

## EMC...from Page 1A

an assault on their character, and a malicious charge of criminal conduct, which has damaged their families and businesses in an amount to be proven at trial; award reasonable expenses and attorney fees incurred in the case; and grant such relief that the court deems equitable and just.

Tom Daniel, of Daniel, Lawson, Tuggle & Jerles is representing the four directors.

Directors Ronald Burch and William Prather did not join the other directors in the counter claim.

The suit was filed Jan. 2 in Towns County Superior Court on behalf of BRMEMC members Krista L. Gooch, Larry Williams, Andrew Stephens, and Barbara Moss, on behalf of the BRMEMC membership. According to the 219-page lawsuit, they seek a jury trial to decide the case. No trial date had been set at press time.

They ask for a judgment in favor of the membership against General Manager Matthew Akins, and directors Burch, Prather, Ensley, Lance, Nichols and Owenby, according to the suit.

The suit also seeks the dismissal of Akins, legal counsel Lawrence Sorgen, and auditor Gene Allen, according to the suit.

The suit also seeks a judgment in favor of the plaintiffs for the benefit of the membership against the six directors and Akins for breach of fiduciary duty in an amount to be proven at trial.

The suit claims that the membership has been damaged by a result of the actions of the six named Board of Directors and Akins.

The suit claims the directors named in the suit failed to discharge their duties in good faith and with the degree of diligence, care, and skill, which ordinarily prudent men would exercise under similar circumstances in like positions and are therefore liable to the membership for breach of fiduciary duty under O.C.G.A. Sections 46-303 and 46-3-303-1.

The suit stems from the disclosure that former BRMEMC President Terry Taylor was allowed to carry a significant debt, and retain electrical service to both his commercial operation and residential dwelling for a number of years.

The suit also alleges that Taylor, who first became BRMEMC president in 1997, was in conflict with the Board of Directors for having commercial contracts that allowed the president to benefit financially from the construction of the BRMEMC headquarters project.

The suit by the membership group claims that more than one of the Board of Directors knew about the debt incurred by Taylor and Taylor Construction, and Terry Taylor's residential account, which also was in arrears.

The suit claims that Akins, in addition to allowing Taylor to continue the indebtedness to BRMEMC, perjured himself and damaged BRMEMC by filing false reports in 2011 and 2012 on IRS Form 990.

The claim is that Akins had knowledge of a conflict of interest arising out of Taylor receiving compensation from BRMEMC at the same time that Taylor and Taylor Construction and Taylor personally, had an unpaid balance with BRMEMC; as well as Taylor and Taylor Construction doing work on the BRMEMC corporate headquarters project.

"We have elections in June, and I'm stepping down, finally - I'm running for treasurer this time, hopefully - to give some of the new people a chance," said Caines. "We've got a lot of new people, and I think it's about time for them to get involved and make some changes they think look good."

To learn more about TUMGA, visit the association's website at [www.perennialpals.com](http://www.perennialpals.com).

## Master Gardeners...from Page 1A

In 2009, I met Jo Anne Allen, and she and I were driving all the way to Blue Ridge to go to a local meeting, and so I asked her, why don't we start our own local group here?"

Those who would become Master Gardeners must go through two months of training with the University of Georgia, in areas such as biology and botany, which is more than 60 hours of classes. Those who graduate the program must complete 50 hours of volunteer time following training.

"The University of Georgia, because they're the agricultural college for this state, each agricultural college in each state sets their own day to have a Master Gardener Day, and ours is always the third Saturday in March," said Caines. "They ask everyone to do something at that time."

A large part of what the Master Gardeners do is geared toward educating the public as they beautify and take care of the land in the counties.

"What we do is, when we go out in a garden, we work it, and we take up dues and use that money to buy signs for the plants so that people will know how to identify them," said Caines. "In Union County, they have an Ask a Master Gardener booth that's at the fairgrounds every year, and

also at their weekly farmer's market."

Master Gardeners field all kinds of questions from a curious public, giving free advice like what grows best during different times of the year, or how to identify what may be wrong with a plant they've been growing.

TUMGA is currently undertaking a number of projects around the county, including the Hiwassee Square, Towns County Courthouse, Pioneer

Village and the Hamilton Gardens at the Georgia Mountain Fairgrounds, both the Mountain Regional Library in Young Harris and the Towns County Public Library in Hiwassee, as well as the 21st Century After-school Program and Towns County Farmer's Market at the picnic area near the beach.

Caines has been president of TUMGA since the beginning of the organization, but this year, she plans to step into a different leadership role.

## Appreciation...from Page 1A

Georgia's continued growth requires dedication to excellence in our education system as well as a commitment to providing trained teachers and vital resources to all schools."

Gov. Deal continues in a similar fashion throughout the proclamation, highlighting the spirit of cooperation and teamwork school boards must embody in order to successfully navigate the policy decisions within each school district.

The import of these policy decisions is never more apparent than when examining the level of accountability each board member must uphold in order to successfully serve their district.

"As constitutional officers of Georgia, school board

members are responsible for setting educational policies, employing school personnel, providing buildings and equipment, operating a transportation system and disbursing school funds," according to a press release issued by Dr. Berrong's

office. "As community leaders, school board members serve as advocates for the children in local public schools and must study, evaluate and decide what actions are in the best interest of those students."

The end goal for any school board should always be the continued success of its district's student population, which is why the Towns County Board of Education is joining in on the statewide celebration of School Board Appreciation Week.

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