

EMC Members Deserve More Than Superficial Transparency

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DEAR EDITOR:

In a guest column July 21, Bryan Boyd, Chairman of the Board at Cobb EMC, took issue with former Congressman Fletcher Thompson's concerns about transparency at the EMC. While the situation is greatly changed from where it was under the leadership of former CEO Dwight Brown, much care must be taken to assure continued progress. No one should be content with a job half done and Fletcher Thompson has once again stepped forward to remind us that a fully protective Member Bill of Rights has not yet been realized.

While Mr. Boyd makes the claim that "Cobb EMC today is arguably the most transparent EMC in Georgia and perhaps in the nation," this claim falls short of the transparency members should rightly expect.

The transparency Mr. Boyd refers to is the right of members to attend and monitor monthly board meetings and have access to company records. Often the decision-making process today is done in committee meetings that are closed to members. Many times these meetings are attended by a quorum of the Board of Directors effectively allowing board decisions to be made in committee with no members in attendance. Committee recommendations are then presented at a board meeting with no discussion, just an up-or-down vote to accept a prior committee determined decision. While progress has been made in the governance of Cobb EMC, the vast majority was done through continued prodding from members. The board relented to the incorporation of a member Bill of Rights only after Mr. Thompson and other members pushed for a committee to take up the matter. The resulting Bill of Rights, however, was subordinated to other areas in the bylaws and was thereby subject to change by the board.

Cobb EMC Forum, a group of concerned members whose mission is to encourage Member participation at Cobb EMC, has pressed for changing the bylaw language to ensure the preeminence of the Member Bill of Rights. In addition, a Member-sponsored bylaw change on this year's ballot allows Member attendance at any meeting where a quorum of the Board of Directors is present. This will allow members to observe those closeted discussions that currently determine the outcome of voting.

However, the board has already recommended a vote against this change.

In another disturbing development, the current board, after spending a reported \$2 million dollars on the recently released forensic audit, plans to put the audit aside without the further action the auditors outlined in their recommendation.

Moreover, when members spoke at the June Board meeting to encourage action on the forensic audit, the chairman used the bylaws to prevent the Marietta Daily Journal from attending. This does not seem to provide for transparency to me.

While progress has been made at Cobb EMC, these accomplishments should not be used to gloss over other changes that still need to be made.

Jim Hudson, Candidate for Cobb EMC Director, District 3