

EMC...from Page 1A

"In the course of our examination, we found the knowledge, cooperation, and organization of the staff of Blue Ridge Mountain EMC to be commendable, which greatly assisted in the efficiency and effectiveness of this examination."

Last fall, the board selected the Forensics Accounting Group of Dixon, Hughes, Goodman LLC out of Charlotte, North Carolina, to do the audit, and "while one board member has used DHG for accounting at their business, no one on the board or working for BRMEMC has had any previous dealings with the Forensic Accounting Group of DHG," said Perren Friday.

The audit, which started this spring and wrapped up recently, closely examined three years' worth of disbursements at a total of 12,300 checks amounting to \$72 million, spanning January 2012 through December 2014.

DHG found "no transactions that they believed required further investigation," according to the board's statement Friday.

The following areas were taken into account during the audit: cash disbursements, credit card charges and payments, accounts receivable, inventory and parts, disposal of surplus property, funding of new facility building expenditure, bank deposit activity, heat pump loan activity, and review of IRS Forms 990.

In conclusion, the auditors made several recommendations to the EMC based on their examination of the books, including: improving processes and procedures around the purchase order system; conducting inventory of assets on an annual basis; utilizing ACH when possible to disburse funds; gaining approval before ordering



Jeremy Nelms is the new general manager of the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC.

all parts; implementing an improved process for managing the disposal of surplus property.

"The board asks that the membership look at this figure as an investment," said Perren, speaking on the nearly \$76,000 cost of the audit. "As the recommendations of DHG Forensics are implemented, savings should exceed the cost of the forensic examination over time."

Board Vice Chair Mickey Cummings said in the meeting that, moving forward, the audit findings and recommendations will serve as specific guidelines for newly hired BRMEMC General Manager Jeremy Nelms.

"From my perspective, I think this just helps clear these dark clouds that have been hanging over this EMC for so long – it's just helping to clear the air," said Nelms on Friday. "It's very encouraging to me to see that we can start out essentially with a clean slate."

"To know that the financial health has not been compromised at this EMC helps me to know that we can just move forward and get back to doing what we do best, and that's serving our membership here in North Georgia and Western North Carolina."

Perren agreed with Nelms that the audit should put to rest any fears about what may or may not be hiding in the financial books of BRMEMC during its troublesome past few years.

"It's time for us to move on to the future, a bright future here at Blue Ridge Mountain EMC," said Perren.

The board will present the same information regarding the forensic audit to the membership in the Sept. 10 annual meeting, and Board Chair Steven Phillips said he's looking forward to leading that meeting in a style similar to the three Town Hall Meetings the board held earlier this year.

"Instead of being a lawyer that's going to be running it, I, being the chairman of the board, I'm going to run the meeting, and each person on the board, they've got their part," said Phillips.

Along with the new director candidates, the membership will also be voting on a policy change to bring the EMC another step into the 21st century.

"Now, if we have a board meeting, we have to send a letter out by mail instead of email, so we need to change that," said Phillips, speaking on the ballot initiative.

Commissioner...from Page 1A

has changed, no new rules are being implemented – there are just two sides to this coin.

On the one side, there is what the rulebook says, which is stated above, and District 2 says that it is simply clarifying those long-existing requirements.

On the other side, there's the 30-year precedent set by all of the counties in District 2, a precedent favored by past Department of Health leadership, to disregard the rule for lots platted prior to the first year recovery area rules were implemented, in 1984.

Many lots in Towns County were platted prior to 1984, and many of those are smaller lots containing very little acreage, including expensive lakefront lots that add to the county tax digest.

These lots face considerable devaluation under the newly enforced regulations.

For example, where earlier this year a four- or five-bedroom home could have been approved for construction on one of these lots, now the same lot may only be able to hold a two-bedroom home because of the smaller permitted septic system, due to a lack of land for the necessary replacement area.

The state got involved following a December 2015 review of procedures for issuing permits within District 2, after District 2 asked for guidance concerning easements for septic system construction.

Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall has made it clear that the county will continue to conduct business as usual when it comes to permitting these smaller, older lots.

In fact, he has had the county attorney look into the matter, and has drafted a letter that he personally delivered to District 2 Public Health Director David Westfall in the most recent Towns County Board of Health Quarterly Meeting.

The letter states: "Our



Harold Kilgore knows a thing or two about what's been going on in District 2 Public Health. He has personally seen properties diminish in other counties in light of new rules enforcement favored over 30-year precedent

County has operated since 1986 under the requirements as interpreted. We have many lots platted prior to 1984 and intend to continue to treat those lots as grandfathered."

Commissioner Kendall also said that, should matters concerning these issues go to court, the county will stand with its property owners.

And when it comes to alternatives to combat the recent clarification of minimum requirements, there don't seem to be any given said clarification.

"We have no provision or guidance for using easements in the Onsite Manual," according to a District 2 Public Health statement issued at the end of June. "Easements should not be considered when reviewing sites for new construction/ onsite sewage management system development. Hardship cases (system failures without viable options on the immediate lot) would be the only times in which easements would be considered."

According to Harold Kilgore of Gravelator Systems Inc. out of Talmo, there are common sense solutions that would eliminate the need for any "grandfathered" lots.

Kilgore and his business do all things septic-related,

from consultation and design to installation and repair.

He was working on a project in Hall County, filing all the necessary paperwork the same way he had been for years, when his permit for a septic system was denied by the health department.

This happened because that June 1 deadline came and went, which Kilgore said caught him by surprise because it hadn't been well publicized.

Since then, Kilgore has been leading the charge of change, going county to county explaining what's happened to local leaders. He is looking for the rules to undergo simple changes to alleviate issues caused by the abrupt rejection of such a longstanding rule interpretation.

Thanks to better understanding of management and installation of onsite sewage systems via advanced technology, design, more relative soil information, enhanced products and more efficient application of wastewater, said Kilgore, small plats don't even need full conventional recovery areas anymore to get the job done in an environmentally friendly manner.

Veterans...from Page 1A

Manor to celebrate and honor these veterans, with Towns County Sole Commissioner Bill Kendall and his wife, Jean, being two of the many present.

Each Quilt of Valor recipient was wrapped in their respective quilt, each handstitched and uniquely designed with patriotic threads. Along with the quilt, honorees were presented with a three-part message, a poem, a "Thank You" note and a hug from the quilters.

The first veteran honored was U.S. Army Air Force World War II veteran Oliven Cowan. He was a fighter pilot for the 388th Fighter Squadron of the 365th Fighter Group of the 9th Air Force. During the war, Cowan flew 88 combat missions throughout Normandy, Northern France, Rhineland, the Ardennes and Central Europe. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with 12 Oak Leaf Clusters, a Presidential Unit Citation with Oak Leaf Clusters, the European Theater of Operations Ribbon with Campaign Stars, as well as citations from Belgium and France.

U.S. Army veteran Gordon G. Allison, Jr. was the second to receive recognition. Allison served during the Korean War in the 2nd Infantry Division, beginning in 1950. Allison was injured in the 1951 Spring Offensive, at which time he was airlifted back to an Army Hospital in the U.S. After spending nine months in the hospital, he was honorably discharged from the Army at



Teresa Anderson, activities director of Brasstown Manor, and her staff received an award in the ceremony for their hard work and dedication as recognized by local veterans.

Fort Benning in 1952.

The third Quilt of Valor recipient was U.S. Army Veteran George Goins, who served during the Korean War. Goins joined the Army in 1950 and was honorably discharged in 1953. During his time of service, Goins spent a total of two years, 11 months and 21 days deployed to Korea, where he achieved the rank of corporal as a 53 RA ARTY. For his service, Goins received the Korean Service Medal with two Bronze Campaign Stars, the National Defense Service Medal, and the UN Service Medal.

Following Goins, U. S. Navy World War II veteran John Maynard was presented with his quilt. Maynard began his time in the military in 1945 and was discharged in 1946 as a Seaman First Class in the USNR. Maynard served at

the US Navy Training Center Bainbridge, Maryland, on the USS Cread, at USNAS Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and on the USS Guadalcanal. For his honorable service, Maynard received the American Theater Ribbon and the Victory Medal.

U.S. Army Vietnam veteran John T. Fowler was the final Quilts of Valor honoree. Fowler began his service with the Army in 1967, where he became a Light Weapons Specialist in the U.S. Infantry, serving a year tour in Vietnam. His last duty assignment was with Company F 41st Infantry in Fort Ord, California. Fowler spent two years on active duty, leaving the Army as a Sgt. (E-5) before transferring to the Army Reserves in 1969. For his honorable service, Fowler received the Bronze Star Medal, a Purple Heart, the Vietnam Service Medal, the Republic of Vietnam Campaign Medal, the Combat Infantryman Badge, the Army Commendation Medal, the National Defense Service Medal and a Sharpshooter badge.

While the ceremony was a time to honor the lives of the brave veteran recipients, it also served as a way for the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 7807 and American Legion Post 23 to acknowledge those who continue to show care for elderly veterans.

Brasstown Manor Activities Director Teresa Anderson and staff were recognized for their continued service and hard work for the senior citizens of the community, especially veterans. Anderson received a plaque for her outstanding leadership at the event as well as for her consistent nurturing and care of local citizens and veterans.

All those in attendance enjoyed a banquet following the ceremony, celebrating a day of fellowship, honor and service.

WWII...from Page 1A

drops of the atomic bombs on Japanese cities, Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Hiawassee local and U.S. Navy (Ret.) Chief Petty Officer Clarence "Bud" Johnson, an Iwo Jima Veteran, was 24 years old at the time of the surrender, and he can still recall the moment that rekindled hope for many Americans around the world.

"I remember that day like it was yesterday," said Johnson. "My wife and I were in New York City, and we were going to go dancing at this little place we always loved going to. My wife always loved to dance.

"We saw the news out in Times Square. We even saw the sailor and the nurse kissing, you know, the ones from that famous photo. It was quite an extraordinary day.

"I knew it was going to happen, after the bombings and from what I'd seen out in the Pacific. It was just a matter of time, but what a good day it was."

Aboard the USS Missouri, a naval ship that

had seen countless battles throughout her time in the Pacific Theater of World War II, President Harry S. Truman, Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Japan Gen. Douglas MacArthur, Japanese Foreign Minister Mamoru Shigemitsu, Japanese General Yoshijiro Umezu and all major Allied powers signed the document that would end World War II.

"I remember that day very well, even though I was a just a little boy," said local U.S. Navy veteran Comm. John Richards. "My family and I, we were all sitting around and heard it on the radio. I knew it was something very important."

On that September Sunday in 1945, over 250 Allied warships made port in the Tokyo Bay, the USS Missouri at the helm of the fleet. Just above the deck, the flags of the United States, Britain, the Soviet Union and China flew high in celebration. The Axis was defeated.

Now, 71 years later, that day still stands in infamy not

only in America, but also around the world. World War II brought more casualties worldwide than any war in history. Without that victorious moment, as generals and great leaders wept tears of both sadness and joy, many freedoms enjoyed today would be at a loss.

"It wasn't about just us," said Johnson. "It was about everyone. It was about all the soldiers and marines and seamen and coast guard protectors and civilians and leaders coming together and working towards a greater good."

"We didn't do it because we had to. We did because we wanted to. I'm so proud to have served for my country and for the USS Missouri. It was truly the greatest honor."

To commemorate such a triumphant day, and to honor those men who gave their lives during the war, Johnson will be donating a book containing important information concerning the USS Missouri and her tour in World War II to the Towns County Public Library.

Jenkins...from Page 1A

Truett McConnell University, it's a big day for me personally. I've known this young lady for a long time. She embodies everything that I'm looking for and our school is looking for in a total person.

"She is an amazing lady, and she's going to be in the mix to be very competitive for our golf program. This is just an awesome day for Truett McConnell University."

For Jenkins, her signing day was the culmination of many years of dedication to the sport.

"It means a lot to me, because this is always what I wanted to do," said Jenkins. "Everything that I've worked for is paying off."

Looking forward to her final year of high school, Jenkins is not shy about the high expectations she holds for herself, as she's aiming for a state championship to close out her career at TCHS.

If Indians Golf Coach Brett Keller has anything to say about it, Jenkins will be walking away with the Top Honors she deserves, though in his eyes she's already an accomplished young woman.

"Truett McConnell is getting a quality person besides the golf talent," said Coach Keller. "She is someone they will be proud to have representing them."



Jenkins listens as her upcoming coach, Steven Patton of Truett McConnell University, tells those gathered about how the college is looking forward to receiving Jenkins next fall.

athletically, Jenkins had her pick of seven other schools, one as far away as Colorado, though she knew in her heart she wanted to attend Truett McConnell.

Those in attendance for her signing ceremony were grandparents Betty and Jerry Jenkins, father Tracy and mother Ingrid Jenkins, Indians Coach Brett Keller, TCHS Principal Dr. Connie Hobbs, Bears Coach Steve Patton, TCHS Athletic Director Jim Melton, TCHS Counselor Lana Parker and Indian teammate

Chase Williams.

Following the ceremony and delicious cake, Jenkins said she was thankful for her family and God for giving her this opportunity, as well as for Steve Phelps, golf pro at Brasstown Valley, and her high school coach Brett Keller.

Truett McConnell University is a private Christian liberal arts and sciences university where Jenkins looks to major in business, though she did say she wouldn't mind turning pro given the right circumstances.

Rape...from Page 1A

Shook is being held in Clay County on \$50,000 secured bond until his extradition to Union County, where further charges are pending, according to Lt. Osborn.

Lt. Osborn and Detective Sgt. Tom Mangifesta would

like to thank the following individuals: Lt. Mark Henderson, Cpl. Jeremy Parker and Deputy Johnny McCoy, all of the Towns County Sheriff's Office; and Clay County Sheriff's Deputy Eric Giles of North Carolina.