

BLUE RIDGE MOUNTAIN ELECTRIC MEMBERSHIP CORPORATION
BOARD MEETING MINUTES

February 9, 2021

The Board of Directors of Blue Ridge Mountain Electric Membership Corporation (BRMEMC) met in Regular Session on February 9, 2021. Board Chairman Ray Cook called the meeting to order at 6:18PM.

The invocation was led by Director Cook, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Director Mason

The following Directors were present as noted by Board Secretary Perren and were in attendance during the Board Meeting:

Ray Cook, President/Chair
Danny Henson, Director
Jack Lance, Director
Jeff Ledford, Director
Gene Mason, Director
Cory Payne, Director
Roy Perren, Director
Bert Rogers, Director
Gayland Trull, Director

The following Staff were recognized by the Chair and were present during Regular Session:
Erik Brinke, Interim General Manager
Charles Autry, Board Attorney

The following Staff were recognized by the Chair and were present during Regular Session via Zoom:

Amanda Holdaway, Director of Finance and Acct.
Fred Gray, Director of Operations
Daniel Frizzell, Director of Engineering
Kelly Crawford, Manager of Communications
Sonny Mahan, Director of Member Services

Upon request of Chairman Cook, the Meeting Agenda for February 9, 2021 was considered. A motion to accept the Agenda, as presented, was approved by unanimous vote upon Motion by Director Rogers seconded by Director Henson.

Upon request of Chairman Cook, the Minutes of the Board Meeting of January 19, 2021 were considered. A motion to accept the minutes, as presented, was approved by unanimous vote upon Motion by Director Payne, seconded by Director Ledford.

Board Chair Cook asked for any declarations of conflicts of interest by the Directors and none were disclosed.

Director Payne presented the Finance Committee report of the Committee meeting of February 9, 2021, at 5:00 PM, to the Board, which was noted by the Chair as received and to be filed with the Minutes of the meeting for subsequent audit. The committee also performed its quarterly review of the budget to-date.

Director Rogers presented the Policy and Public Relations Committee report of the committee meeting of February 9, 2021. The committee approved minutes from the last meeting and did not take up any further business while members attended the quarterly budget review.

Reports:

Staff Reports were presented in the board packet as available for review by members of the Board.

Member Comments:

None

Old Business:

Rick Parks has completed the property appraisal at the old EMC HQ. Interim General Manager Erik Brinke will continue working through the property appraisal documents, and Board members were encouraged to read the full reports on each parcel appraised, as well as a summary document compiled by Brinke.

New Business:

NGN Asset Transfer

Board Attorney Charles Autry presented a resolution for authorization for Erik Brinke to execute and deliver documents in connection with the transfer of assets from NGN to BRMEMC. This resolution is required in order to allow Staff and the Attorney to move forward with execution of necessary documents relative to the transfer that will be sent to NTIA, RUS, CFC and CoBank. Director Perren made a motion, seconded by Director Henson, to approve the resolution. After discussion the motion was approved by unanimous vote of the Board.

Survey and Ballot Systems

Interim General Manager Brinke inquired as to the Board's preference for using Survey and Ballot Systems for this year's Director Election. BRMEMC has used S&B's services for the past several years to manage ballot delivery via mail, online and in-person voting as well as conducting Ranked Choice Voting for Annual Meeting. The Board is not opposed to using S&B again, but suggested looking at different systems to get quotes/costs for the service. Interim General Manager Erik Brinke stated Staff will do research to see if there are comparable companies that offer this service.

Work Plan & Coordination Study

Director of Engineering Daniel Frizzell presented information on renewing the Four-Year Construction Work Plan and Coordination Study, and led discussion on the need to develop a new work plan. He also discussed the need to conduct a comprehensive coordination study

which has not been done in several years. BRMEMC last used McLean Engineering to develop both our 4-year and our 10-year long-range plans. BRMEMC is currently in the third year of a four-year plan, and Staff needs to know whether the Board wants to proceed with procuring these services or not. Frizzell suggested that BRMEMC could go through a new bid process, or could use McLean again if their price is consistent with their previous work. The Board asked how much the prior contract was, and Frizzell stated it was \$36,000. The Board suggested bidding it out to determine if we are getting the best price for the service. Both the 4-year plan and coordination study would be included in next year's budget (2022).

Director Reports:

Director Cook spoke about a member concerned about the cost of changing from temporary to permanent service. Board President Ray Cook stated that a member had voiced concern that BRMEMC's cost for service connections is too high at \$900+ dollars. Policy 336 governs these charges. Director of Engineering Daniel Frizzell stated this is a fixed-charge regardless of the footage required, since it is a service connection and is distance limited anyway. Much discussion ensued on the subject with some saying that the Cooperative is only recovering a portion of the total costs to do the work now.

Manager Report:

Zoning Variance at Old HQ (Meeting set for Feb. 16 with Mayor Andrea Gibby of Young Harris and ED Director Denise McKay)

We have discussed re-zoning of the old headquarters property several times in the past year or so, but recently the Board suggested that we should begin working on a re-zoning plan in earnest. BRMEMC has a meeting set up on February 16 with Young Harris Mayor Andrea Gibby, and the City/County Economic Development Director Denise McKay. At that meeting BRMEMC will begin conversations about the highest and best use of the property, and will discuss the City's zoning variance process. Brinke already has the documents necessary to request re-zoning, which were requested previously from the City's Attorney.

Update on Temporary Broadband Construction Assistance Progress

The Contractor providing temporary broadband construction assistance got off to a troubling slow start. BRMEMC released two jobs to the contractor last week, but they have only worked one day (2/8) since the release. The locate tickets were good on Thursday of last week for the particular jobs. Director of Operations, Fred Gray, will continue to monitor this situation closely.

BRMEMC's Role in Middle Mile Project with Seven States Power Corporation (7SPC)

Interim GM Brinke has been working with a team consisting of several other TVA-served LPC's for over a year now on a Middle Mile connectivity project that will use existing and new fiber optics to create a lit network of TVA-served LPC's across seven states, and potentially 153 LPC's. The purpose of this

interconnectivity is to allow for joint purchasing of low-cost data, emergency service sharing and communications between LPC's, data warehousing between like LPC's, creation of load management and aggregated billing opportunities, and application/service sharing. The network will also create new revenue streams for participants like cell companies, industries and multi-site commercial operations who might want to interconnect over our large geographic area. A special called meeting of the 7SPC Board was held on January 28, 2021, and the Board approved moving forward with the project. Each LPC would be given an option to participate at various levels financially, and returns on investment will be allocated based on the participation level. The details and costs are still being worked out, but BRMEMC and EMC Broadband, LLC may want to look seriously at participating as there may be significant benefit in the future. Brinke will provide more information as it becomes available.

GREAT Grant Award for Warne/Pine Log (Clay County)

BRMEMC received formal notice from the State of North Carolina Department of Information Technology that we received one of their GREAT Grants for broadband expansion in the Warne/Pine Log area of Clay County. The grant award was for \$1.27 MM, with a required \$545,000 match (30%) for a total project of \$1,816,476.50. This funding will allow BRMEMC to expand to 590 new residential and business consumers by the end of the construction period which is January 2023. BRMEMC is excited to serve this area of Clay County as it is largely un-served and under-served with broadband service currently.

President Biden appoints Tom Vilsack to serve as USDA Secretary

Tom Vilsack, who led USDA for 8 years during the Obama Administration, has been appointed to serve again as USDA Secretary. He is likely to be confirmed by the Senate, and has already been recommended by a Senate oversight committee. He is a "known commodity" to USDA borrowers, which is encouraging, and he has also stated that one of his focus areas will be last-mile broadband, which could benefit BRMEMC. BRMEMC does not anticipate much in the way of change in RUS as a result, and in fact, Vilsack is likely to re-appoint several key leaders within the agency with whom we are familiar.

Pradke, LLC Praise for Work Performed and Customer Service

Brinke received a signed letter from Pradke, LLC, the contractor working on the Baptist Retirement Community Expansion. The letter praised BRMEMC for its highest-quality service, open communications and specifically recognized Engineer Matt Walls for his excellent service delivery. Pradke suggested that BRMEMC's level of customer service is among the top of all those with whom this company works.

Presentation of Director Perren's Gold Director Certificate from NRECA

BRMEMC recently received Director Perren's certificate recognizing his achievement of NRECA's Gold Director status, which is the highest level of certification offered by NRECA for Directors. Director Perren invested a number of hours in training, and we are pleased to celebrate this accomplishment with him.

Other Business:

None

The Board adjourned at 7:18PM before going into Executive Session

The Board came out of Executive Session. With no further business the meeting was adjourned at 8:05PM


Respectfully submitted, this, the 3rd day of March 2021.

Roy Perren,
Secretary of the Board of Directors, BRMEMC

ATTEST: The undersigned EMC officers attest that the foregoing minutes of the Board Meeting on the 9th day of February 2021, were approved in Regular Session of the Blue Ridge Mountain EMC Board of Directors on the 9th day of March 2021.



Ray Cook, Board Chairman



Roy Perren, Secretary