

MEEKER COOPERATIVE PIONEER



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Meeker
Cooperative
Light and Power Association

VIBRANT
Broadband™

The Pioneer Newsletter is the official Cooperative publication.
Meeker Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

POWDER RIDGE SKI HILL: A TIMELESS COMMUNITY TRADITION

In the heart of the Midwest, Powder Ridge Ski Resort stands as a testament to the enduring love for winter activities. Originating as a modest homestead in the 1950s, the resort has blossomed into a cherished destination for snow enthusiasts. As we navigate through the history, offerings, and future aspirations of Powder Ridge, it becomes evident that this is more than just a ski resort – it's a community, a tradition, and a hub for all things winter.

Powder Ridge Ski Resort began its journey during the 1954-1955 season, with a small group of investors, a single rope tow, and a handful of runs. Over

the years, the Resort has undergone significant transformations including more runs, multiple chair lifts, a chalet expansion, and new owners. Despite these changes, Powder Ridge has maintained its welcoming hometown atmosphere, providing visitors with a sense of belonging that transcends time.

Today, Powder Ridge is synonymous with winter fun, offering a wide variety of activities for all skill levels. From skiing and snowboarding to the exhilarating experience of snowtubing, guests can immerse themselves in a snowy

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POWDER RIDGE CONTINUED...



wonderland. The Resort goes beyond traditional winter sports, providing personalized lessons, tempting treats like the famous Powder Ridge donuts at Ridgeview Kitchen, and delightful dining at Chester's Bar & Grill. During the off-season, the Resort transforms into an exclusive event venue, hosting weddings and exciting summer events like "Party on the Patio."

Reflecting on its journey, Powder Ridge boasts numerous milestones. Notable achievements include increasing the vertical height by 50 feet in 1991, a 12,000 square foot chalet expansion in 1996, a new maintenance shop in 2002, and the installation of a quad chair lift in 2022. 04-36-303 The latest addition, a brand-new pump house in 2023, signifies the Resort's commitment to continuous improvement.

Powder Ridge Ski Hill is not just a business; it's an integral part of the local community. The Resort proudly employs locals from surrounding areas, becoming the first employer for many and the first ski experience for countless others. Hosting school day field trips, Powder Ridge strives to instill a lifelong love for winter sports in the younger generation.

Central to Powder Ridge's operations is electricity, vital for making snow, operating chairlifts, running nighttime operations, and maintaining an inviting chalet.

Powder Ridge deeply values its partnership with Meeker Cooperative, recognizing the pivotal role played by a reliable electricity source.

This collaboration extends beyond mere association; it also reflects a shared commitment to responsible energy usage. The ski resort actively participates in Meeker Cooperative's commercial and industrial interruptible program, demonstrating its dedication to energy conservation and the community. When demand on the power grid and wholesale energy prices skyrocket, Meeker Cooperative is able to call on Powder Ridge to reduce their load and they systematically deactivate various loads, like snow making, to meet a predetermined demand level. Over time this helps Meeker maintain reliable service and stable rates.

Powder Ridge has also taken advantage of energy efficiency rebates offered through the Cooperative to make improvements like installing high-efficiency compressors for snowmaking and an adjustable speed drive on the chair lift's 100 HP motor.



From its humble beginnings to the present, Powder Ridge encapsulates a commitment to continuous improvement, community engagement, and responsible energy use. Powder Ridge's reliance on electricity, backed by a partnership with Meeker Cooperative, underscores not only their operational efficiency but also a shared dedication to a thriving community. As this winter wonderland continues to evolve, it remains not just a ski hill but an enduring hub of timeless tradition that celebrates the magic of winter.

CO-OP HOSTS VISITORS FROM SISTER CITY DURING ANNUAL LITCHFIELD PEANUT BUTTER AND MILK FESTIVAL

Meeker Cooperative hosted visitors from Hartford, Alabama, on Thursday, February 7th. FFA students and their parents were given a tour of Meeker Cooperative and VIBRANT Broadband!

Despite the unexpected closure of the ski hill due to rain, an alternative plan was quickly arranged. Our guests enjoyed ice skating and playing hockey at the Litchfield Civic Arena, followed by lunch at the Eagles Club. The day continued with a tour of the Forest City Threshers and Mies Outland. Everyone had a blast!





A CLOSER LOOK AT THE 2024 RATE ADJUSTMENT AND WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU

After careful consideration, the Meeker Cooperative Board of Directors approved an overall rate increase of 3.2% to address the impact of inflation on the price of energy and critical electrical distribution equipment.

One of the most fulfilling parts of leading an electric cooperative is that we are guided by service to our members rather than profit. We only raise rates when necessary to maintain the integrity of our operations, which allows us to focus on the quality of our service to you, our members and owners. I want to take this opportunity to explain the reasoning behind the upcoming rate increase across all rate classes and what changes you can expect on your bill.

Meeker Cooperative has felt many of the same financial pressures as the businesses and families we serve including inflation, increased interest rates, and supply chain disruptions. These challenges, combined with the rising costs of wholesale power, have put a strain on our budget. As we prepared for 2024, our financial forecasts indicated that additional revenue would be needed to maintain operations and support crucial investments in the long-term reliability of our distribution system.

To address these economic challenges, we launched a Cost of Service study in collaboration with an independent firm to analyze our revenue requirements and provide us with valuable insights to determine the level of revenue needed to maintain the quality of the Cooperative's distribution system. The study concluded that a revenue increase of 3.7% was needed to avoid making cuts that would undermine our ability to meet service goals and support ongoing investments in the quality and integrity of our electrical distribution system.

Board members reviewed and discussed various rate adjustment options and chose what they believe is the best plan that balances the impact on our members with the need to maintain our financial stability, ongoing operations, and investments.

Beginning April 1, 2024, the Fixed Charge for the Small Single Phase rate class will increase from \$43 to \$46.50, an increase of \$3.50 per month. This includes residential, seasonal and small commercial or agricultural accounts, which constitute over 96% our membership.

The monthly Fixed Charge covers our costs for delivering electricity – including labor, maintenance, and repairs to distribution infrastructure. These costs exist no matter how much energy members use, which is why the charge is fixed and equal for all members within each rate class.

In addition to the Fixed Charge increase, there will be a slight adjustment to our energy rate structure. The Energy Charge will no longer have seasonal variations. The summer rate will remain unchanged at 12.3¢/kWh, while the rate for other months will increase from 10.3¢/kWh to 12.3¢/kWh. Additionally, the Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) will be adjusted to show \$.0000/kWh. This enhancement makes your bill easier to understand and reduces the cost of the summer rate by 1.12¢. From time to time an adjustment to the PCA may be warranted, such as the Cooperative receiving a PCA from one or more of its wholesale power providers. Meeker Cooperative's budget isn't able to absorb a large wholesale PCA charge.

SMALL SINGLE-PHASE RATE 01 & 02

	Current Rates	New Rates
Fixed Charge	\$43.00/month	\$46.50/month
Energy Charge		
June - August	\$0.1230/kWh	\$0.1230/kWh
Other Months	\$0.1030/kWh	\$0.1230/kWh
PCA	\$0.0112/kWh	\$0.0000/kWh

The chart below shows a sample of how the new monthly Fixed Charge and Energy Charge will affect the Small Single-Phase general service accounts at various levels of monthly kWh usage.

SAMPLE RATE INCREASE IMPACT CALCULATIONS

kWh Used Per Month	Fixed Charge Increase Per Month	Energy Charge Increase Per Month	Total Bill Increase Per Month	Annual Total Increase	% Annual Bill Increase
800	\$3.50	\$3.04	\$6.54	\$78.48	4.73%
1,000	\$3.50	\$3.80	\$7.30	\$87.60	4.50%
1,500	\$3.50	\$5.70	\$9.20	\$110.40	4.15%
2,000	\$3.50	\$7.60	\$11.10	\$133.20	3.94%

It is crucial to emphasize that the overall increment for individual members will fluctuate based on their energy consumption, alongside any applicable taxes and location-specific fees.

Continued on page 4.

RATE INCREASE CONTINUED...

We recognize that a change in our rates means a change in your bill, and your household budget. We want to remind you that you have access to resources to help keep your monthly bills manageable.

The Cooperative provides an array of energy management programs and rebates designed to assist you in conserving energy and cutting costs. By engaging in programs like dual fuel heating, peak shave water heating, cycled air conditioning, interruptible irrigation, and interruptible generators, members can play a role in maintaining stable rates and reducing expenses. 05-24-401 These initiatives enable the Cooperative to lower system demand, potentially avoiding or minimizing wholesale demand charges. Participation in these programs not only results in a reduced energy rate for members but also makes them eligible for available rebates.

The kWh rate for our energy management programs for dual fuel heating, peak shave water heating and cycled air conditioning remains the same at 5.7¢/kWh and 6.2¢/kWh. Our energy management programs offer members a choice to have lower space heating, cooling and water heating operating costs.

Our energy experts are available to discuss load management and help you determine energy solutions that work for you. Visit www.meeker.coop/programs/ to learn more.

For those facing financial challenges, members can contact the Cooperative to establish acceptable payment plans. Additionally, the Minnesota Department of Commerce provides energy assistance programs and resources for eligible members to address utility bill payments. For more information, members can reach out to the energy assistance providers listed on our website at www.meeker.coop/energy-assistance/

While adjusting rates is never an easy choice, member value is always our top priority with these decisions. Meeker Cooperative will continue its mission of providing reliable, safe, and affordable electric service.

Looking ahead, we will continue to invest in modernized equipment and infrastructure and provide members with up-to-date information on how you can reduce your energy use and get the most value out of your service.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this rate adjustment, we encourage you to call our office during regular business hours (8 am-4:30 pm) at 320-693-3231.

Dedicated to keeping the lights on and the data flowing,

Luke Johnson
CEO, Meeker Cooperative

FIRST CYBERSECURITY EVENT A HUGE SUCCESS: MORE TO COME



VIBRANT Broadband hosted a new VIBRANT-U event called Hackers, Scammers, & AI on February 22. The event aimed to educate people about cybersecurity and how to stay safe when using their devices.

Technology has made our lives easier by providing vast amounts of information at our fingertips. It has revolutionized the way we connect, learn, and entertain ourselves. With the help of technology, we can also control our homes, grow food, and perform a multitude of other tasks. However, there are people out there who try to deceive us and take advantage of our hard-earned money. These people are known as hackers and scammers, and they can use artificial intelligence (AI) to manipulate us if we are not careful.

The VIBRANT-U Cybersecurity class is designed to educate individuals on the difference between hackers and scammers, their mode of operation, and the concept of AI. The course also provides insights on how to identify hacking, scamming, and AI misuse. Additionally, it equips participants with practical

tips on how to prevent being hacked or scammed and what to do in the event of becoming a victim.

The free class provides helpful links for people who have been victimized by a scam or computer hack. The first event was a full house, and more classes will be scheduled soon. To find out when the next class will be, stay tuned to our Facebook and Instagram pages or listen to our radio show on Wednesdays at 10:30 AM on KLFD.





WILLIE WIREDHAND'S ELECTRICITY FUN FACT



Lightning bolts, with temperatures soaring to approximately 30,000 kelvins (53,540 degrees Fahrenheit), surpass the sun's surface heat. This extraordinary intensity underscores the formidable force and searing heat generated during the electrical discharge in a lightning strike.

ENERGY SAVING MADE EASY: CONSIDER AN ENERGY EFFICIENT AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMP

Whether you're replacing your old air conditioner or building new, an Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) offers the perfect balance of comfort and savings.

WHAT IS AN AIR SOURCE HEAT PUMP?

An ASHP is an electric-powered unit that provides home cooling and supplemental heating. In Minnesota, ASHPs most commonly replace a standard air conditioning unit.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

An ASHP simply uses electricity to move heat from one place to another. In cooling mode, an air source heat pump extracts indoor heat, releases it outdoors, and cools the indoor space. By reversing its refrigeration cycle, it absorbs outdoor heat, compresses it, and releases it inside for heating, providing a versatile solution for both cooling and heating needs.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

- **Super energy efficient.** ASHPs provide home cooling and supplemental heating with less electricity than conventional air conditioners and furnaces. ASHPs are up to 300% efficient – helping you save on your energy costs.
- **Easy installation, low maintenance.** You can find an ASHP to fit nearly any size of home, and your contractor will have no problem with the easy installation. 29-02-13 If you don't have ductwork in your home, consider the ductless option.
- **All-in-one heating and cooling solution.** ASHPs provide comfort nearly all year long – they will not only cool your home in the summer, but they also provide supplemental heat in the winter. The technology continues to improve, and many models will offer fully electric heat through well-below-zero temperatures.
- **Save money with rebates and low energy management rates.** Meeker Cooperative provides rebates up to \$1,200 for members who install a qualifying, energy-saving ASHP on our energy management programs. Additionally, when you install an ASHP and enroll it in the Cycled AC and Dual Fuel programs, you pay nearly half the standard rate for electricity. An ASHP will also help you limit your use of propane or natural gas, protecting you from volatile pricing and shortages. You'll ultimately consume less and save more. That's the value of a heat pump.

LEARN MORE

www.meeker.coop/programs/

MEMBER NEWS

OFFICES CLOSED

Meeker Cooperative offices will be closed on Friday, March 29 in observance of Good Friday.

EXPANDED NEWSLETTER

Meeker Cooperative is expanding its newsletter.

Our regular printed newsletter will be printed and mailed in January, March, May, July, September, and November.

We are adding a new, digital-only newsletter in February, April, June, August, October, and December.

The digital newsletter will be sent automatically to all email addresses in our system.

SMARTHUB WINNERS

Congratulations go out to the winners of our January 2024 Smart Hub Sign-Up promotion. These members, who recently enrolled in SmartHub, were selected at random and have won the following bill credits:

Jeff Locy: \$100.00
David Pommer: \$200.00
Allen Hanson: \$100.00
Rebecca Nistler: \$200.00

APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE FOR CO-OP BOARD OF DIRECTOR CANDIDATES IN DISTRICTS 4, 5, 7 AND 9

Meeker Cooperative is member-owned and governed by local leadership. Your Cooperative's Board of Directors is made up of nine Cooperative Members elected to serve from throughout the nine districts which make up the Cooperative's service territory. Directors are elected by you, the Member-owners.

At the 2024 Annual meeting, the director seats in Districts 4, 7 and 9 are up for election following the normal rotation of districts for election. The district 5 seat is also up for election to fill the opening for that unexpired term. The seat for district 5 will also be up for election in 2025 as part of the prescribed rotation of districts.

These districts are made up of the following townships:

- **District 4:** Litchfield and Greenleaf in Meeker County
- **District 5:** Fairhaven in Stearns; Cokato, Southside, French Lake in Wright; Dassel in Meeker
- **District 7:** Collinwood, Cedar Mills in Meeker; Stockholm in Wright; Acoma, Hutchinson in McLeod
- **District 9:** Forest City, Kingston, and North Kingston in Meeker County



Members in these districts that are interested in being placed on the ballot, and meet the qualifications identified in the bylaws, must submit a completed Meeker Cooperative Application for Director Form by the close of business on April 5, 2024.

The process for director elections is outlined in the bylaws of the Cooperative. All potential candidates must declare their intention to be placed on the ballot by submitting a completed Application Form and be declared qualified for placement on the ballot by the Qualifications and Election Committee (Q&E Committee). No write-in candidates shall be deemed valid.

The bylaws direct the Board of Directors to appoint a Qualifications and Election (Q&E) Committee consisting of one Member from each of the Director Districts which is not up for election. 04-18-374 It shall be the responsibility of the Q&E Committee to review all of the applications submitted and to determine that all candidates meet the stated qualifications.

The Committee will notify any potential candidate that does not meet the qualifications and allow seven days for the candidate to comply with said requirements. The decisions of the Q&E Committee will be final.

The Committee will have the authority to place qualified candidates on the ballot for election, and for any district in which there is only one candidate, waive the ballot process and declare the candidate elected.

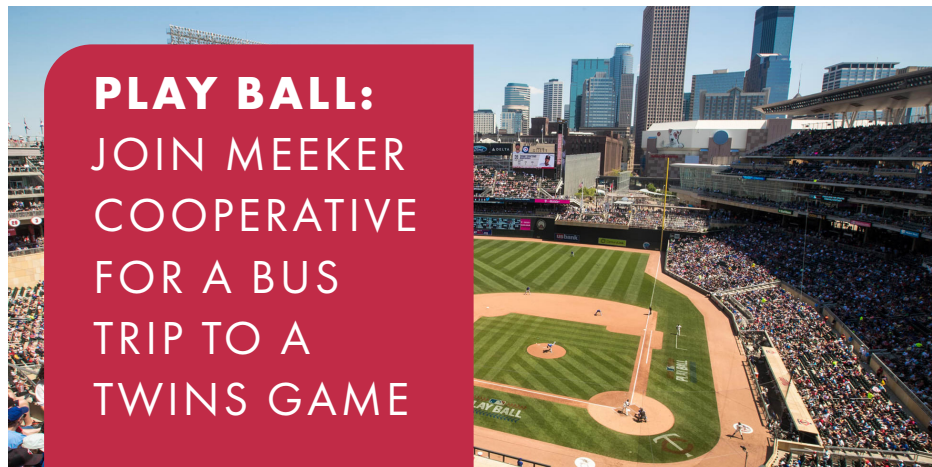
The Qualifications & Election Committee shall prepare and post at the principal office of the Cooperative at least 75 days before the meeting the list of qualified candidates for director elections. If no Member from a district up for election is placed on the ballot, said position shall be deemed vacant following the annual meeting and the Board of Directors may appoint a Member from said district to fill said position until the next annual meeting and election of directors.

For complete director election information, qualifications, and requirements, please visit www.meeker.coop. Under the Member Services tab on the left at the top of the home page, select "download forms" to find the packet or contact Mary Alice Holm at 320-693-3231 to request one be mailed to you.



**FIND YOUR
LOCATION
NUMBER**

Four location numbers are hidden within this Pioneer. If you find your number and claim it by calling Meeker Cooperative before March 31, you will have \$10 credit to your account. When you call and verify your information is correct in our system, you will also receive an additional bill credit equal to one month's output from a Member Solar Panel.



JOIN US: THURSDAY, JUNE 20 TICKETS: \$75 PER PERSON

We are excited to invite you to join us for a fun-filled day at Target Field to watch the Minnesota Twins play against the Tampa Bay Rays on Thursday, June 20! Our bus trip will take you straight to the stadium, without having to worry about traffic, parking, or navigating downtown Minneapolis.

Your ticket includes a comfortable and convenient ride to the game, ticket to the game and all-inclusive ballpark fare (including hotdogs, burgers, chicken tenders, popcorn, chips, soda, water, juice, and milk). Plus, you'll have plenty of time to socialize with your fellow fans and get excited for the game!

We'll depart from the Meeker Cooperative parking lot at 9:30 a.m. and arrive at Target Field in plenty of time to catch the first pitch at 12:10 p.m. After the game, we'll return to the same location.

Don't miss out on this opportunity to cheer on the Twins with your friends and family while leaving the driving to us. Tickets are limited and sell out fast, so make sure to reserve your spot today. The deadline to register is May 17, 2024.

MEEKER MEMBER TRIP: TWINS GAME 2024

Please reserve _____ places for the Twins Game Bus Trip.

Name(s): _____

Account Number: _____

Phone: _____

Cost Per Person: \$75 Amount Enclosed: \$ _____

*Return to: Meeker Cooperative, Attention: Michele Boreen,
1725 US Highway. 12, Suite 100, Litchfield, MN 55355 by May 17.*

FEATURED RECIPE

BANANA BREAD | SUBMITTED BY: MICHELE CALDWELL



INGREDIENTS

- 2/3 C. Veg. oil
- 1 1/2 C. sugar
- 1 1/2 C. ripe mashed bananas
- 2 eggs
- 1 tsp. vanilla
- 2 C. flour
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1/2 C. Sour cream

DIRECTIONS

Cream veg. oil and sugar. Blend in bananas, eggs and vanilla. Beat well and add flour, soda and salt. Add sour cream. Pour in 2 (8x3-inch) prepared pans. Bake at 350 degrees for 50-60 minutes, until it tests done.

Submit your favorite recipe for our next issue! The chosen winner will receive a \$10 credit to their account. DEADLINE: March 31, 2024.
Email to: szeppelin@meeker.coop | Mail to: Meeker Coop, ATTN: Shane 1725 US Hwy 12 E, Ste 100, Litchfield, MN 55355

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Contract Editor: Fuller Creative, LLC



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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Brad Donnay, President — District 3

Luxemburg, Maine Prairie,
South Maine Prairie in Stearns;
Forest Prairie in Meeker

Larry Huhn, Vice President — District 8

Darwin, Ellsworth in Meeker

Karen Becker, Treasurer — District 2

Eden Lake in Stearns;
Harvey, Manannah in Meeker

Paul Bugbee, Secretary — District 1

Roseville, Irving in Kandiyohi;
Paynesville in Stearns;
Union Grove in Meeker

James Ellingson — District 4

Litchfield, Greenleaf in Meeker

David Leonhardi — District 5

Fairhaven in Stearns; Cokato, Southside,
French Lake in Wright; Dassel in Meeker

Neil Pearson — District 6

Harrison, Kandiyohi, Genessee, Fahlun,
Lake Elizabeth, E. Lake Lillian in Kandiyohi;
Cosmos, Acton, Danielson, Swede Grove
in Meeker; Brookfield, Boon Lake in Renville

Randy Bryant — District 7

Collinwood, Cedar Mills in Meeker;
Stockholm in Wright;
Acoma, Hutchinson in McLeod

Jesse Turck — District 9

North Kingston, Kingston,
Forest City in Meeker

Chad Felstul, Attorney









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Send Attention: Editor at the address above.

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Keep up-to-date with your Cooperative in-between issues of the Pioneer and browse our classifieds online at:
www.meeker.coop/news.



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