

PIONEER



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

CELEBRATING 90 YEARS OF SERVICE, INNOVATION, AND COMMUNITY

In 2025, Meeker Cooperative marked a powerful milestone: 90 years of service to its members and rural communities. What began in 1935 as a bold mission to bring electricity to farms and homes across rural Meeker County has grown into a forward-thinking cooperative delivering not only electricity but also high-speed internet through its Vibrant Broadband division.

Throughout this celebratory year, Meeker honored its deep roots while looking ahead to an exciting future. From local events and historical exhibits to a refreshed brand and new name, 2025 became more than an anniversary. It became a living tribute to the values that

have carried the Cooperative through nine decades of progress.

HISTORY ON DISPLAY, STORIES REMEMBERED

Meeker's 90th year was woven into member experiences throughout 2025. Features in The Pioneer newsletter spotlighted key moments from the Cooperative's early days and reflected on how member needs have evolved. A full historical timeline was created and unveiled during the Annual Meeting. It now hangs in the lobby and has become a favorite stop for visiting members.

Continued in page 2.

ANNIVERSARY CONTINUED...



That timeline wasn't the only nod to the past. A photo slideshow played during the Member Appreciation Event, blending archival images with modern snapshots. 36-11-202 Long-retired tools were cleaned up and displayed in the warehouse, sparking conversations about how far service and technology have come. It is not uncommon to see members lingering in front of the lobby timeline, sharing memories—some recalling when the lights first came on, others reflecting on how many services Meeker now provides.

Beyond the walls of the Cooperative, Meeker's 90th anniversary story was shared through local radio, community partnerships, and updates to signage and branding across its service territory.

A BIG CELEBRATION AND A BOLD NEW CHAPTER

The 2025 Annual Meeting was both a celebration of history and the official launch of Meeker's refreshed identity

as Meeker Energy. With a new logo and a name that better reflects the Cooperative's expanded focus on energy solutions and broadband connectivity, this brand refresh marked the beginning of a new chapter. The values remain the same, but the vision continues to grow.

In total, more than 1,000 members and community members interacted with history-related displays, communications, or events during the May Member Appreciation Event.

ROOTED IN LEGACY, FOCUSED ON WHAT'S NEXT

Looking back, Meeker Energy's commitment to reliability, innovation, and member trust remain a direct through-line from its founding. As CEO Luke Johnson reflected at the Annual Meeting:

"Our founders didn't set out to build an empire. They just wanted to bring light to our rural areas. But they built something lasting, a cooperative grounded in service, innovation, and trust. That's still true today."

As Meeker Energy turns the page to year 91, the mission is as strong as ever: to power progress, connect communities, and continue shaping a legacy of cooperative leadership for today and for generations to come.



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Four location numbers are hidden within this Pioneer. If you find your number and claim it by calling Meeker Energy before December 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.



DIRECTOR ELECTIONS APPLICATIONS AVAILABLE FOR DIRECTOR CANDIDATES IN DISTRICTS 1, 2 AND 6

Meeker Energy is member-owned and governed by directors elected by you, the member-owners, from each of the nine service territory districts. Director seats in Districts 1, 2 and 6 are up for election following the normal rotation of districts for election. The election will be held in conjunction with 2026 Annual meeting which will be held at Meeker's headquarters at 4 pm on May 20, 2026.

These districts are made up of the following townships:

DISTRICT 1: Roseville, Irving in Kandiyohi, Paynesville in Stearns, Union Grove in Meeker

DISTRICT 2: Eden Lake in Stearns, Harvey, Manannah in Meeker

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

Members from these districts, interested in being placed on the ballot and meeting the qualifications identified in the bylaws, must submit a completed Meeker Energy Application for Director packet by the close of business on January 20, 2026.

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 are accepted.

The bylaws outline the make up and responsibilities of the Q&E Committee. Members are appointed by the Board of Directors from each of the Director Districts not up for election. The Committee:

- reviews all of the applications submitted to determine that all candidates meet the stated qualifications.
- notifies any potential candidate that does not meet the qualifications and requests they comply.
- places qualified candidates on the ballot for election. If there are no candidates in a district, the position shall be considered vacant following the annual meeting and the Board of Directors may appoint a Member from that district to fill the position until the next election of directors.
- has the authority to waive the ballot process and declare the 24-23-105 candidate elected for any district in which there is only one candidate.
- prepares and posts the list of qualified candidates at least 75 days prior to the annual meeting.

The decisions of the Q&E Committee will be final.

For complete director election information, qualifications and requirements, please visit www.meeker.coop. Under the Member Services tab 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.



WILLIE WIREDHAND'S ELECTRICITY FUN FACT

The very first Christmas tree lit with electric lights appeared in 1882, when Edward H. Johnson, an associate of Thomas Edison, hand wired 80 tiny red, white, and blue bulbs onto a rotating Christmas tree in his New York home. People thought it was a publicity stunt, but it eventually inspired the Christmas lights we use today.

MEMBER NEWS

HOLIDAY HOURS

The Meeker Energy office will be closed December 24-25, and January 1 for the Holidays.

COFFEE ON THE CO-OP

Join us for coffee, conversation, and connection with your cooperative team.

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9:

Queen Bee's, Paynesville

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 10:

Keek's, Watkins

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 11:

Meeker Energy

9-11 A.M. EACH DAY.

We hope to see you there!

HOLIDAY PARADE

Join us on Thursday, December 11 at 5:30 PM in downtown Litchfield for the 5th Annual Candy Cane Parade. Meeker Energy is proud to be part of this festive community tradition as we celebrate the season with lights, cheer, and a whole lot of holiday spirit! Look for our float, then warm up with hot chocolate and music at the Opera House after the fun!

SAVE THE DATE

Join us Wednesday, May 20 at Meeker Energy for our Member and Subscriber Appreciation Day from 4:30 to 7:30 pm. The Annual Meeting business session begins at 4:00 pm (members only). Mark your calendar and plan to attend.



SCHOLARSHIPS NOW OPEN FOR MEEKER ENERGY MEMBERS



At Meeker Energy, we believe in supporting lifelong learning and the bright futures of our members and their families. Two scholarship opportunities are now open for applications:

Basin Electric Power Cooperative Two \$1,250 College Scholarships

These scholarships are available to dependent children of Meeker Energy members or Vibrant Broadband subscribers who plan to attend a two- or four-year college, university, or technical school full-time in the fall of 2026. 36-30-302 Applicants must be U.S. citizens and have not previously received this award. Application deadline: January 30, by close of business (4:30 p.m.).

Meeker Cooperative Electric Trust Two \$1,000 Non-Traditional Student Scholarships

Funded by Operation Round Up®, these awards support adult learners, students returning to school five or more years after high school, who are pursuing a degree, certificate, or license.

Applicants must be a Meeker Energy member, employee, or Vibrant Broadband subscriber and have already completed at least one semester or quarter in their chosen program. Application deadline: February 5, by close of business (4:30 p.m.). Applications for both scholarships are available at www.meeker.coop/download-forms, at the Cooperative office, or by calling 320-693-3231.

Investing in education is one of the many ways Meeker Energy continues to power our community forward.

EASY HASH BROWN SOUP

Submitted By: Dorothy Holm

INGREDIENTS

- 1 bag (26-30 oz) of frozen hash browns (plain)
- 2 – 14 oz. cans chicken broth*
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- ¼ c. chopped onion
- ¼ tsp pepper
- 1 – 8 oz package of cream cheese
- 1 c. milk

DIRECTIONS

Put the first 5 ingredients in the crockpot and cook on high for at least 1 hour. Stir, turn to low and cook for 1 more hour. Add cream cheese, cook for another 30 minutes or until cheese can be stirred into the mixture. Add milk and cook for 10-15 minutes more. Total cook time about 3 hours. Serve with shredded American or cheddar cheese on the top.

**Can substitute a combination of roasted vegetable, garlic or other favorite broth flavors to your liking (Better than Bullion options work great to combine flavors)*

This cozy soup comes from one of our long-time members and marks the final recipe in our newsletter series. We hope you enjoy every last spoonful!

FEATURED RECIPE



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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Brad Donnay, President — District 3

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

Paul Bugbee, Vice-President — District 1

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

Randy Bryant, Treasurer — District 7

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

Karen Becker, Secretary — District 2

Eden Lake in Stearns;
Harvey, Manannah in Meeker

Barbara Ann Nelson — District 4

Litchfield, Greenleaf in Meeker

Ben Beckman — District 5

Fairhaven in Stearns; Kokato, 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

Jerome Wosmek — District 8

Darwin, Ellsworth in Meeker

Jesse Turck — District 9

North Kingston, Kingston,
Forest City in Meeker

Chad Felstul, Attorney

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.



HOLIDAY SAFETY CHECKLIST

As you decorate, gather, and celebrate this season, a few simple safety steps can help keep your home bright and worry-free. 24-23-239 Use this quick checklist to make sure your holiday lights, décor, and electrical equipment are working safely all winter long.

- Inspect your lights: Check for cracked cords, loose bulbs, and damaged plugs before hanging any light strands.
- Choose LED décor: LED lights stay cooler, use less energy, and greatly reduce fire risks.
- Don't overload outlets: Spread holiday décor, appliances, and chargers across multiple outlets or circuits.
- Use outdoor-rated cords outside: Only use extension cords and light sets marked for outdoor use in Minnesota's winter weather.
- Keep cords visible: Avoid running cords under rugs, through windows, or behind tightly packed furniture.
- Give space heaters space: Keep them at least 3 feet from anything flammable and plug them directly into the wall.
- Water real Christmas trees daily: A dry tree and electric lights can be a dangerous combination.
- Set timers or use smart plugs: Automatically turn lights off at bedtime or when you leave the house.
- Disconnect décor safely: Always unplug decorations before changing bulbs, replacing fuses, or taking them down.