional iteration, I suppose, of the Workforce Investment Act," said Griggs.

The WIA was created in 1998, and "enacted a formula-funded youth program serving eligible youth, ages 14-21, who face barriers to employment," according to program literature.

GMWD has several programs aimed at serving these eligible youth, including After School Programs, Credit Recovery Programs, College or Technical College Assistance, Summer Work Experience and Youth Employment Apprenticeship Resource, better known as YEAR.

Ultimately, Griggs and those involved in the effort behind Great Promise Partnership, Work-Based Learning and GMWD, including the Blairsville-Union Chamber of Commerce and North Georgia Technical College, are now appealing to businesses within the community to partner up and help kids who need the help.

Breakfast was provided by The Sawmill Place Restaurant.

Bell Ringing Union County Old Courthouse



November 25th
in memory of
**Frances "Fran"
Bradley Taylor**
by her daughters
Wendy Ryback
and Valerie Wagner
**Bell ringing information
at 706-745-5493**