

MEEKER COOPERATIVE PIONEER

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

MAY/JUNE 2021

**SAVE THE DATE:
ANNUAL MEETING
& MEMBER
APPRECIATION DAY**

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ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH, KIMBALL, MN

VIBRANT HELPS ST. JOHN'S SPREAD THE WORD

A lot can be said about how God brings people together. Many churches today are using technology to reach their parishioners. This used to be in written form with a newsletter and also in recent decades, a website. These worked great, but people become more engaged when there is video.

Pastor David Milz of St. John's Lutheran Church always sought to engage with more people, but it became a critical concern when the pandemic hit. Immediately, he and Diane Harff began to set up video sessions using a phone and notebook computer to record the sermon for the week so they could post it online. But it soon became apparent that their connection to the internet needed to be improved.

Diane is a Meeker Cooperative Light and Power Association member and she had heard about VIBRANT Broadband. She wondered if they could connect to the VIBRANT Fixed Wireless tower near Powder Ridge. When it became apparent that working, learning, and now worshiping from home was becoming necessary, Diane reached out to the VIBRANT Sales Team.

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



MERGER'S MESSAGE

BY TIM MERGER, MEEKER COOPERATIVE, CEO/GENERAL MANAGER

FINALLY

On Friday, May 14, Minnesota Governor Tim Walz signed the Executive Order lifting or relaxing Minnesota's face

covering mandate. Finally. Governor Walz instituted the face covering mandate at midnight on July 24, 2020, close to ten months ago. Hopefully we can continue down the road to a full recovery of our normal activities – whatever that new normal might be.

Every Minnesotan has been affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Some more than others. At Meeker Co-op we were affected both positively and negatively. On the negative side, we needed to ensure employees had the equipment, materials and resources to work from home, maintain social distancing for those still needing to work in the office, close the office to the public and our members, linemen needed to drive in separate vehicles, and service technicians on both the broadband and electric side needed to get into members homes while ensuring all of the pandemic safety protocols were followed. Lots of additional time, steps and new ways of doing things were developed.

On the positive side, many of the co-ops members received their VIBRANT Broadband just in the nick of time. Unquestionably, we saw a sudden uptick in VIBRANT Broadband installations due to members needing to work from home, schools forced to close and children needing to have solid internet to continue their education.

Remarkably, we saw little variance in late bills or nonpayment compared to past

years. This was likely due to the numerous assistance programs that were available including Meeker's own Meeker Cares Funding Program. We established this program to help members financially hurt by the pandemic. It was established with funding from a grant from CoBank (one of our lending institutions) Meeker Co-op's Operation Round Up program and the Co-op itself.

ECO PASSES

Minnesota's legislature adjourned on May 17. One of the bills they passed prior to their adjournment was the Energy Conservation and Optimization Act, ECO for short. Co-ops have been working on this piece of legislation for the past four years. It simply is an important update to the Conservation Improvement Program (CIP) legislation which has been in place since 2007.

Much has changed in the way of energy conversation, efficiencies, renewables, new technologies (think electric vehicles and LED lights), and generation of electricity since then and an update was due.

Some of the updates in the new legislation include changing the spending requirement and allowing multi-year plans and measurement of their success over that time rather than annually. This gives utilities across the state more flexibility in the goal to achieve financial savings for their members or customers. Overall, the bill now includes energy efficiency across electric, transportation, agriculture and natural gas sectors.

ANNUAL MEETING

As you will see elsewhere in this newsletter, the Co-op's Annual Meeting will be held in conjunction with our Member Appreciation Day (MAD) event. I hope the mask

mandate, social distancing and other pandemic protocols will be completely lifted at that point.

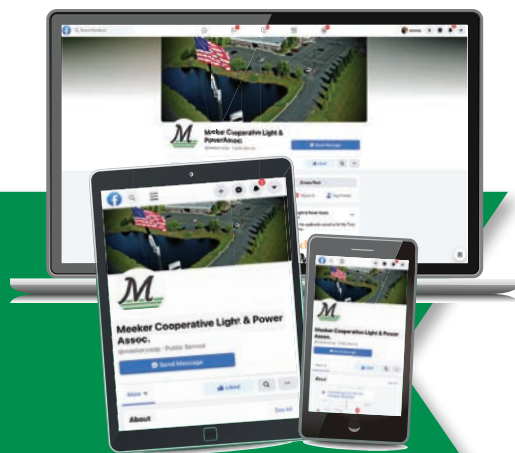
I encourage all of our electric and VIBRANT members and customers to join us for the evening. The one thing that we are asking you to do is give us a headcount if you will be attending. In the July/August issue of the *Pioneer*, which will come out around the 20th of July, we will have an RSVP form. We are asking you to complete it and return it to us prior to the event or simply log onto our website and provide us the RSVP that way.

We have not asked for a MAD or Annual Meeting RSVP in the past, but with the pandemic protocols just lifted and with people just starting to really get out and about, we are unsure of how many members to plan for. This will help us order supplies and food, as well as plan seating accommodations and workers needed.

I hope to see you on August 11 at the A Maze'n Farmyard.

DID YOU KNOW?

**An average of
307 billion emails
were sent and
received each
day in 2020.**



Is your account info up-to-date?

Please take a moment to
update your information.

Go to [www.meeker.coop/
update-my-info](http://www.meeker.coop/update-my-info)
or call us at 320-693-3231.

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!

SAVE THE DATE: ANNUAL MEETING & MEMBER APPRECIATION IS AUGUST 11!

Come join us at the
"A maze'n Farmyard" in Eden Valley!

Receive FREE admission, a FREE meal and a lot of fun at this year's Member Appreciation to be held at the family-fun A maze'n Farmyard on Hwy. 55 just outside of Eden Valley. This event runs from 4:30 to 8 p.m. on Wednesday, August 11.



Here are just a few of the activities that will be available:

- Bucket truck rides
- Huge 150-foot slide
- Two mazes
- Barn full of animals to hold and pet
- Miniature golf putting greens
- Snack & Gift Shop
- Pony Rides and Wagon Rides
- Water races and more

VIBRANT Broadband Representatives will be on-hand to answer your VIBRANT questions. Look for more information in the next edition of the *Meeker Pioneer*. Put this on your calendar and make plans to come!



ANNUAL MEETING

*Meeker Cooperative will hold its
Annual Meeting during Member
Appreciation Day at A maze'n Farmyard,
August 11th at 7 p.m.*

TREE TRIMMING IMPROVES SERVICE FOR ALL

We are fortunate to have so many trees that offer beauty, shade and a habitat for all sorts of birds and other wildlife. We know that you appreciate our community for many of the same reasons.

At Meeker Cooperative, we strive to balance maintaining beautiful surroundings and ensuring a reliable power supply by keeping power lines clear in rights of way (ROW).

While we recognize and appreciate the beauty of trees, there are three main benefits to tree trimming in ROW areas. However, before touching on the main reasons, we will explain what a "right of way" is and how it may impact you. A right of way is the land we use to construct, maintain, replace or repair underground and overhead power lines. Rights of way enable the Co-op to provide clearance from trees and other obstructions that could hinder the power line installation, maintenance or operation. Meeker Cooperative must be able to maintain the power lines above and below the ROW. Our goal is to provide reliable power to our members while maintaining the beauty of our community.

Safety

First and foremost, we care about our members and put their safety and that of our lineworkers above all else. Overgrown vegetation and trees pose a risk to power lines. If trees are touching power lines in our members' yards, they can pose grave danger to families. Electricity can arc, or jump, from a power line to a nearby conductor like a tree. A proactive approach diminishes the chances of fallen branches or trees during severe weather events that make it more complicated and dangerous for lineworkers to restore power.

Reliability

One of the biggest benefits of a smart vegetation management program is reliability. Strategic tree trimming reduces the frequency of downed lines causing power outages. Generally speaking, healthy trees don't fall on power lines, and clear lines don't cause problems. Proactive trimming and pruning keeps lines clear to promote reliability.

Affordability

As you know, Meeker Cooperative is a not-for-profit cooperative, and that means



we strive to keep our costs in check in order to keep our rates affordable. This extends to our approach to vegetation management. If trees grow too close to power lines, the potential for expensive repairs also increases. Effective tree trimming and other vegetation management efforts keep costs down for everyone.

We appreciate the beauty trees afford, but we also know our community depends on us to provide reliable energy. Through vegetation management, we are better able to keep the power lines clear, prepare for future weather events and secure the reliability of the grid.

ELECTRIC PICKUPS WILL FIND LOTS OF INTERESTED CUSTOMERS



A majority of Meeker Cooperative Members' vehicle of choice is the pickup truck. It's no surprise given our rural roots in agriculture. Some of the hottest new electric vehicles in the coming years will be pickup trucks. #05-25-103

Ford and GMC, as well as Tesla and Rivian, will be coming out with many options to choose from.

According to a survey conducted by Cox Automotive, 40 percent of consumers who plan to purchase a pickup in the next two years would consider an electric version.

Electric pickup shoppers rank price and driving performance high on the list of considerations, while horsepower and brand name are lower on the list. Transporting cargo is also high on the list, however work use is also lower.

Compare that to people who would be buying an internal combustion engine pickup truck who consider horsepower more important on their list. These are interesting and exciting times in the EV world.

Ford's new just-released F150 Lightning has an estimated base range of 230 miles, starting price under \$40k, and 40% less maintenance cost than a gas-powered F150. Learn more about the new Lightning at: <https://www.ford.com/trucks/f150/f150-lightning/2022/>

Source: GRE News and Car and Driver

Follow Us!

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

 /meeker.coop
 /vibrantbb.net



Chevrolet Bolt

ACT NOW and get a rebate on a new Air Source Heat Pump



It's the best of both worlds. Air Source Heat Pumps provide home cooling and supplemental heating with 72% less electricity than conventional air conditioners and furnaces.

Learn more about this by speaking with one of our Energy Management Representatives.

Standard Rebate Criteria		High Efficiency Rebate Criteria		
Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio (SEER)	Rebate	Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio (SEER)	Heating Seasonal Performance Factor (HSPF)	Rebate
14.5-15.9	\$530	14.5-15.9	≥8.2	\$1,050
≥16.0	\$630	≥16.0	≥8.2	\$1,200

Meeker Cooperative
Light and Power Association
320-693-3231
www.meeker.coop

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 **July 16**, you will have a \$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. **Good luck!**



VIBRANT HELPS ST. JOHN'S SPREAD THE WORD

– FROM FRONT PAGE

"Church members wanted to engage in church services online, especially after the COVID restrictions. The church didn't have a very good Internet connection and uploads were very slow," Diane recalls.

"We had also upgraded our video equipment, and with that we needed to look for a better Internet solution."

Pastor Milz went from recording on a mobile phone to a two-camera system they had purchased from a company that specializes in video equipment for churches.

HOW VIBRANT BROADBAND HELPED

"Before VIBRANT Broadband, when we uploaded our church services, it would take forever or just wouldn't happen. We used to have to drive over to a neighbor's house or someone who got a signal to get it to upload," Diane states. "It was just crazy and nerve-wracking for a while."

"Once we got VIBRANT Broadband, the upload speed was so much faster that it allowed us to upload the church services quickly. Our 9:00 AM service is ready to be viewed between 11:00 and 11:30 AM that morning!" #25-32-134

"It's been tremendous," said Pastor Milz. "It's sharp, it's clear, the sound is great and it's very professionally presented to our viewing audience. We worked with a great video equipment company and are very happy, but we wouldn't have been able to do it without our great Internet service and fast upload speeds from VIBRANT Broadband."



Pastor Milz credited Diane as she was the person who did the heavy lifting on the entire project. She gathered the information and presented all the necessary details to the church council.

"VIBRANT's customer service is great," according to Diane. She is familiar with Meeker Cooperative's exceptional member care and has always been happy with MCLP. She gives kudos to the entire VIBRANT Broadband Team. "My VIBRANT Sales Representative called and left a message while he was on vacation, and wanted me to know about the mesh system. Even though he was with his family he took the time to call and leave a message with us about our options."

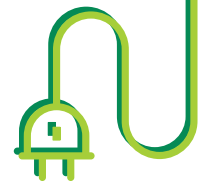
"We are so thankful that VIBRANT Broadband was able to help us connect with our congregation." With busy schedules, people shared comments like, 'sometimes the kids are working or people weren't able to make it to church as a family and we love the online availability of pre-recorded services.' In response to the input of the members, St. John's plans to continue with their online connection even after things go back to normal.

Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

A dirty filter causes your air conditioner to work harder than necessary.

Remember to change your air filter every month (or every two months) to prevent dust buildup, which can lead to even bigger problems.

Source:
www.energy.gov



Looking to buy, sell, or give away something?

Check out our online classified section.

Go to:
www.meeker.coop/classifieds
and list your item FREE!



WILLIE WIREDHAND'S ELECTRICITY FUN FACT



Did you know....?

On September 13, 1935, the Meeker Cooperative Light and Power Association became the third REA co-op organized in Minnesota.

By the end of November of 1936, Meeker Co-op powered up the first REA lines in the state.

VIBRANT Reviews

We just signed up for VIBRANT. We couldn't be more pleased with everyone from the office, to laying the line, putting in the router and burying the line. We were hooked up before the line was buried and I was concerned about our daughters' dogs chewing on the line. They put the job on high priority and it was buried the day after it was hooked up. Couldn't ask for more. Thank you all! #05-22-111

Virginia S.

I am SO happy with my new service! I want to compliment your installers; they were so courteous and worked to find the best solution where to put my router. They did a great job, explained everything and made sure I understood how things worked. They were very respectful in regards to COVID and I felt completely safe with them in my home. I am looking forward to getting my [VIBRANT] phone installed, and I love the ease of having my electric, Internet, and phone all on one bill and doing auto-pay. Thanks for making this such a good experience for me!

Lori H.



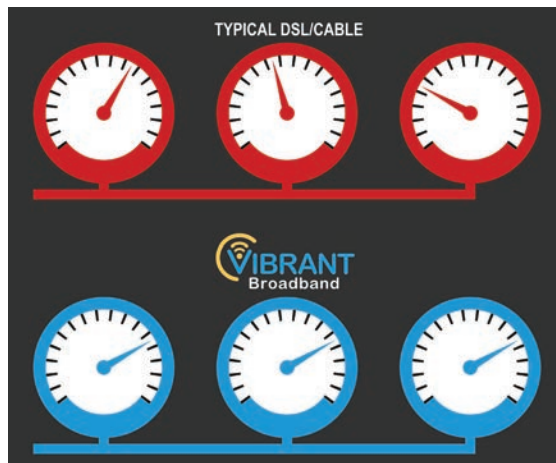
VIBRANT Broadband is built on a fiber-fed backbone. This means that our Fixed Wireless service is just as fast as our Fiber-To-The-Premise service. We get asked about how VIBRANT's speed is affected if other users also have our service.

VIBRANT's fiber and fixed wireless services should provide a subscriber with the full speed their package allows. For example, subscribers to our Streaming Package with 50Mbps download and 5Mbps upload will get those full speeds no matter how many households are connected to VIBRANT Broadband.

Where speed is affected is within your household and the number of devices that are connected to your VIBRANT Broadband service.

As you have more and more devices connected, like tablets, computers, televisions, mobile phones, thermostats, smart light bulbs, smart speakers, and more, your speed within your VIBRANT Broadband package can become affected.

VIBRANT BROADBAND MEANS FULL-SPEED



This is why we offer multiple residential packages with speeds up to 100Mbps. For today's residential Internet user, most wouldn't need speeds over 100Mbps. As long as the router can handle the traffic to your devices, you most likely would not notice a difference in your Internet experience with speeds over 100Mbps.

So, no matter what VIBRANT Broadband speed package you subscribe to, you are assured to get the full-speed without being affected by other VIBRANT Broadband subscribers.

Featured Recipe

Almond Crusted Walleye

Congrats to **Christie Schlueter** for submitting this month's winning recipe for **FISH**.

INGREDIENTS

Almond-Panko Crust

- 1/2 cup sliced almonds coarsely chopped
- 1/2 cup panko breadcrumbs

- 1/2 tablespoon fresh thyme or 1/2 teaspoon dried
- 3/4 tsp. kosher salt
- 1/4 up to 1/2 tsp. ground pepper

Walleye

- 2 tablespoons extra virgin olive oil
- 6-9 oz. walleye fillet
- 2 eggs beaten with 1/4 -1/2 cup milk

- Sea or kosher salt and ground black pepper, to taste

Flour coating

- Flour- seasoned with salt and pepper



INSTRUCTIONS

1. Combine crust ingredients thoroughly
2. In a large sauté pan or cast iron pan, heat oil over medium high heat.
3. Season fish with salt and pepper
4. Place beaten eggs in a shallow bowl. Place flour into a shallow bowl, place crust mixture into a shallow bowl.

5. Dip fish into seasoned flour, then egg, then into panko mixture pressing crust lightly to help it stick
6. Add fish to the hot oil, spoon oil over the fillet adding a bit more if needed. Cover the pan. Cook the crust side until golden brown (5-6 minutes.) Flip fish over in the pan. Cook for another 3-4 minutes or until fish flakes are golden on the other side. It's important not

- to flip until fish has cooked until golden on the first side, then it will not stick to the pan. Watch second side carefully and take off as soon as it is golden or fish flakes with a fork. Just lift up an edge of fillet to check.
7. Once fish is cooked through, and flaky, serve with a scattering of additional sliced almonds, lemon slices and sprig of thyme, if desired. This recipe is also good for Northern.

Submit your favorite **BBQ/GRILLING 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: July 2, 2021**

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

PRACTICE SAFETY WHEN DIY-ING

Many of us are spending more time at home and finding new, creative ways to enhance our living space. Tackling do-it-yourself (DIY) projects for the home can be fun and cost-effective. But many of these projects do not come without risks. Here are a few safety tips to keep in mind as you get to work.

Select a designated work area. The amount of space you'll need will depend on the size and scope of your project. Make sure you have adequate lighting and ventilation (if necessary), and the required tools and equipment nearby.

Personal protective equipment (PPE) is your friend. Stock up on safety goggles, dust masks, ear plugs or noise reduction ear protectors, gloves and any other kind of protection you'll need for your project. Wear appropriate clothing and shoes.

Work slowly and clean as you go. When you rush through a DIY project, you'll likely end up with less desirable results than you intended, or worse, you could make a costly or dangerous mistake. Clean as you go to ensure a safer workspace.

Be cautious with power tools. Annually, 8% of electrocutions in the U.S. are attributed to improper use of power tools. The Electrical Safety Foundation International offers the following safety tips:

- Use ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs)



Tackling a DIY home project is incredibly satisfying, but many of these projects can come with risks. Keep safety in mind as you take on any home improvements.

- Never use power tools near live electrical wires or water pipes
- Use extreme caution when cutting or drilling into walls
- If a power tool trips a safety device while in use, take the tool to a repair center for service
- Do not use power tools without the proper guards #25-08-401
- When using a wet-dry vacuum cleaner or a pressure washer, be sure to follow the manufacturer's instructions to avoid electrical shock.

Remember, you should only tackle DIY home projects within your skill and comfort level. For projects that require extensive electrical work, we strongly recommend you hire a licensed, qualified electrician for assistance.

Source: NRECA

DO YOU HAVE PAST CAPITAL CREDITS COMING TO YOU?

If you have ever received power from Meeker Cooperative, you may be entitled to receive past Capital Credits.

To check if your name is on our list of past members, go to www.meeker.coop/capital-credits. You will find a link on that page called "Unclaimed Capital Credits." Click that link and you can download the PDF of the complete list.

You may also call our office to have a list sent to you by email. If your name is on the list, please contact Jammie at 320-693-3231.

After seven years of unsuccessful attempts to locate members with outstanding Capital Credit balances, the State of Minnesota allows the Co-op to donate these funds to the Operation Round Up program to use for educational purposes.

YOUR JULY BILL MAY BE HIGHER

With the beginning of Meeker Co-op's summer rate of 12.3¢ per kilowatt hour June 1, the energy you used in June will be at this higher rate. This may result in a slightly higher bill in July. Beginning September 1, the rate will return to the fall/winter rate of 10.3¢/kWh. If you are on an Energy Management program, your summer rate for your heating/cooling will be 6.2¢/kWh in the summer and 5.7¢/kWh the remaining months. For information on how to receive the low Energy Management electric rate, contact us at 320-693-3231.



888.264.6380
heartlandss.com

Here is what customers have to say about Heartland Security

"We've been very happy with our system and the excellent service we've received. We love being able to control our system with the app on our phone! We can even arm and disarm from our phones! We recommend Heartland Security to anyone who wants a security system that is easy to use."

Call or go online to find out how Heartland Security can make security easy for you.

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Chad Felstul, Attorney

MEEKER COOPERATIVE ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY

The Forest City Livewires 4H Club worked Saturday, May 1st, on the Meeker Co-op Adopt-A-Highway section. They picked up 48-bags of trash in the ditches along the six-mile section, located on Highway 12 between County Road 34 and County Road 9. Thank you, Forest City Livewires 4H Club, for your service to our community.



OFFICE HOURS

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

CONTACT US

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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.