

MEEKER COOPERATIVE PIONEER

The official publication of
**Meeker
Cooperative**
Light and Power Association
Meeker Co-op is an Equal Opportunity
Provider and Employer

JAN/FEB 2021

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"ENERGIZING AND CONNECTING...ENHANCING YOUR LIFE."



NEW LOOK PIONEER

BY TIM MERGEN, MEEKER COOPERATIVE, CEO/GENERAL MANAGER

Welcome to the newly redesigned and reformatted Meeker Cooperative Pioneer. As the second decade of this century comes to a close, we realize

that technology advancements have changed the way people and businesses communicate.

We have been evaluating and researching possible changes to the newsletter for several months. Meeker's Media Specialist, Becky Sorenson, retired last fall and with her retirement we felt it was the opportune time to take a look at what changes needed to be made to the Pioneer to keep it relative in today's vastly different world of providing news and information.

The Pioneer was changed to its former design in January of 2000. If you think back, that was when our biggest concern was the Y2K computer crisis. That was more than two decades ago and now Y2K seems like a small problem compared to today's issues of COVID-19 and political strife.

Over that time reading a paper version of just about anything has given way to all forms of electronic communication. Our own member survey from last winter told us members were only reading limited sections and many members, especially the newer members, simply were not reading it.

In a world changing as rapidly as today, Meeker Cooperative needed to evaluate our overall communications program and make some needed adjustments. We cannot ignore the changes in electronic communication methods. We need to communicate in the present methods. This includes providing information via websites and various forms of social media outlets. We also know that some members still rely on the printed method, so we are offering both.

Meeker Cooperative is not the same Co-op it was when it began publishing the Pioneer in 1949. Our members aren't the same as they were back then, either. The new format of the Pioneer is one of those changes. This new look moves away from the newsprint style to a more magazine look; a change that I believe will be both an improvement in quality and reader friendliness.

Our goals are to focus more on our members' activities by doing profiles and featuring success stories of our members and customers. We will also highlight our growing programs and services for both electric and VIBRANT Broadband, and continue providing you the latest information on related electric energy and broadband topics and items of interest.

Another change is the frequency of the newsletter. It will now be a bi-monthly publication printed in the months of February, April, June, August, October, and December. The Pioneer and other timely information will be posted to our websites (meeker.coop and vibrantbroadband.com) and other social media sites like our Facebook pages.

You will see we are no longer printing the classifieds section. Over time this section has become smaller as the years went by. To our members who value the want-ads section we are offering what we believe will be a better way to list your ads. We are starting a new classifieds section on our website, meeker.coop. You can get to it by going to meeker.coop/classifieds. No registration is required but you must be a Meeker Co-op member and have a valid email address. You can learn more about it in this issue. It's really exciting for us!

We will continue to print a recipe in each issue and of course hide location numbers throughout the Pioneer. We will also hide location numbers in articles posted on our website and various social media posts between issues.

One of the fundamentals of a good cooperative is having a communication program that provides the members with the information they need to stay informed and empowered. I believe the revisions and improvements to the Pioneer and providing this information on our websites and social media sites will help to continue to make Meeker Cooperative a solid cooperative well into the future.

ANNUAL MEETING

At its November 2020 meeting the Board of Directors made the decision to hold a combined Annual Meeting and Member Appreciation Day (MAD) for 2021.

This year (pending any restrictions) we are planning on hosting the combined event on Wednesday, August 11th at the "A maze'n Farmyard", located just east of Eden Valley right off highway 55. We are keeping our fingers crossed to be able to host an enjoyable, entertaining, and informative event. More information will be posted and printed as the date draws near.

Also, keep an eye on the Pioneer and our website for information on Director Districts that are up for election this year along with candidate applications for those that may be interested in running for a Board of Director position.

DID YOU KNOW?

In 1982 it took \$82 million to make it on the Forbes 400 Richest Americans List. In 2020, it takes over \$2.1 billion.

UPCOMING EVENTS



ANNUAL MEETING AND MEMBER APPRECIATION DAY

When: Wednesday, Aug. 11
Where: A maze'n Farmyard

Watch for more upcoming details.

MORE ARTICLES AVAILABLE ONLINE

We are posting more articles on our website in between issues of the Pioneer.

Go to www.meeker.coop/news to stay up to date!

WATKINS CHIRO INSTALLS VIBRANT BROADBAND FOR KINK-FREE INTERNET

Doctor S. Gary of Watkins Chiropractic Clinic takes his practice seriously. He takes his patients even more so. He's been in Watkins for more than twenty-years, and while semi-retired, he still finds time to help people feel better.

"When a patient comes in, I spend my time with them," he says, "I don't interrupt to answer the phone. When I'm with the patient, I focus on them. I take the time to explain how they are built and why they are having their issues."

Dr. S. Gary wants to get to know his patients on a personal level. He loves to know what your hobbies are, who your spouse and kids are, and those types of things. He also goes above and beyond to make sure you feel better and you understand why. #16-17-103

Dr. S. Gary wanted faster and more reliable Internet. He only had dial-up and was frustrated with his previous provider. When VIBRANT Broadband came along, he was glad to get installed.



He uses the Internet for his credit card machine and to stream to the TV in his waiting room. "When it was first installed, I had a little hiccup. The Wi-Fi wouldn't reach my TV or credit card machine, and one day it stopped working altogether. VIBRANT came out on a Sunday to check the issue. It turned out that something came unplugged. They also fixed my Wi-Fi issue. It was an easy fix and I've been very happy with it since."

He said the VIBRANT Team is great to work with. "Everyone I've come in contact with, from the sales people to the service people to the front office are friendly and helpful. I can only speak of good things of VIBRANT and Meeker Cooperative."



DREAMING OF STREAMING™?

In our June 2020 issue of the *Pioneer*, we wrote about streaming services such as Hulu, YouTube TV, Sling TV, and Philo. Other services like Netflix and Disney+ also stream through your Internet service. How do you stream to your TV?

New televisions can have streaming built-in, but you can also purchase an inexpensive device that allows you to stream to any TV with an HDMI port. Here are four streaming devices and what makes them each different.



Amazon FireTV

- Amazon Prime focused
- Works with Alexa voice commands
- Menu can take a bit getting use to
- Excellent app and game selection



Roku

- Largest catalog of channel apps
- Most neutral platform, doesn't push any one streaming service
- Intuitive menu



Apple TV

- Apple-centric ecosystem
- Very familiar "app-style" menu
- Most expensive



Chromecast with Google TV

- Nice interface
- Wide range of channel apps
- Works with Google Assistant voice

There are others on the market, but we covered the most popular.

Why use a streaming device instead of the built-in streaming software?

Move from one TV to another

Take it with you on vacation

Usually faster and better menus

Software and firmware updated often



2021 ENERGY MANAGEMENT PROGRAMS AND REBATES

Every year, Meeker Cooperative puts together its rebates for energy management programs for space heating, air conditioning, and water heating that can help you save money at your home, farm or business. If you plan to make energy-wise improvements in 2021, the sooner the better as rebate funds are limited. Here are the energy management programs and rates for 2021. You can also visit the website at www.meeker.coop/programs/.

Electric Vehicle (EV) Charger

- Install a Level 2 Electric Vehicle Charger - \$500
- Battery Electric Vehicles (BEV) and Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEV) are controlled/interruptible and metered separately at the energy management rate (\$.057/kWh Sept-May, \$.062/kWh Jun-Aug)

Electric Water Heating

- 8 Hour Peak Shave Water Heating
- Controlled Up to 8-Hours
- Minimum Efficiency - 0.90 Energy Factor (EF)
- Must use greater than 400 kWh per month on main service meter

Options

1) With an existing electric water heater not on an energy management program:

- A. Metered applicable general service rate
 - i. \$4 per month credit on bill
 - ii. Up to an \$800 credit/rebate toward purchase of an electric water heater; 80-gallon capacity or larger; minimum .90 EF
- B. Metered separately at energy management rate (\$.057/kWh Sept-May, \$.062/kWh Jun-Aug)
 - i. Up to a \$400 credit/rebate toward the purchase of an electric water heater; 80-gallon capacity or larger; minimum .90 EF

2) New construction or conversion from gas to electric water heater:

- A. Metered applicable general service rate
 - i. \$4 per month credit
 - ii. Up to an \$800 credit/rebate toward purchase of an electric water heater; 80-gallon capacity or larger; minimum .90 EF
- B. Metered separately at energy management rate (\$.057/kWh Sept-May, \$.062/kWh Jun-Aug)
 - i. Up to an \$800 credit/rebate toward purchase of an electric water heater; 80-gallon capacity or larger; minimum .90 EF

Interruptible Dual Fuel - \$10/kilowatt (kW) connected load

- Minimum of 5 kW resistance or any qualified electric thermal storage room unit (new or existing)
- Must have qualified backup heating system #01-07-128
- Metered separately at energy management rate (\$.057/kWh Sept-May, \$.062/kWh Jun-Aug)

Electric Thermal Storage - \$25 per kW connected load

- Central furnace, room units, radiant floor cable or hydronic
- Metered separately at energy management rate (\$.057/kWh Sept-May, \$.062/kWh Jun-Aug)

AC Tune-Up - \$25 per unit

- Unit must be five years or older and in working condition
- Work must be performed by licensed HVAC contractor

Air Source Heat Pump – Ductless - \$500 per unit

- Controlled on Dual Fuel and Cycled Air Conditioning with qualified backup heating system
- Metered separately at energy management rate (\$.057/kWh Sept-May, \$.062/kWh Jun-Aug)

Air Source Heat Pump (standard rebate) - \$300 per unit

- Controlled on Dual Fuel and Cycled AC with qualified backup heating system
- Metered separately at energy management rate (\$.057/kWh Sept-May, \$.062/kWh Jun-Aug)

Air Source Heat Pump with Quality Installation (QI) requirement

- Installation must be performed by a registered HVAC contractor
- **Matched equipment of the outdoor unit and indoor coil**
- Proper equipment sizing with a completed load calculation on file
- Performance tests and measurements of the airflow and refrigerant charge
- Controlled on dual fuel and cycled air conditioning
- Sealing of the exposed ductwork in the mechanical room area
- Metered Separately (\$.057/kWh Sept-May, \$.062/kWh Jun-Aug)

14.5 - 15.9 SEER.....	\$530 Rebate
>16+ SEER	\$630 Rebate
14.5 - 15.9 SEER + ≤ 8.2 HSPF.....	\$1,050 Rebate
>16+ SEER + ≥ 8.2 HSPF....	\$1,200 Rebate

SEER = Season Energy Efficiency Ratio
 HSPF = Heating Seasonal Performance Factor

Ground Source Heat Pump – \$400 per Ton

- Controlled on Cycled Air Conditioning and Dual Fuel heating with qualified backup heating system
- Metered separately at energy management rate (\$.057/kWh Sept-May, \$.062/kWh Jun-Aug)

Ground Source Heat Pump - \$100 per Ton

- Metered at Applicable General Service Rate
- Controlled for Cycled Air Conditioning

Energy Management Improvement (EMI) Loan

- Loan funds from \$500 - \$5,000 are available for interruptible dual fuel, storage space heating, air-source heat pumps, ground source heat pumps, peak shave water heating, storage water heating, heat pump, water heater, and electric vehicle charger and load control equipment installations.
- Interest rates and maximum loan amount
 - **In Lieu of rebates:** 0%, \$500 - \$3,000 / 3%, \$500 - \$5,000
 - **With rebate:** 7%, \$500 - \$3,000
- Maximum loan period of 5 years (60 months)

ALL REBATES ARE FOR NEW ENERGY MANAGEMENT INSTALLATIONS.

REBATES FOR LOADS TYPES ALREADY ENROLLED ON AN ENERGY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM QUALIFY FOR 50% OF THE CURRENT REBATES, EXCLUDING WATER HEATERS.

STAY WARM AND SAFE DURING WINTER STORMS AND POWER OUTAGES



Winter storms bring dangerous weather conditions. Follow these tips to stay warm and safe.

Prepare:

- Be informed, follow weather alerts
- Create an emergency plan
- Assemble an emergency kit
- Prepare for possible power outages
- Keep the gas tank at least half-full and have emergency supplies in your vehicle

During a storm:

- Minimize outdoor activities
- Drive only if it is absolutely necessary
- Dress to protect against the elements
- Watch for signs of frostbite and hypothermia

After a storm:

- Continue to monitor media for emergency broadcasts
- Call 911 to report emergencies
- Stay away from downed power lines
- Report power outages to your utility company
- Stay off streets and roads until they are clear
- Clear exhaust vents from direct vent gas furnace systems #28-34-301
- Check on family, friends, and neighbors

Read more about staying safe during a winter storm at www.meeker.coop/news.

WILLIE WIREDHAND'S ELECTRICITY FUN FACT

The average daily cost of residential electricity is less than the cost of a Big Mac® value meal.



BIG MAC® MEAL
AVERAGES

\$5.30



AVERAGE DAILY
COST OF
POWER IS

\$3.87



Electricity is expressed on a daily basis using EIA 2018 Average U.S. Monthly Residential Bill of \$117. Big Mac® is a registered trade mark of McDonald's Corporation. McDonald's Corporation does not enforce or sponsor this material.

Sources: Economist.com and EIA 2018 data.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

Replace standard power strips with advanced power strips to save energy. Advanced power strips look like ordinary power strips, but they have built-in features that are designed to reduce the amount of energy used by standby electronics that consume energy even when they're not in use (also known as phantom load).

The National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) estimates that the average home loses \$200 annually to energy wasted by phantom load.

Source: www.nrel.gov



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Stay **CURRENT** and **VIBRANT** by following our Facebook pages

[f /meeker.coop](https://www.facebook.com/meeker.coop)
[f /vibrantbb.net](https://www.facebook.com/vibrantbb.net)

COGENERATION AND SMALL POWER PRODUCTION GOVERNED BY MINNESOTA RULES

Meeker Cooperative is obligated by Minnesota Rules pts. 7835 to interconnect with and purchase electricity from any cogenerators and/or small power producers. We also are required to provide information free of charge to any and all members who may be interested in entering into an interconnection agreement with the Co-op. In compliance with Minnesota adopted rules relating to cogeneration and small power production, all interconnections require an application and approval to become a qualifying facility.

<https://www.novapowerportal.com/Home/Index/5>

VIBRANT Reviews

My choice in VIBRANT has been a wise choice in money and entertainment. My Internet speed is amazing compared to my old "land line" based system, finally my cell phone's wi-fi can be used without problems as my cell booster and house phones have been removed. Great service, cheaper price, and with the associated phone app, you can give your guests a wi-fi password, and as a bonus the devices can become a security tool for your home, no extra cost. Great is how I describe VIBRANT.

- Jay J

Cindy and myself would like to thank all the people involved with installation of our new VIBRANT Broadband service. All the people that I have talked to in this installation have been above my expectations for professionalism. If the broadband system works as well as your employees have, we will be very happy. Thank you all.

- Steve and Cindy W

VIBRANT INSTALLS CONTINUE THROUGH WINTER

VIBRANT Broadband has been well-received by thousands of our member-owners. We continue to install VIBRANT throughout the winter months. VIBRANT Broadband offers *Rip Snort'n FAST* Internet speeds allowing you to stream content, video call your family, keep up-to-date on your latest social sites, and monitor your home while you're away. There is so much more you can do with high-speed Internet from VIBRANT Broadband.

If you're tired of slow Internet or are "Dreaming of Streaming", call and talk to one of our VIBRANT Sales Consultants at 320-693-3231. You can also visit the website, vibrantbroadband.com, to learn more.



Find your location number

Four location numbers have been hidden within this *Pioneer* and four more will be found in articles published on our website between now and the next *Pioneer* mailing. If you find your number and claim it by calling Meeker Cooperative before March 30, you will have \$10 credited to your account! If you find your number and your information is correct in our system, you'll receive a bill credit equal to one month's output from a Member Solar panel. **Good luck!**



Featured Recipe

Chicken Broccoli Casserole (Hotdish)

Congratulations to **LOREE SCHULTZ** for submitting this month's winning recipe for **Favorite Hotdish Recipe**.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 medium chicken cooked & de-boned
- 2-10 oz packages frozen broccoli, thawed
- 6 slices American cheese
- 1 can sliced water chestnuts
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- ½ cup mayo
- frozen onion rings

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Grease 9x13 pan
2. Layer from bottom to top: broccoli cuts, chicken pieces, cheese slices, and water chestnuts
3. In a separate bowl, mix cream of chicken soup with mayo – spread this over the top
4. Top with frozen onion rings
5. Bake for 60 minutes at 350°.



Submit your favorite **SPRING SALAD RECIPE** for our next issue! Please include a photo if you are able.

The chosen winner will receive a \$10 credit to their account. **DEADLINE: March 30, 2021**

E-mail to: szeppelin@meeker.coop | **Mail to:** Meeker Coop, ATTN: Shane, 1725 US Hwy 12, Ste. 100, Litchfield, MN 55355

ELECTRIC SNOWBLOWERS GETTING BETTER



We know in Minnesota it snows every winter. That means we need to move it. In an area dominated by small gas engines, electric snowblowers are becoming better and more efficient at moving snow than ever before.

Outdoor electric power tools have been around for many years. They are great for light to medium duty work. They are quieter and lower maintenance than gas engine equipment, but they have generally been less powerful. One drawback to high-power electric tools has been having an extension cord always plugged in for peak power. This means they aren't as portable as a gas-engine version. #13-08-132

Recently, batteries have become more powerful and reliable. They are also lasting longer and work in colder weather. This is making battery powered equipment more portable and more powerful, even snowblowers.

One new model claims to be able to throw snow up to 50-feet, move the heavy wet stuff, and last long enough to clear an 18-car driveway with 8-inches of snow in a single charge (using two batteries). That's quite the accomplishment for an electric snowblower.

Electric snowblowers are generally smaller and lighter, much quieter, have lower maintenance, and are less expensive to run than their gas-powered counterparts. Most work great for lighter snow, on decks, smaller driveways, and sidewalks with some newer models up to the task of the heavier, wetter snow.

When you're shopping for your next snowblower, consider your usage and if it fits for you, take a serious look at the new electric snowblowers available.

CLASSIFIEDS MOVE TO MEEKER.COOP

Our FREE classified ads have moved to our website! You can easily find them by going to WWW.MEEKER.COOP/CLASSIFIEDS.

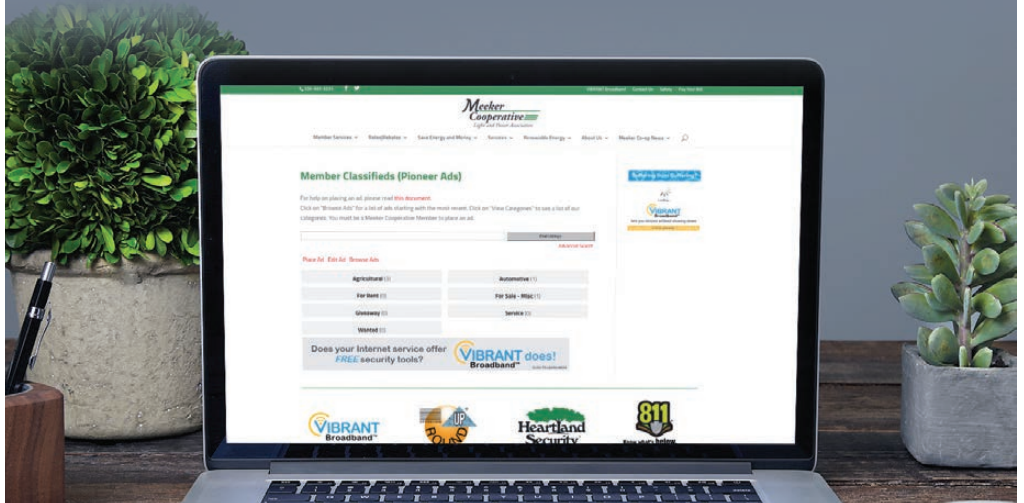
There is also a link in the site navigation at the top.

You can browse ads and place an ad from your computer, smartphone or tablet. There are many benefits to moving the ads online:

- They are posted upon approval – no more waiting for the next *Pioneer*
- You get a longer description, more than nine words
- They are visible to all website visitors
- Ads stay live for 15-days, but can easily be renewed
- You get notified prior to your ad expiring, allowing you to relist or let it disappear

Placing an ad is easy, but you do need an email address. Classified ad submissions are available to members, but anyone who visits the website can view them.

With this change, we will no longer be accepting mail-in submissions for classifieds.



Go to www.meeke.coop/classifieds
to learn more about placing your ad free online!



Go with confidence.

Our Belle mobile medical alert system uses the latest technology and is certified on the Verizon 4G LTE network.

Our 24/7 monitoring and local in-person installation and service give you peace of mind.

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heartlandss.com

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Chad Felstul, Attorney

COLORING CONTEST WINNERS

Congratulations to our winners of the 2020 Co-op Coloring Contest. Each winner from the 11 age categories received a \$10 Walmart gift card in the mail. Thank you to all the wonderful young artists that took the time to color and send in their entries. It's a joy when we receive them and it's often difficult to choose the top entries. An Honorable Mention goes to June Johnson, 93, who also loves to color!



Sadie C, 2
 Grove City



Abby B, 3
 Corcoran



Hans K, 4
 Paynesville



Ella N, 5
 Litchfield



Gannon H, 6
 Paynesville



Briecyn K, 7
 Cosmos



Brekkeh J, 8
 Dassel



Brenna B, 9
 Litchfield



Lyla M, 10
 Paynesville



Brayden V, 11
 Kimball



Laura A, 12
 Atwater



June Johnson, 93
 Dassel

You can see a larger version of each winner's masterpiece on our website by going to:

www.meeker.coop/2020-color-contest

OFFICE HOURS

Monday - Friday 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

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USPS 018-308 | ISSN 1525-1055 | Periodicals Postage Paid at Litchfield, MN with additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to address above, Attn: Meeker Pioneer.

The Meeker Pioneer is published bi-monthly for \$5 per year for members and \$10 per year for non-members by Meeker Cooperative.

The Meeker Pioneer is the official member publication of Meeker Cooperative and focuses on our members, programs and events.

All member story ideas and comments are welcome. Send Attention: Editor at the address above.

