

BRMEMC...from Page 1A

that move in the future," Cummings said.

Cummings told the crowd of about 20 persons that the Board needed to hear from its membership to learn what the membership likes and dislikes about the new measures the Board goes through each month.

The Board also learned that the costs of the 2017 Annual Meeting were significantly lower than costs in 2016. In 2016, the cost of the annual meeting was \$112,640.05 compared with \$76,619.97 in 2017.

EMC General Manager Jeremy Nelms told the board that he believed the cost savings came in the form of not having paper ballots printed to send to the membership.

President Cummings agreed that made a significant financial difference. He added that it also had another impact, one of the lowest voting turnouts in EMC history.

"I'm going on record saying I think we should revisit using paper ballots in future elections," President Cummings said. "Online voting left something to be desired."

Cummings asked

members to contact their representatives on the board and let them know if they want paper ballots included in next year's elections.

Director Larry Williams said the voting turnout was a disgrace.

"We've got 50,000 members and only a little more than 1,900 voted in our last election," he said. "That's pitiful."

Williams added that he does not support having only county specific voting measures to elect directors as requested at the Annual Meeting by the membership. One thing was certain, no one verified that those persons attending the annual meeting were in fact members of the cooperative with voting privileges, Williams said.

Director Bert Rogers also disagreed with the county specific voting method.

"I represent the cooperative, not just Towns County," Rogers said.

Williams said that he believed the EMC's new attorney, Charles Autry, should do some due diligence to determine if holding votes specific to each county was legal.

Meanwhile, Nelms told the Directors that the cost of Hurricane Irma in September was approximately \$596,000.

"I feel like we were spared significantly," Nelms said. "We had everything back on (electricity) within 70 hours. We hope to get 75 percent of that back from the feds. The question is, if and when."

Meanwhile, Nelms explained that he was exploring a pilot program by the Rural Utilities Service that would allow the refinancing of federal financing bank loans. There is a \$600 million max debt load that could be refinanced.

The cooperative has already submitted all loans with higher interest rates (close to \$50 million of debt) to be considered for refinancing in the pilot program.

"If we take all the notes more than 2 percent in interest and refinance them, it would save hundreds of thousands in interest," Nelms said. "That's a significant savings."

Director Gene Mason received recognition in the meeting for completing the Credentialed Cooperative Director program in December of 2016, and received his certificate of completion at the start of the November board meeting.

Teachers...from Page 1A

of the Year," adding that her success comes from having such awesome students and wonderful coworkers at the high school.

Over at Union County Elementary School, Brittany Jordan said she, too, was honored to have been chosen as teacher of the year.

Jordan is a Union County

native who graduated from Union County High in 2002. She attended Brenau University for her bachelor's degree and Piedmont College for her master's degree.

She has been a teacher for 12 years now, with the past five of those spent between the third and fourth grades at Union County Elementary.



Brittany Jordan with husband Joe and daughters on Aug. 21, 2017 - Eclipse Day. Photo/Facebook

Currently, Jordan teaches fourth grade students, and she has two children - Mya, age 6, and Maddyn, age 2 - with her husband Joe.

"My personal teaching philosophy is the teacher is the facilitator in the classroom," said Jordan, who became a teacher because she loves kids. "I am there to support my students and help meet their needs, academically and physically."

"Each child is very unique and special. I set expectations for them and treat each of them like they are my own."

Jordan thanks her fellow teachers and staff for their support, and said that each of them are teachers of the year in her book.

Check back with the Nov. 29 edition of the *North Georgia News* for more interviews with Union County Teachers of the Year.

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More than a dozen members of the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC attended the first ever regular board meeting open to the membership on Thursday, Nov. 16. Photo/Byron McCombs

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