

MONTHLY NEWS

WORLD-CLASS TECHNOLOGY. UNRIVALED LOCAL SERVICE.

April 2021

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The 2021 Annual Meeting will once again be held virtually on **April 22, 2021 at 1:00 PM**. The webcasting platform called "Perigon", which was used last year for the meeting is a high-tech platform that can accommodate video presentations, attendee questions and voting, will once again be used for this meeting. Voting by electronic means is permitted in the cooperative's bylaws and will take place during the meeting. The 2021 VC Co-op scholarship recipients will be announced during the meeting.

Online pre-registration for this meeting is required. Registration instructions and voting credentials will be available on the cooperatives website, www.vernoncom.coop, after April 1, 2021. Information required for pre-registration will be the cooperative member's name, account number and email address. Your email is needed so updated meeting information can be forwarded to registrants if necessary. Optional contact information to provide at the time of pre-registration will be a telephone number.

Director elections will proceed in the usual manner and ballots will be sent by mail. The nominating committees have met and selected candidates to fill three year terms for Director positions. The nominees selected for District 4 (Viroqua) are Gene Cary, Rachel Hanson and Trudy Wallin (incumbent). District 5 (De Soto) nominees are Miles Bohland (incumbent) and Tom Fisko. District 6 (Westby Rural & Cashton) nominees are Kyle Bakkum, Mark Cade, Cheryl Day, Marty Stenslien (incumbent), and Annette Wedwick. Ballots will be counted on April 21, 2021 and announced at the Annual Meeting.

Our hope is for things to be somewhat normal next year, so we can have the 2022 Annual Meeting in person. ***We would like to thank our members for your patience, understanding and cooperation in this last year, as we set forth and focus on the future.***



HELP US BY CALLING 811

Happy Spring Everyone! Hopefully, the snow and cold weather are behind us. With spring comes the rush for digging holes and making improvements around your property. This is a very busy time for us as well because construction season begins.

The construction process gets more difficult when we have to stop to repair the destruction of a cut cable. We are also seeing more and more damage from burning ditches. Yes, underground cables can be destroyed by fire. Our hand holes in road ditches are either plastic or fiberglass and they will burn. The cable in them is also plastic and it burns very easily too. If you are burning, make sure you keep the flames at least 10 feet away from our hand holes. They are usually marked with either 1 or 2, 4"x4" wood posts in the road ditches. Please remember to call **Diggers Hotline** 3 days before you dig. Never assume the cable is several feet deep. Over the years, topsoil may have been removed. Also, never assume that a cable is minor and only feeds residential services. We recently had a small fiber-optic cable accidentally damaged outside of La Farge that was a major transport route to Madison and other neighboring companies. Several very large businesses in Madison had their service interrupted. We were able to temporarily restore service, but it took 3 days to make permanent repairs and could only be done in maintenance windows after midnight. This will probably cost the cooperative in excess of \$10,000.00 from cable repairs as well as lost services for customers on that route. Another thing to consider is the time and stress that is created for our employees when a fiber cut happens. Help our employees enjoy their spring by not creating outages that takes them away from their off hour plans. Enjoy spring and the freedom to move around this year. *Help our employees enjoy their spring by calling **Diggers Hotline**, before you start your projects.*



Destroyed handhole from ditch burning

10 DIGIT DIALING

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has adopted "988" as a new three-digit number to be used nationwide to reach the *National Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Crisis Lifeline*, starting July 16, 2022. Customers must continue to dial 1-800-273-TALK to reach the Lifeline until July 16, 2022.

In order for 988 to work in your area code, 10-digit local dialing must first be implemented. 608 is an area code that needs to change the way a local call is dialed. Beginning April 24, 2021, you should begin dialing 10 digits (area code + telephone number) for all local calls. If you forget and dial just 7 digits, your call will still be completed.

On October 24, 2021, you must dial 10-digits (area code + telephone number) for all local calls. On and after this date, local calls dialed with only 7-digits may not be completed, and a recording will inform you that your call cannot be completed as dialed. You must hang up and dial again using the area code and the 7-digit number.

On July 16, 2022, dialing "988" will route your call to the National Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Crisis Lifeline.



214 N. Main St. Viroqua, (608) 638-2030.



CALL BEFORE YOU DIG



**Know what's below.
Call before you dig.**

Diggers Hotline is a FREE service that is used before you do any kind of digging, to make sure you don't damage underground lines owned by utilities buried on your property. Because fiber is buried underground, the importance of calling Diggers Hotline before you do any kind of digging is more important than ever. Damaging fiber is very costly and can

interrupt service to you and your neighbors. The process is simple and easy to do, but planning ahead is key.

Here is the information you will need before you make the call: Name, address, contact number and email address. You will need the name of the person doing the digging and their phone number, whether it is you or a contractor. You will also need the address of the site location and the side of the street specified along with the distance and direction from the nearest intersecting road. The dig site information will include the date of the digging, the work type, marking instructions and any additional pertinent information.

Whether you're planting a tree, digging a trench with a shovel, post hole digger or trencher, you must call Diggers Hotline 3 days before digging at (811) or (800) 242-8511.

BURNING PERMIT

Don't forget the burning permit! For information in your county, **Call 1-888-WIS-BURN (947-2876) or go to: <https://dnr.wi.gov/topic/forestfire/restrictions.asp>** or contact your local fire department or local municipal official for burning regulations.

TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION



Many of us are receiving stimulus checks and with that comes the rise of phishing scams, fake websites and robocalls designed to steal your money and personal information, according to Newsweek. If you receive emails or texts on social media claiming to be from the government, **BEWARE!** They may ask you to click on a link to verify your information or to fill out an application to receive your stimulus check. Another scam asks for taxpayers to disclose bank account information under the guise of receiving the \$1,200 Economic Impact Payments. They may try to scam you by stealing passwords, account numbers, or Social Security numbers. If they get that information, they could gain access to your email, bank or other important accounts. **The IRS will never contact you by phone, email, text message or social media with information about your stimulus payment asking for Social Security numbers, bank account or government benefits debit card account number.** If you see this, it is a scammer phishing for information. Robocalls may pretend to be a government official

asking for an upfront fee to retrieve your stimulus check and ask for personal information. You do not need to pay anyone to get your money. If you have caller id and it shows up like a call from the government, Social Security Administration or a local number, be on guard as this could be spoofing.

Here are four signs that alert you to a scam according to the FTC:

1. **Scammers PRETEND to be from an organization you know.** They might use a real name, like the Social Security Administration or the IRS. Some could pretend to be from a business you know.
2. **Scammers say there's a problem.** Scammers say there's a problem with one of your accounts and you need to verify some information.
3. **Scammers pressure you to act immediately.** They want you to act before you have time to think.
4. **Scammers tell you to pay in a specific way.** They often insist you pay by sending money through a money transfer company or by putting money on a gift card and then giving them the number on the back. Some will send you a check (that later turns out to be fake), tell you to deposit it and then send them money.

ENTERTAINMENT NEWS



On March 1, 2021, WGN America officially re-branded as NewsNation and expanded its primetime news programming to 5 hours every weeknight! NewsNation remains committed to delivering fact-based and unbiased news, and are building on the solid start of their nightly news program. With this expansion, NewsNation will deliver viewers more fact-based national news and regional stories from across the U.S., as well as coverage of the day's most important issues.

TV RATE INCREASE

Due to the rising cost of programming from local and national television networks, VC Co-op television prices will increase on May 1, 2021. The new price reflects the increase that programmers have passed on to us. Sports and local broadcast networks continue to be the driving force behind these sharp increases.

VC Co-op negotiates with local broadcast networks for the right to offer their stations as a convenience to our members. And although these stations are available free over the air with a digital antenna to many urban residents, these stations still collect fees from all TV providers each month as a "broadcast retransmission charge". These fees continue to climb out of control. In 2006, they were only \$0.06 of the average customer's monthly bill and today account for almost \$20.00 per month.

The price networks pay to air sports has caused television service to double over the past decade. Escalating salaries of star players and coaches place large financial demands on teams and leagues who drive up programming costs to cover expenses. For example, the NFL just signed a new deal with broadcast partners for \$100 billion. The costs paid by the networks are passed on to VC Co-op and then to you.

VC Co-op continues to fight for our members by negotiating fees and programming on your behalf. Our goal is to help manage your monthly bill by fighting against excessive fee increases. We want you to have access to all your favorite programs at a price that is fair and we will continue to work hard to add more value to our television service.

2021 TELEVISION RATE INCREASE			
TELEVISION PACKAGES	2020	2021	INCREASE
Local	48.50	54.00	5.50
Basic	99.25	105.25	6.00
Expanded	110.95	118.25	7.30
Select	87.50	95.50	8.00
MVS - VC Co-op Local Tier	19.95	25.45	5.50
MVS Stream - Local	29.25	32.50	3.25
MVS Stream - Basic	68.95	71.50	2.55
MVS Stream - Expanded	91.65	95.50	3.85
MVS Stream - Select	79.95	83.00	3.05
*These prices do not reflect multiservice discounts			

April 1 April Fools Day



April 4 Happy Easter



April 22 Earth Day



April 22 VC Co-op's Annual Meeting Begins at 1:00 PM

Go to: www.vernoncom.coop
for pre-registration information



103 N Main Street
Westby, WI 54667

Lobby Hours:
8:00am - 4:30pm (M-F)

(608) 634-3136
www.vernoncom.coop



LEMON POUND CAKE

INGREDIENTS:

3 C. all-purpose flour
1 tsp. baking powder
1/4 tsp. salt
1 C. unsalted, softened butter
2 C. sugar
3 eggs

1/2 C. buttermilk
1/2 C. sour cream
1 TBS lemon juice
1 tsp fresh, minced ginger
Zest of 2 lemons (about 2 TBS.)
1 tsp. vanilla



GLAZE:

1 1/2 C. powdered sugar
3 TBS. lemon juice
*Whisk the powdered sugar and
lemon juice together until smooth.*

CREAM CHEESE FROSTING:

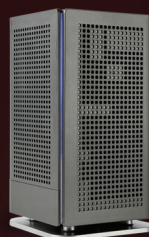
4 oz. softened cream cheese
1 TBS. lemon zest
1/4 C. lemon juice
2 C. powdered sugar
Mix until smooth & creamy

1. Sift flour, baking powder, and salt and set aside. In another bowl, cream butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Beat in eggs, one at a time. Mix in the sour cream, lemon juice, vanilla, ginger, and lemon zest.
2. Mix half of the flour mixture into the butter mixture. Mix in the buttermilk and then add in the remaining flour mixture. Mix just until the flour disappears. Pour the cake batter into a bundt pan that has been generously sprayed with baking spray.
3. Bake for 70 to 80 minutes or until a knife inserted in the center of the cake comes out clean. Remove the cake from the oven and allow to cool for 5 minutes. Turn the cake over on a cake platter. Spread the lemon glaze over the warm cake so that the glaze can soak into the cake. Let the cake cool completely and drizzle the lemon cream cheese frosting over the cake.

EMPLOYEE SERVICE AWARDS



Alicia Funk (left) and Gunnar Gretebeck (right) were recognized for their years of service at a recent employee meeting. Alicia has been with the cooperative for 20 years and she began her employment on March 12, 2001. Her current title is *Plant Facilities Administrator*. Gunnar is a *Member Service Technician* and he started his employment on March 13, 2006. The longevity of these employees has created a lot of knowledge in their field for the cooperative.



GigaSpire Blast Wi-Fi Router

Advantages:

- Receives Gigabit broadband data
- High-performance system (Wi-Fi 6)
- 6x6 streams of Wi-Fi

