

BRMEMC...from Page 1A

Vegas for 88 days.”
Also in the meeting, EMC General Manager Jeremy Nelms brought everyone

up to speed on the state of broadband legislation in the Georgia General Assembly.

The two bills currently being reviewed in committee conference are House Bill 887 and Senate Bill 232, both of which aim to “facilitate and incentivize adequate and expanded broadband and other communications services throughout the state,” per HB 887.

Nelms said he was hopeful that the increased legislative attention being paid to broadband expansion will help rural communities like those in North Georgia

to gain better access to more reliable internet services.

Furthermore, Nelms said that he had been tapped by Georgia EMC to join a group focused on providing guidance and feedback on EMC needs in the broadband realm, alongside CEOs of Greystone Power, Flint Energies and Mitchell EMC.

More details on an upcoming TVA rate change emerged in the March 13 board meeting, as Nelms informed the board that the TVA plans to submit the rate change proposal to its board in May.

After that, BRMEMC will have until July 1 to figure out how to implement the rate change for customers.

The board was excited to discuss in the meeting a new product the EMC will be offering for members called GenerLink.

GenerLink is “a new meter collar device that makes connecting a portable generator safe and easy,” according to promotional materials, and it “detects when a generator is operating and automatically disconnects from the utility grid, eliminating dangerous feedback.”

For more information, call the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC or visit GenerLink.com

Young Harris resident and EMC member Chuck Luca attended the March 13 board meeting, and he asked the board who would be covering the cost of implementing the Hiawassee Franchise Fee Ordinance.

In his manager’s report, Nelms said that he had reached out to Hiawassee Mayor Liz Ordiales about covering the cost of any software development fees associated with collection of the fee.

DDA...from Page 1A

initial rollout,” said Harper. “Everybody that has the app will have the coupon in their phone.”

Added Harper: “It’s populated with things that tourists might want to do.”

Business owners within the city limits can contact Harper to find out if they qualify to advertise on the app.

The DDA also discussed further developing the city parking lot behind the Hole in the Wall Restaurant, which is now just a gravel lot.

“There is work we as a city have got to do before anything can be done back there,” said Blairsville Mayor Jim Conley, who regularly attends DDA meetings. “We just can’t reach out of the hat and pull up money for that.

We don’t have the money for that.”

Building the parking lot will require some engineering and work that the city has to do for sewer lines, drainage and bathrooms.

“It would take some more engineering for it to happen,” said Mayor Conley. “I would like to remove all those trees and move all that dirt.”

Added Mayor Conley: “When I free my guys up, some work we can do ourselves without a lot of monetary spending.”

Board member Robert Rogers brought up selling one of the commercial parcels of land that the city owns.

“I think we need to talk about a strategy to sell that,”

said Rogers. “Yesterday and today, I had conversations with people looking for good commercial property, and there isn’t in Blairsville, it just does not exist.”

Added Rogers: “That’s kind of the best kept secret around, is how much that is.”

With three of the board members being real estate agents, decisions must be made on how the property is listed, how to price it and how to get signs up to market the property.

“We want to sell it,” said Mayor Conley. “If it’s not known, it’s not sold.”

Board members are working on a solution to get the property listed, and they have decided to hold a work session on Tuesday, March 27, at 5 p.m.

Board member Rhonda Mahan would like to see

flashing lights put up by the crosswalks in the downtown area to make motorists aware of the pedestrians crossing the streets.

“If the lights were on both sides, it would make it more visible, like the lights in Young Harris,” said Mahan.

The crosswalk lights in the City of Young Harris are state maintained, and the DDA would have to get cost estimates for installation and maintenance.

An informational kiosk will soon be appearing downtown, as the board has purchased the lumber and will be building it soon.

The DDA will also be sprucing up the flower beds around the city in the coming weeks, and the board approved spending the money on it. They would like to plant before Memorial Day.

Tax Credits...from Page 1A

in the Top 25 most developed counties in the state to the Top 16, bumping it from Tier 3 to Tier 4 status.

Unfortunately, the transition from Tier 3 to Tier 4 lowers the incentives for new jobs creation in Union County.

At Tier 3, qualified businesses that create at least 15 net new jobs are eligible for a \$1,250 tax credit per job to be used toward 50 percent of income tax liabilities.

However, at Tier 4, the minimum number of net new jobs that must be created to receive job tax credits increases to 25, while the credits themselves drop to \$750 per job.

Fortunately, businesses that file a “Notice of Intent for Georgia Job Tax Credit” form with the DCA by the March 31 deadline will lock in the better Tier 3 job tax credits for the next three years.

Filling out the one-page form will allow businesses to continue to receive Tier 3 tax credits from 2017, despite Union County’s 2018 reclassification to Tier 4.

“If you are a qualified business in Union County and you might hire 15 or more people in a fiscal year, please fill out a Notice of Intent,” said Griggs. “Companies that fill out the NOI are not promising, are

not pledging, and are not held to any projected or hypothetical job creation number that they put on this form.

“It is absolutely and completely nonbinding in every respect.”

Griggs also said it’s important for business owners to be generous with their potential job creation estimates because, if they’re not, the state will only grant them tax credits up to the number listed on their Notice of Intent.

State law dictates the rules and regulations of the Job Tax Credit Program, which lumps all 159 Georgia counties into a ranking system from Tier 1 to Tier 4, with Tier 4 being considered the most developed.

The program is designed to make less developed counties more attractive to business owners looking for a place to set up shop, and businesses that locate in lower tier counties are rewarded better job tax credits.

Union County businesses also qualify for a \$500 bonus credit because the county is part of a joint development authority with Towns and Fannin counties.

Businesses located within one of the county’s three Opportunity Zones receive the best job tax credits possible in the program, granting any

business, including retail, a two-job creation threshold with tax credits worth \$3,500 per net new job, to go toward 100 percent income tax liability plus withholding.

But these Opportunity Zones expire in August 2020, and at this point, there is no NOI process established for companies within an OZ, so it may be advantageous to have Tier 3 job tax credit benefits in 2021 through the regular NOI process now.

Each of the four tiers is fixed by number, so even if all 159 counties were equally developed or undeveloped, they’d all still fall between Tier 1 and Tier 4 for job tax credits.

The state ranks counties based on a combination of unemployment rate, lowest per capita income, and highest percentage of residents whose incomes are below the poverty level.

Qualified businesses are those primarily engaged in manufacturing, warehousing and distribution, data processing or are headquarters facilities.

For more information ahead of the deadline, email Griggs at mitch@ucda.net, or call him on his cell at (706)599-5040.

The NOI form, including directions, can be found online by searching for “Notice of Intent for Georgia Job Tax Credit.”

Veterans...from Page 1A

to put in place a Memorial Mural at Meeks Park, which will be 300 feet long by 15 to 18 feet high.

“It’s going to have all the different wars from the Revolutionary War, the Civil War, World War I, World War II, Korea, Vietnam and the current conflict we have with terrorism,” said VVA Member Ed Frizzell.

The estimated cost of the mural is around \$100,000 to complete. The group will be seeking funding from various sources as well as fundraising efforts.

“April 19, there is a Memorial Day parade meeting, it will be a perfect opportunity to present some paperwork to the Veterans Service Organization commanders to see what kind of interest there is in helping us and helping the effort,” said Kittredge.

Group members recently picked up documents from Union County Sole Commissioner Lamar Paris’ office giving them approval to use the land at Meeks Park to construct the mural.

“Union County, myself, Larry Garrett, Larry Conley and the crew at Meeks Park are honored to have the Vietnam Veterans place a large mural at the site of the Moving Vietnam Memorial Wall in Meeks Park,” said Paris in response to the VVA’s plans.

Added Paris: “It is an exciting prospect to know such a special memorial to all veterans will be placed in Meeks Park in such a prominent location.”

The group is seeking the help of a structural engineer and volunteers to aid in constructing the mural.

This will not be the only new change in Meeks Park, as the Vietnam Veterans are

working on final approval to place a stationary helicopter at the entrance.

“Jennifer is getting a letter stating that we have approval to place and display the helo at Meeks Park,” said Tiburski. “We intend to put it on an 8 to 10-foot pedestal.”

The veterans will also be participating in the Blairsville-Union County Parade this year, and a motion was presented during the meeting to hand flags out to the community on the parade route.

A bipartisan bill was sponsored by U.S. Sens. Pat Toomey and Joe Donnelly to establish a day to honor all Vietnam Veterans for their service to their country.

On March 28, 2017, President Donald Trump signed into law the creation of a day of recognition for the nation’s Vietnam Veterans.



Photo by Mark Novak

Chuck Kittredge is the new VVA president, and was sworn in on Thursday, March 15.

March 29 is now designated as National Vietnam War Veterans Day, and the U.S. flag is to be flown in honor and remembrance of those who served in Vietnam.

Local VVA Veterans will be wearing their trademark shirts and hats that day in recognition of the holiday.