

BRMEMC...continued from Page 1A

Jenkins, Phillips and Logan enter their first terms.

Those three were EMC freshmen when elected in '14, though now they are the ranking board members, as each annual meeting since, the membership has elected fresh leadership to the board.

When Jenkins, Phillips and Logan ran for election three years ago, they were required to gather more than 100 member signatures apiece to receive their nominations by petition, as the board's Nominating Committee at that time had no clear process by which to nominate members interested in running.

All that has changed over the past few years, as new policies have made it easy for EMC members to run for the board.

Just last week, on Thursday, June 1, the board-appointed Nominating Committee met to nominate members who had submitted their names to the committee.

That meeting resulted in the nomination of four EMC members from Union County, three from Towns County and two from Clay County, North Carolina, all of whom will potentially appear on the ballot in September.

Those members who have been nominated must still be vetted by the member-led Elections and Credentials Committee, which will work in concert with EMC management to make sure that the nominees are members in good standing

Union County Historical Society Museum volunteer meeting

There will be a volunteer meeting on Thursday, June 15th at 1 p.m. at the Union County Historical Society Museum on the square. We are looking for dependable volunteers for various shifts available weekdays and Saturdays. Please consider volunteering a few hours of your time.

Call 706-745-5493 if you need more information in the Historical Society.

with the EMC, and therefore qualified to run.

The Nominating Committee is composed of EMC members, and it met for the first time on April 10 to discuss its duties and responsibilities.

Those on the Nominating Committee are as follows: Bruce Little of Cherokee County, North Carolina; Guy Grant and Michael Anderson of Clay County, North Carolina; Robert Turner of Fannin County; Alan Rogers and Jason Dyer of Towns County; and Ruby Jones, Lee Knight and Paul Brown of Union County.

Between that April 10 meeting and the June 1 meeting, the members of the Nominating Committee spoke with members interested in running for the board, informing them of the duties, responsibilities and personal commitment expected from elected board members.

All members who submitted their names to the Nominating Committee received nominations, and should appear on the ballot in September pending vetting by the Elections and Credentials Committee.

The Elections and Credentials Committee will meet in July to vet nominees, after which the names of candidates for the upcoming election will be made public.

Technically, it's not too late to receive a nomination from the Nominating Committee, though the committee has already fulfilled its obligation per the EMC bylaws.

The Nominating Committee decided to meet at the beginning of June because, after the announcement soliciting nominations appeared on the EMC website and in various newspapers EMC-wide over the last couple of months, there came a period after which no more names came in to the committee.

Since the committee has met to conduct nominations, the time to be nominated by committee is closed unless the board decides to have the committee reconvene for such a purpose, and that option is

only viable through Friday, June 30.

Reconvening the Nominating Committee would require sufficient notice for the board to call a special meeting.

This means that members interested in receiving a nomination by committee would need to hurry up and get their names in to one of the board members by around the middle of June in order for the board to be able to reconvene the Nominating Committee by the last Friday in June.

It's likely that, at this point, the easiest process for latecomers interested in running for the board of directors is to go ahead and start the petition nomination process, the successful completion of which would guarantee a spot on the upcoming ballot.

To be nominated by petition, prospective nominees would need to acquire the signatures of 113 EMC members, at which point their nomination would be turned over to the Elections and Credentials Committee for vetting.

Those interested in receiving a petition for candidacy should visit the EMC headquarters, and all petitions must be received before the third Monday in July.

"I would like to say a special thank you to the Nominating Committee," said EMC Board Chairman Mickey Cummings. "We had an extraordinary committee, they brought forth some good names for us to consider, and I really appreciate all their hard work."

EMC Board Vice Chair Steven Phillips, who served last year as board chair and currently heads up the board's Policy Committee, said that the board has taken the membership's concerns to heart, including the nominating process.

"When we got elected, we said we'd make some major changes at the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC, and one of them was the Nominating Committee," said Phillips.

This year's annual meeting will be held on Saturday, Sept. 9, at the Union County Schools Fine Arts Center.

Cummings talks Farmers Market in neighboring Towns County

By Lily Avery
North Georgia News
Staff Writer

YOUNG HARRIS – Union County Farmers Market Manager Mickey Cummings paid a visit to Towns County residents to talk vendors, produce and more at the Mountain Movers and Shakers weekly meeting at Mary's Southern Grill on Friday, May 26.

Although Towns County has its own farmers market, Cummings wanted to explain the regional impact of the Union County Farmers Market with locals, and extend a warm welcome to any who wished to get involved.

"When we started at the (Union County) courthouse all those years ago, we had 30 vendors," said Cummings. "At the new Farmers Market, we have 84 stalls and most of those are full all the time."

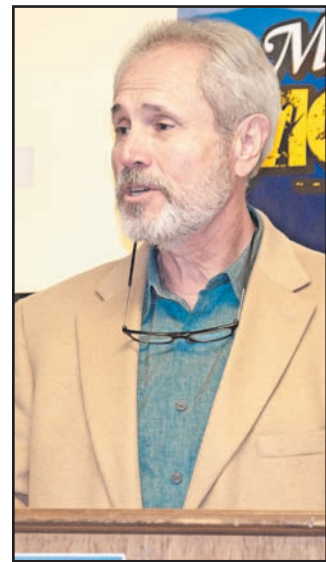
According to Cummings, on any given Saturday, the Market could see anywhere from 2,000 to 5,000 people coming through, both locally and out of state, to come see what all the Farmers Market has to offer.

With this large influx of visitors comes an increase in local, even regional, economics. Cummings added that oftentimes, not only will these Market-goers visit the Farmers Market, but they will also visit local restaurants and retail locations. And this does not include the impact it has on those who sell their goods at the Market.

"Every year we do an evaluation of the Farmers Market," said Cummings. "We want to determine the impact of our Farmers Market. So, we ask our vendors how much money they generate on any given Saturday."

"What we found was, on average, our farm or produce vendors bring in around \$369 per week. Our craft vendors bring in somewhere around \$356."

Last year alone, the Union County Farmers Market generated \$600,000 for its Saturday openings – all of



Union County Farmers Market Manager Mickey Cummings. Photo/Lily Avery which went directly to the vendors.

"Basically, the Farmers Market was generating this money for the people who were selling the product," said Cummings. "If you combine that with what we do at the canning plant and what we do at the yard sale on Fridays, the Farmers Market was generating between \$1.1 and \$1.3 million for this area just last year."

"We try to balance what it does for the vendors and what it does as a tourist attraction."

Union County Farmers Market features vendors from Union County and the continuous counties, including Towns, Fannin, White, and Lumpkin counties and Clay and Cherokee counties, in North Carolina.

"There's a reason why our vendors must make their products in these areas," said Cummings. "You see these big grocery stores that advertise locally grown foods but locally grown to them is anything from the Southeastern United States. To me, locally grown means locally grown, right here."

"That's where our crops come from. There are a few exceptions but those are for crops that we don't grow in Union County or any of the continuous counties."

Peaches, apples, pecans, muscadines, watermelons, pumpkins, cantaloupes and strawberries are the exceptions that are not native to the area. Watermelons can be grown locally, but do not come into season until August, so vendors are allowed to bring outside melons up until that point.

Vendors that sell at the Market not only have to make sure that their products are locally grown or locally sourced, each of their products must also be verified by a Market employee.

Before each opening day, vendors must provide a list of their products. If a product is not on the list, it cannot be sold at the Market.

For those who sell produce, Cummings also verifies the authenticity of the crops by performing home checks, just to be sure that the Market is only selling locally grown foods, as advertised.

"Our farmers must list everything that they're going to be selling," said Cummings. "Then, this time of year, I start visiting those farms. I make sure that what they have listed is what they're growing on those farms."

"Then when they start coming in June, I go through the buildings every morning, before we open, and make sure that they have in their possession what they have on the list."

"If they have something that isn't on the list, we tell them they can't sell it because I have to verify it's there and that what they're selling is what they're growing."

Cummings added that walk-up vendors are more than welcome each Saturday, space permitting, and that the same rules apply to those merchants.

Beginning Saturday, June 3, the Union County Farmers Market will be open every Saturday, from 7 a.m. until 2 p.m., and Tuesday, from 2 p.m. until 6 p.m., from now until October.

"Come on out and see us," said Cummings. "We'd love to have you."

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