

Results Were Close In District 9 Race

A Sunset Beach businessman came close to unseating a long-time member of the Brunswick Electric Membership Board of Directors Saturday as a write-in candidate.

Edward (Eddie) Gore Jr. of Sunset Beach received 22 fewer votes than Bryan R. Smith, a Longwood area farmer who has served on the BEMC board more than 10 years. The count was 396-374 in the District 9 race at BEMC's 52nd annual meeting in Whiteville Saturday.

Gore said he was approached Oct. 1 and asked to run. He agreed on such short notice, he said, because he was supportive of their concerns about the board's pension program and because he had concerns of his own.

"I really was kind of surprised (at the close vote), but a lot of people were supporting me," he said. "The only other election I've ever been in was for Sunset Beach Town Council. I only received a fourth of the votes I needed. I haven't tried to win any kind of election since then."

If he's not bogged down in other activities three years from now, however, Gore said he might try again to win election to the utility board. If nothing else, he's interested in learning more about how the co-op's board operates.

He was approached to run by a group of BEMC members who were upset over an annuity pension plan established by the board in 1986

that many members of the cooperative were not aware existed.

"I agreed with them, I was against it," said Gore.

Directors also receive per diem payment of \$100 per meeting plus mileage and health and dental insurance. "I think that is all the compensation the board should get," he said.

Board members should be concerned with working together to provide electricity as cheaply and efficiently as possible, he continued, in keeping with the co-op's origins.

"I've never been able to figure out why our electric rates are higher than CP&L's though we are a cooperative and don't have to pay taxes and aren't subject to some of the restrictions they are," he said. It may stem from the co-op's rural nature. "We may still have to many miles of line per connection for the rates to be competitive. I don't know."

And after Saturday's meeting, he is concerned at the lack of interest expressed by a majority of co-op members. While more than 900 members registered for Saturday's annual meeting, that represented just over 2 percent of the co-op's membership of more than 38,000. Most of those present left after the awarding of door prizes, leaving the membership unable to conduct new business because there was no longer a quorum.

Some members feel they no longer have any control over the board, evidenced by frustration expressed in questions raised at Saturday's meeting.

But Gore, who was attending his first BEMC annual meeting Saturday, said he and other co-op members need to get more involved if they are to effect change.

"I was very disappointed when I saw so many leaving after the door prizes," said Gore. "If the members are not concerned about the board's management there may not be a whole lot we can do about it."

The annual meeting agenda, as adopted by the membership, schedules awarding of the door prizes after the elections but before the balance of the business meeting. Meetings alternate between Brunswick and Columbus counties.

Gore also thinks elections could be run better, with more safeguards.

"They were talking about it being an \$80 million organization; well, I don't think that's any way to run an \$80 million business," he said.

With such low turn-out for annual meetings, one option might be instituting use of proxy votes as well as in-person votes to ensure greater member participation in elections and other business, as is routine practice for companies with stockholders, Gore suggested.



STAFF PHOTO BY DOUG RUTTER
FIREMEN PREPARE to spray water on the vacant fertilizer plant in Navassa Monday morning. Brunswick County Fire Marshal Cecil Logan expected the building to continue burning at least through Thursday.

Co-op Members Unseat Two Directors

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Members were met at the door Saturday morning with flyers and card-size slips of paper advocating either the incumbents or the alternative candidates.

Asked why someone should vote for the write-in and petition nominees, David R. Gore of Nakina said, "They're new. They can't be any worse than the ones already in there."

Brunswick Electric has had a retirement plan for directors. In its early years, any director who served 20 years received "director emeritus" status and received retirement benefits of \$100 a month, paid directly from the general operating fund.

In 1986 that changed when the National Rural Electrification Cooperative Association (NRECA) offered a deferred compensation plan through a subsidiary, ELCO, that, depending upon length of service on the board, could pay a former director or the director's survivor \$208 to \$832 per month for 8 to 16 years. The Management Incentive Plan pools money from 144 participating co-ops (out of more than 900 nationwide), then purchases insurance policies and

annuities for board members and managers. BEMC has coverage for its directors. General Manager David Batten and his assistant, Chip Leavitt.

"I think it's a good deal," board Chairman Frederick Tedder. "It doesn't cost the co-op anything and it gives a good return. It gives good men an incentive to run for the board, men who will take the time to study and learn what the board can and cannot do."

Funds committed to the program stay on the co-op books as accounts receivable, an asset. The co-op receives interest on its investment (\$50,000 from 1986 to 1990) that is paid into the general fund. Eventually the co-op gets its initial investment back plus a gain of a 100 percent to 200 percent.

"If you had been on the board and heard it the way it was presented, you would have voted for it too," said Smith.

Tedder fielded members questions Saturday while votes were counted. He urged members to read the co-op bylaws, find out more about how the organization works and get more involved.

He termed investment in the plan "a good business decision" by the

board.
 "I'm not saying that it is a bad business decision...but that it is a morally bad issue," said William David Gore of Nakina. "I believe you need to review it. You call it an incentive program; I see it more as a retirement program for the board."
 "I realize the money will come back. But it's costing us up front. And my electric bill has done nothing but go up."

In other benefits or perks, directors are paid \$100 per meeting (usually held monthly), plus travel reimbursement and medical and dental insurance.
 Tedder told the group BEMC's directors had discussed the issue and decided to stand with the retirement program.

"That means it didn't matter to you what we said here today," Jerry Perry of Supply rose and told Tedder.
 Tedder replied, "No, that's your statement."

Earlier Perry's wife, Jewel, questioned Tedder about directors' perks while complimenting BEMC on its service.
 Tom Duncan of Nakina, whose brother Pete Duncan serves as a director, said he thought it violated

federal law for each candidate not to be allowed to name someone to watch the votes counted, a task now handled by the co-op's appointed election committee, which includes one member from each district.

Tedder pointed out that the rules are set up to make sure the election is honest, with a member from each district named to the elections committee.

Another member asked how benefits for employees who retired after 30 years with the co-op compared to those provided directors.

General Manager David Batten answered only generally, saying, "Their benefit package is good," intended to help keep good employees.

Grover Faulk of Nakina wanted Tedder to specify where the money comes from for the board retirement program and who pays it. Earlier he had told the *Beacon*, "I'm paying for that and you're paying for it. If that's not cheating and stealing I don't know what is."

Tedder quickly adjourned the meeting, only to rescind the action after learning votes were still being counted. The meeting adjourned once the results were announced a few minutes later.

Chambers Company Offers Recycling To Communities

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initiated the proposed recycling program following an Aug. 7 meeting with town officials.

John M. Rodgers, general manager of Chambers' Conway Division, outlined the company's proposal in a Sept. 13 letter to the towns and Brunswick County.

For the curbside program to work, Rodgers said it would be necessary to have participation from a "significant portion" of the permanent and seasonal residents in all five towns.

Chambers serves approximately 4,671 residential units in the five towns, but more than 70 percent of them are on a seasonal basis.

With good participation, Rodgers said the cost of curbside recycling could be as low as \$5 per unit per month. The total cost for the five towns would be \$280,260 per year

based on the \$5 per unit cost.

As an alternative to curbside recycling, Chambers could set up one or more recycling centers in each of the five towns.

Residents would drop off their recyclables into six-cubic-yard containers designated for plastics, clear glass, aluminum and newspapers.

The towns would have to provide staff for the centers and pay Chambers \$600 per month if the containers are emptied once a week.

Despite the higher expense, Ocean Isle Beach Mayor Betty Williamson said she favors a curbside recycling program over one in which items must be dropped off at a central location.

She said more residents and visitors would take advantage of a convenient curbside service, and a centrally-located recycling center would be unsightly in a resort area.

Troops Sought For Festival Parade

Men and women who served in the Persian Gulf conflict earlier this year are being sought to participate in the N.C. Festival By The Sea parade scheduled for Saturday, Oct. 26, beginning at 10:30 a.m.

The parade is being dedicated in honor of the U.S. troops who served throughout the middle east during the Gulf conflict.

In addition to being featured in the parade, participating troops will also be honored later that afternoon in a special ceremony at the entertainment stage at 1 p.m.

All troops may register for the ceremonies and receive special instructions, including complimentary meal money, at Craig Realty (118 Ocean Blvd.) located on the island next to the bridge.

The parade and ceremonies are part of the Festival By The Sea held at Holden Beach on Oct. 25-27.

For more information and details contact Greater Holden Beach Merchants Association president Johnny Craig at 919-842-2777.

Pleasant Weather In Forecast

Generally pleasant weather is forecast for the South Brunswick Islands as N.C. Oyster Festival weekend approaches.

Shallotte Point meteorologist Jackson Canady said Tuesday that he expects near normal temperature and precipitation. Temperatures should average from the mid-50s at night into the mid-70s during the daytime, with no more than a half-inch of rainfall.
 For the period Oct. 8-14, he

recorded a maximum high of 82 degrees Oct. 10 and a minimum low of 39 degrees Oct. 8.

A daily average high of 79 degrees combined with a nightly average low of 50 degrees for a daily average temperature of 64 degrees, about two degrees below average, said Canady.

At his residence at Shallotte Point Canady measured no rainfall during the period.

Brunswick County Law Enforcement Officers Association announces... HOLIDAY FOOD DRIVE

The Brunswick County Law Enforcement Officers Association is gearing up for their annual food drive with baskets to be delivered to hundreds of needy families in the county.

Each food basket will contain a 12-14 lb. turkey or ham, dressing, canned goods, bread and sweets, designed to feed a family of 4-6 a holiday feast with food left over.

Don Stovall, president of the local L.E.O.A., said this is just one of the many community activities the organization does each year.

"We try to seek out the families who really need the food," Stovall said.

Officers will call on businesses and individuals throughout the county for their support in this effort. "We want to thank everyone who has helped in our programs in the past," Stovall said.

The B.C.L.E.O.A. is comprised of the sheriff's department, the N.C. State Highway Patrol and members of the town police departments.

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