

MEEKER COOPERATIVE PIONEER

The official publication of

Meeker
Cooperative
Light and Power Association

VIBRANT
Broadband™

Meeker Co-op is an Equal Opportunity
Provider and Employer

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Building Broadband for the 100th MN State Baseball Tournament: A Community Collaboration

In anticipation of hosting the prestigious 100th Annual MN State Amateur Baseball Tournament, the Litchfield Baseball Association (LBA) embarked on a journey to enhance the tournament experience for players and fans alike. Recognizing the importance of reliable broadband access, LBA President Brian Jones spearheaded efforts to ensure seamless connectivity throughout the event.

Having broadband access at the MN Baseball Tournament is crucial for several reasons. First, it allows for efficient communication and coordination among teams, coaches, and officials. Instant access to scores, schedules, and real-time updates ensures smooth operations and enhances the overall experience for participants and spectators.

Continued on page 2.

“ENERGIZING AND CONNECTING...ENHANCING YOUR LIFE.”

CONTINUED: Enhancing Baseball Tournament with Broadband Access

Additionally, broadband access enables live streaming of games, allowing friends, family, and fans who cannot attend in person to still enjoy and support the tournament remotely, promoting inclusivity and expanding the tournament's reach.

Months prior to the tournament, Jones initiated discussions with local internet providers to assess their ability to meet the State's requirements. In October 2022, he reached out to potential partners, seeking internet and Wi-Fi services for critical areas such as the press box, beer tent, and the trailer house on the north side of the 3rd base line. The LBA's aim was to create an immersive and technologically advanced experience for players, media, and attendees.

Following comprehensive evaluations and deliberations, VIBRANT Broadband emerged as the preferred choice for the

LBA. In February 2023, the Cooperative's Design Engineers visited Optimist Ballpark to evaluate the site and devise a tailored plan for the broadband infrastructure. Their expertise and commitment to meeting the State's requirements further solidified the partnership.

By May 2023, the LBA announced its collaboration with VIBRANT Broadband, assuring the community that reliable and efficient broadband services would be available throughout the tournament. With VIBRANT's support, LBA could offer high-speed internet access for streaming TVs in the beer tent, a dedicated 150mbps connection in the trailer house, and internet connectivity in the press box to cater to radio and TV broadcasters.

This concerted effort to build out broadband infrastructure exemplifies Meeker Cooperative's commitment to the community. The collaboration between the LBA, VIBRANT Broadband, and other local

“Litchfield’s ability to host the State Amateur MN Baseball Tournament was made possible thanks to VIBRANT. This local company proved instrumental in meeting the tournament’s demanding technological requirements. The employees of VIBRANT were a pleasure to work with. Being a local company, their active involvement in the community and visibility around town made the decision easy for LBA.

**- Brian Jones,
LBA President**



Cody installing fiber at the ballpark.



Optimist Park in Litchfield

organizations highlights the community's dedication to showcasing our fine town and providing an exceptional experience for players and fans during this historic tournament.

As Litchfield gears up to welcome teams and enthusiasts from across the state, the availability of broadband access at Optimist Ballpark sets the stage for seamless communication, live streaming, and real-time updates. The successful implementation of this broadband infrastructure not only enhances the tournament experience but also demonstrates the power of community collaboration in leveraging technology to elevate sporting events.

The 2023 amateur baseball state tournament gets underway Friday, August 18. For more information about the tournament or to volunteer, check out www.mbastate2023.com



CEO MESSAGE

2023 LEGISLATION IMPACTS

The 2023 legislative session, which began in January and concluded on May 22, was one of the most consequential in history for Minnesota's 1.7 million cooperative members. Record investments, key policy changes, and the landmark 100% carbon-free by 2040 mandate all made this legislative session one with big, long-term impacts on everyone using electricity in the state.

At the forefront of advocating for our Cooperative member-owners, the Minnesota Rural Electric Association (MREA) actively engaged with lawmakers to ensure our voice was heard. They worked tirelessly to shape the outcomes of the session, and I would like to share with you a summary of the key developments that will affect all of us.

100% CARBON-FREE BY 2040

The first and most impactful bill for electric cooperatives and their member-owners was the historic 100% Carbon-Free by 2040 bill, which was signed into law in early February. The legislation, passed in record time, is widely regarded as the most significant energy policy ever passed in Minnesota and mandates that all electricity sold in the state comes from carbon-free sources by the year 2040.

Naturally, as a cooperative that provides electricity to our members, we are concerned. Whenever something is mandated, the price tends to go up and the affordability of electricity for our members is always a priority at Meeker Cooperative. 31-08-202 Additionally this law also presents significant challenges regarding reliability.

As a result, MREA worked with lawmakers to add some common-sense amendments to help protect affordability and reliability. However a lot of investment, innovation, and ingenuity will be necessary to avoid cost increases and potential service disruptions. Significant advancements in technology will also be needed to achieve the mandate.

The good news here is that Minnesota's electric cooperatives are leaders in navigating the clean energy transition, and while we understand that change can be concerning, we're confident that we'll be able to meet this mandate with the help of our wholesale energy providers.

STATE COMPETITIVENESS FUND

As you have just read, investments in Minnesota's electric grid have become more critical than ever. With the recent federal funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), it is

imperative for Minnesota to aim high and attract significant federal dollars. Consequently, lawmakers have allocated \$190 million to establish the State Competitiveness Fund which will be utilized to attract hundreds of millions of dollars for investments in Minnesota's energy infrastructure.

The funds will be utilized by cooperatives throughout the state, with an additional \$5.3 million specifically allocated to consumer-owned utilities. These funds will support projects aimed at improving affordability, enhancing reliability, and facilitating the energy transition.

ELECTRIFICATION REBATES AND GRANTS

The State of Minnesota wants to help you electrify your life and has introduced a rebate program that provides up to \$2,500 for new electric vehicles priced below \$55,000, and up to \$600 for used vehicles under \$25,000. This rebate opportunity is available to individuals, businesses, nonprofits, and government entities. However, those who have already received an EV rebate or tax credit from Minnesota are not eligible for this particular program.

Furthermore, individuals interested in acquiring highly efficient heat pumps for their homes can benefit from rebates of up to \$4,000. The state legislature has also allocated grant funding for various initiatives such as solar installations on schools, electric bikes, electric school buses, pre-weatherization efforts, and more.

As I conclude this column, I want to remind you of Meeker Cooperative's unwavering commitment to your best interests. We are fully dedicated to finding ways to provide reliable and affordable electricity to our members. While the path forward may be complicated, our determination remains steadfast.

Thank you for your continued support and trust in us as we navigate the impacts of the 2023 legislative session. Together we will embrace the opportunities and overcome the challenges that lie ahead.

Dedicated to keeping the lights on and the data flowing,

Luke Johnson

CEO, Meeker Cooperative

CONCERN FOR COMMUNITY: A CO-OP PRINCIPLE

Meeker Cooperative, rooted in the understanding that our success is tied to the community's well-being, prioritizes our members' needs. We actively participate in community development, support local initiatives, and invest in education, health, and infrastructure. By embodying the principle of concern for community, we enhance the quality of life, foster sustainable growth, and demonstrate our dedication to the betterment of the areas we serve.

SCHOLARSHIPS

Meeker Cooperative provides scholarships to students in our communities as a means to support and invest in the development of local youth. 30-04-301 By offering financial assistance for education, we aim to empower students, broaden their opportunities, and foster a skilled workforce for the future. Through these scholarships, we not only contribute to the educational growth of students but also demonstrate our commitment to community enrichment and sustainable progress, ensuring a brighter and more prosperous future for all of our members and the regions we serve.

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR 2023 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Basin Scholarship Recipient Alicia Hansen

Thanks to Basin EPC, one of Meeker's wholesale power suppliers, the \$1,000 Basin Scholarship is offered to dependents of Meeker members or VIBRANT subscribers. This scholarship is open to high school seniors and undergraduate college students. Keep an eye out for the application requirements when it becomes available this fall.

Meeker Cooperative Electric Trust Scholarship Winners

The Meeker Cooperative Electric Trust is proud to offer two \$1,000 scholarships to each of the following schools. Students must attend college or tech school the fall semester following the award. Seniors should contact their guidance counselor regarding the scholarship selection process at their school.

- ACGC Senior High School Breven Buer
- Connor Danielson
- Dassel-Cokato High School Cooper Ernst
- Jake Koelln
- Eden Valley-Watkins High School Allison Brutger
- Elise Schmidt
- Hutchinson High School Stella Docken
- Elizabeth Lien-Wilke
- Kimball Area High School Katheryn Donnay
- Jackson Fink
- Litchfield Senior High School Alexander Draeger
- Lauren Erickson
- Paynesville High School Kennedy Mansell
- Sierra Roeser
- BOLD High School No Eligible Student

Grant Opportunity

The Trust also provides grants to local non-profit and civic organizations that align with the Trust's guidelines. To access the application and guidelines, please visit Meeker's website and navigate to the "Member Services/Download Forms" section. The next deadline for grant applications will be November 2, 2023, at the close of business.



COMMUNITY EVENTS

Meeker Cooperative participates in community events like the County Fair and FarmFest to strengthen our connection with the local community and showcase our commitment to rural life. These events provide an opportunity for us to engage with our members and the wider public, raising awareness about our services, promoting energy efficiency, and educating attendees about the cooperative business model. By actively participating in these events, we demonstrate our support for local traditions, agriculture, and rural development, while also fostering relationships, building trust, and reinforcing our role as a reliable and community-oriented electricity provider.



2023 MEEKER COUNTY FAIR

Join us at the Meeker County Fair from August 2-6 for exciting updates! Visit our booth in the SE end of Commercial Building 2 where VIBRANT Broadband and Meeker Energy Services Representatives will be available from noon to 9pm to address all your internet and electricity questions. Don't miss the chance to spin the wheel and win a prize - we can't wait to see you there!



FARMFEST 2023!

Meeker Cooperative will be at FarmFest 2023 along with other regional electric cooperatives. Stop by, visit with us and don't miss your chance to win battery powered electric lawn care equipment!



AUGUST 1-3 • MORGAN, MN • BOOTH 2301

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

PHONE: _____

EMAIL: _____

You must be a member of one of the participating electric cooperatives to win.



FIND YOUR LOCATION NUMBER

Four location numbers are hidden within this Pioneer and four more 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 August 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.

ENERGY EFFICIENT PEAK SHAVE WATER HEATING PROGRAM



Discover how the Peak Shave Water Heating (PSWH) program from Meeker Cooperative can revolutionize your hot water system, providing uninterrupted comfort while significantly reducing your energy costs. Find out how you can enjoy plenty of hot water and incredible savings today!

The PSWH program allows Meeker Cooperative to temporarily interrupt electricity to your water heater only during periods when the demand or cost of energy is high, while still providing hot water for your normal daily needs. You're rewarded with a low energy management rate. An interruption, called a control period, may happen several times a month for up to 8-hours per occurrence. There are more than 3,300 members participating on the PSWH program who are enjoying plenty of hot water AND saving money.

With electric water heating you'll have the safest and most reliable water heating system you can choose for your home or farm. 25-31-425 There are no worries about open flames or lack of adequate venting that are common with gas water heaters.

You will be saving money on the PSWH program.

The water heater is metered separately at the energy management rate of 6.2¢/kWh in June, July, and August (equivalent to \$1.08 propane) and 5.7¢/kWh in the other months (equivalent to \$1.00 propane).

- Meeker Co-op provides the metering and load control equipment. Member is responsible to have an electrician install the equipment.

Need a new water heater?

We offer an \$800 credit or rebate toward the high-efficient 85- and 100-gallon Marathon Grid Enabled Rheem® water heaters designed to be used as part of our peak shave demand response program. Contact us for pricing and sizing information.

The Marathon Features:

- Seamless, non-metallic tank will not rust or corrode.
- Outer tank resists dents and scratches.
- High efficiency with two-and-a-half inches of polyurethane foam insulation minimizing stand-by heat loss.
- Easy maintenance with bowl-shaped bottom that drains completely and no anode rod to replace.
- Limited lifetime tank warranty for the original homeowner. Five-year warranty on parts and one year on labor.



Pictured in front of a 100-gallon Marathon water heater is the Logan Josephson family of eight (youngest not pictured) who recently enrolled on the Co-op's Peak Shave Water Heater (PSWH) program, metered at the low energy management rate. Logan states that he likes the cost savings on the PSWH program and the family has never run out of hot water even when the unit is interrupted. "The 100-gallon capacity unit is very efficient and I like that we have a lifetime warranty on the tank."

7 COMMON CAUSES OF POWER OUTAGES

Meeker Cooperative has a strong reliability record. However, there are many reasons why even the best utilities experience outages.

1. SEVERE WEATHER

Severe weather conditions like lightning, heavy rains, high wind speeds, or tornadoes can damage power lines, causing blackouts.

2. MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENTS

Accidents involving utility poles can disrupt power supply in affected areas.

3. EQUIPMENT FAILURE

Electrical equipment can fail due to age or mechanical issues, leading to outages.

4. TREES AND VEGETATION

Falling branches during storms can cause short circuits, interrupting power.

5. HIGH ENERGY DEMAND

Extreme weather conditions can overload the grid, resulting in temporary outages.

6. PUBLIC DAMAGE

Unsafe digging, equipment or line damage, or theft.

7. PLANNED OUTAGES

Scheduled outages for maintenance, repairs or system upgrades ensure reliability and safety.

WILLIE WIREDHAND'S ELECTRICITY FUN FACT



The honeybee flaps its wings so quickly that it can create an electrical charge. When the honeybee pollinates a flower, the electrical charge is transferred. Other bees can detect this electrical charge and know to visit another flower instead!

MEMBER NEWS

USDA AWARDS RECONNECT BROADBAND FUNDING TO VIBRANT BROADBAND

Meeker Cooperative Light & Power Association has been awarded a grant of \$19,039,348 as part of the ReConnect broadband funding program by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). This investment aims to expand high-speed internet access in rural areas. The grant will be utilized to deploy a fiber-to-the-premises network passing about 700 homes, as well as businesses, farms, and an educational facility.

Meeker Cooperative aims to make high-speed internet affordable by participating in the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Affordable Connectivity Program. This funding aligns with President Biden's agenda to rebuild the economy by improving infrastructure and expanding access to reliable and affordable internet services for rural communities.

CALL 320-693-3231 TO REPORT YOUR POWER OUTAGE

FEATURED RECIPE

Grilled Margherita Pizza

Congratulations to **Shelley Carter** for submitting this issue's winning recipe.



INGREDIENTS:

- 1 store-bought pizza dough
- Olive oil, for brushing and drizzling
- Kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 1 pound fresh mozzarella, sliced 1/4-inch thick
- 3 Roma tomatoes, sliced 1/4-inch thick
- Handful fresh basil leaves

DIRECTIONS:

Stretch and shape the dough into a 12-inch round on a flat surface. Brush the top with oil, salt and pepper and toss on the hot grill, oil-side down. Cook until the bottom is golden brown, 1 minute. Flip it over and repeat. Remove to a sheet pan. Cover the grill so it retains the heat for the next step. Drizzle the top with more olive oil. Put the mozzarella and tomato slices on top and season with salt and pepper. Return the pizza to the grill on the sheet pan, cover the grill and cook for 3 or 4 minutes to melt the cheese. Remove from the grill and tear the basil leaves over the top. Slice and serve immediately.

Submit your favorite Tomato 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: August 7, 2023.

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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Send Attention: Editor at the address above.

APPLICATIONS FOR DISTRICT 5 DIRECTOR POSITION NOW BEING ACCEPTED

The District 5 seat on Meeker Cooperative's board of directors is now open. District 5 includes the following townships: Fairhaven in Stearns, Cokato, Southside, French Lake in Wright, and Dassel in Meeker.

Meeker Cooperative's bylaws specify that the Board of Directors may appoint a member to fill any open board seat. 23-31-209 Once appointed, the Director will serve until the next Annual Meeting, at which time the seat will be up for election by the membership of the district to fill the unexpired term.

If you are interested in applying for the District 5 Director position, the Director Qualifications and the Application Form may be found on Meeker Cooperative's website at www.meeker.coop. Select Member Services at the upper left and then Download Forms from the dropdown menu. Click on the Director Application packet to download the materials. You can also call Mary Alice Holm at 320-693-3231 to request a packet.

The application deadline is close of business (4:30 p.m.) on September 8. Selected applicants will be notified and will be interviewed in person by the Board of Directors on Monday, September 25.

MORE NEWS & CLASSIFIEDS ONLINE

Keep up-to-date with your cooperative in-between issues of the Pioneer and browse our classifieds online at:

www.meeker.coop/news.