

## Indictments...from Page 1A

of a financial transaction card; financial transaction card theft.

Robert James Allen, two counts deposit account fraud; theft by deception.

Donald Allen Kania, manufacture of marijuana.

Belinda Beth Wood, aka Belinda Beth Hehir, failure to register as a sex offender.

Joshua Lane Christopher, two counts cruelty to children in the first degree; four counts pointing a gun or pistol at another.

Jordan Joseph Howell, violation of Georgia Controlled Substances Act; possession of a controlled substance with intent to distribute; possession of marijuana with intent to distribute; possession of drug-related objects.

Brandon Michael

Lamarre, violation of Georgia Controlled Substances Act; possession of a controlled substance with intent to distribute; possession of marijuana with intent to distribute; possession of drug-related objects; illegal use of a communication facility.

Brandon Jewell Baker, trafficking methamphetamine or amphetamine; three counts sale of methamphetamine; three counts illegal use of a communication facility.

Nathan Jack Fain, possession of methamphetamine.

Cynthia Lynn Smith, possession of methamphetamine; possession of marijuana, less than an ounce.

William Loren Campbell, manufacturing marijuana; tampering with evidence;

possession of drug-related objects.

Jennifer Ann Bryant, possession of methamphetamine with intent to distribute; possession of methamphetamine; possession of drug-related objects; improper turn.

Teresa Anne Colwell, possession of methamphetamine; obstruction of an officer.

Joseph Ray Wehunt, possession of methamphetamine; possession of drug-related objects.

James Paul Weaver, possession of methamphetamine; possession of marijuana, less than an ounce; possession of drug-related objects.

Jeffery Scott Shuford, criminal damage to property in the second degree.

## BRMEMC...from Page 1A

EMC Board of Directors voted to change the venue, day and time of the meeting in a multi-front effort to scale back on annual meeting costs.

For starters, holding the meeting at co-op headquarters during business hours will allow the EMC to close early to divert staff to assist with on-site hosting duties, meaning no overtime costs for extra weekend labor and no extra venue costs to host the meeting elsewhere.

And though the change to weekday business hours is likely to impact the number of members who will be available to attend, it won't impact the overall say of the membership in the 2019 director elections, since each incumbent running for re-election is running unopposed.

As such, Gene Mason of Union County, Cory Payne of Clay County, North Carolina, and Ray Cook of Cherokee County, North Carolina, will be automatically re-elected following the Sept. 26 meeting, granted enough people vote in the election to establish a quorum.

All three incumbents won election to their first three-year board terms in 2016, and Mason, Payne and Cook were the only members to submit director nomination paperwork ahead of the 2019 election.

Since the only items to appear on this year's ballot are the elections of three unopposed member candidates, the EMC Board decided in July not to bulk mail paper ballots, thereby saving the co-op roughly \$35,000.

On top of the \$35,000 in paper ballot savings, the EMC will save an additional \$20,000 in annual meeting costs by cutting advertising and forgoing door prizes, along with holding the event during the week at co-op headquarters.

The annual meeting cost about \$100,000 in 2018, so the \$55,000 savings in 2019 will result in a cost reduction of more than 50% for the annual gathering of the membership.

Cash prize drawings will take place instead of the usual awarding of door prizes to entice member participation at this year's big meeting, which will also feature a number of industry professionals providing information to members in the leadup to the start of meeting business.

In other EMC news, the board held its regular monthly meeting on Monday, Sept. 16, and directors heard from Certified Public Accountant Woody Trimble with financial services firm Jackson Thornton.

Trimble announced a clean bill of financial health for the EMC, reporting that operating revenues for the nearly \$98 million nonprofit company were actually up about \$1.7 million for Fiscal Year 2019 that ended June 30.

The CPA said the increases were due mainly to improved electric sales plus outside compensation for sending EMC employees to aid reconstruction efforts in middle and south Georgia following Hurricane Michael.

EMC leadership views the increased revenues as a combination of natural fluctuations in weather, continued system growth and good financial stewardship via conservative budgeting, which the EMC hopes will help the co-op continue to pay down its \$110 million in debt and counteract inflation for years to come.

A few co-op members, however, think the EMC could be using its increased revenues to offset or avoid an upcoming "revenue-neutral rate adjustment" that will take effect Oct. 1.

Historically, fixed costs have been built primarily into metered electric rates, benefiting members who use

less electricity at the expense of higher-energy users, who, regardless of income, end up paying more than their fair share to maintain the fixed costs of the co-op, according to the EMC.

The EMC contends the rate adjustment is designed to better isolate and recover fixed costs while simultaneously creating a fairer distribution of fixed cost charges by lowering the metered electric rate and raising the customer charge to have no effect on average-use power bills.

In each of the past three years, including in 2019, the federally-owned Tennessee Valley Authority approved the EMC's proposed revenue-neutral rate adjustments, though this year's adjustment stands apart because of a recent change in TVA's financial planning.

As previously reported, the TVA Board decided not to impose an expected rate increase on local power companies in 2019, so the corresponding revenue-neutral rate adjustment approved by the EMC Board in May will be the only change to member bills starting in October.

Had the TVA rate increase gone into effect, as it had every year since 2013, everyone in the residential and GSA1 (larger residential and smaller business) rate classes would have started seeing the same \$1.54 per month increase across the board on their October electric bills.

And now, most members will still see slight variances in their bills due to the corresponding EMC rate adjustment, just not to the same extent.

Essentially, the adjustment is revenue-neutral for the EMC in that it will not increase the amount of money collected by the co-op, and it will be bill neutral for average users who consume about 907 kilowatt-hours per month, keeping average-use member bills from undergoing any change.

Due to the way the rate adjustment lowers the metered electric rate to pull out fixed costs, above-average electric consumers will save more than the \$1.54 adjustment to the customer charge, translating to above-average users seeing slight decreases in their total power bills every month.

Below-average users, however, will experience a slight increase in their electric bills ranging from a few cents a month up to nearly the \$1.54 per month, according to the EMC.

This last point is largely what prompted members Randy Mazie from Union County and Lucille Heil from Towns County to address the EMC Board in the Sept. 16 meeting.

Mazie and Heil view the impending rate adjustment as being discriminatory against lower-use residential members,

particularly those with lower incomes, fixed incomes, people who utilize solar power to cut down on costs, etc.

That Monday, they urged the EMC Board to forgo its current rate adjustment approach in favor of an across-the-board rate adjustment that would be both revenue neutral for the EMC and bill neutral for members.

For example, Mazie said the EMC could accomplish a revenue-neutral rate adjustment by transferring \$1.54 from the bottom line of each member's electric usage over to the customer charge portion of their bill for a net zero impact on all residential and GSA1 member bills.

This approach would definitely work to stabilize fixed-cost recovery in an inflationary environment, and era of increasing energy efficiency, but it would not tackle the issue of making the distribution of fixed costs fairer across the membership, said EMC General Manager Jeremy Nelms.

Also in the Sept. 16 board meeting, directors discussed several bids for the major purchase of a new systemwide electric metering system to replace the one that's currently in use, opting to go with Landis+Gyr for a 10-year purchase price of \$8.5 million.

The EMC's current meters will no longer be manufactured after this year, and the transition to and installation of the new system – which will effectively have a shelf-life of at least 20 years – will take place over the next several years.

Of the many benefits outlined by EMC Director of Engineering Daniel Frizzell in the meeting, the new system will be able to seamlessly integrate with current technologies used by the EMC, and the co-op will finally be able to remotely connect and disconnect metered electric accounts.

Directors also approved a request by Frizzell to hire a new broadband employee, as the co-op's fiber optic business is continuing to grow.

Frizzell pointed out that each of the EMC's two existing field services technicians is performing about 150 fiber installations per month, which Director Cory Payne said made sense, as fiber connectivity has consistently been the No. 1 concern brought to him by members.

The EMC Board approved the co-op's 2020 health insurance renewal through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association in the Sept. 16 meeting.

Medical insurance premiums have gone up about 5% since the board approved 2019 premiums last year, and in 2020, it will cost the EMC roughly \$2.63 million to provide health insurance to the EMC's 192 employees and dependents, totaling about 550 people.