

# MONTHLY NEWS

December 2025

*Connecting our members with exceptional  
communication solutions with ease and integrity.*



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**WISHING YOU A JOYFUL HOLIDAY SEASON  
AND A PROSPEROUS 2026!**



## From The CEO

Greetings, I hope as you read this, you're in full holiday spirit and your Thanksgiving celebration was wonderful.

There has been a lot happening at the cooperative this autumn and I'm very excited to it share it with you.

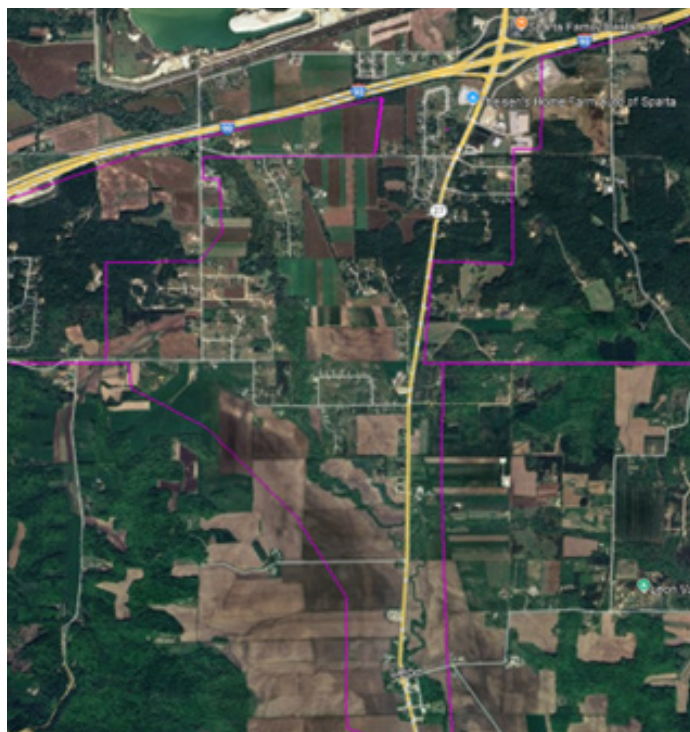
As you may be aware, the cooperative has been expanding its territory into both Monroe and Crawford counties through the state grant program. This expansion initiative first began by my predecessor and the board of directors. We have continued to expand based on those established principles.



Additionally, there have been construction projects that the cooperative has determined to be of value, either via a good return on investment, a community in dire need of better broadband, or both.

This autumn, we launched several expansion projects.

One of those projects allows us to expand into new territory, while the other fills in underserved areas within our territory. If you recall, when we applied for the Monroe Phase I and Phase II grants, there were areas that didn't qualify for grant reimbursements. As a result, we built near those areas but did not expand into them. We have now begun filling in those areas, predominantly in the area South of Sparta to the West of Hwy 27. The image below illustrates most of the area that is being constructed.



In addition to filling in this area, which will bring our world-class broadband to those who need it, we have also begun construction in three new communities. We are currently building fiber-to-the-home in Norwalk, Wilton and Ontario. These three communities were ineligible for the recent BEAD program, and are in desperate need of high speed broadband.

VernonCom will build these villages and assess the surrounding areas, dependent upon how the BEAD program develops. Our goal is to have all of this work complete by mid 2026. We believe adding these new areas to the cooperative will be beneficial for everyone. These underserved villages need highly dependable, high-speed broadband, but have fallen off the grant radar. The same broadband experience you as a member have enjoyed for years, will now be available in these communities.

As great and exciting as expanding into new territories is, it comes with other challenges. One challenge is, as a cooperative, should these new customers be members or patrons? Should they remain as customers with no member status or become a full member, with representation and voting privileges? Again, a good decision was made years ago, welcoming every new customer into the cooperative as a member. The challenge that then arises is how to equitably represent these new members. The board has taken up this conversation for several years. It is challenging to determine how a territory should be broken into districts in order to provide representation, especially when the cooperative is approaching its 75th year of existence. There are some firmly established districts!

Knowing this, the board again took on the challenge of redistricting and has come up with a solution that allows equitable representation for all members as expansion occurs. The by-laws of the cooperative allow the board of directors to determine the territorial election districts of the cooperative. As such, the board has decided to fully redistrict the cooperative into four districts, down from the six that currently exist. If you recall, this same decision has occurred several times in the past, such as in 2014 when Liberty Pole & Readstown combined, Viola & Yuba combined, and the village of La Farge and La Farge Rural combined. In 2023, Genoa and De Soto combined, and in 1961, Romance combined with Genoa, and Red Mound with De Soto!

The change of these districts will also change the make-up of the board of directors. The board of directors will now have six members with four directors representing four new districts and two directors will serve as at-large directors. Over the past 75 years, the number of directors has also changed from a low of four directors in 1950-51, to a peak of eleven, briefly in 2001!

The terms for the board of directors will not change, and will remain at three year terms as defined in the by-laws. The new election cycle will closely follow the current schedule. Below is the breakdown of years for elections and the existing director serving that district, (reflective of the new districts).

**2026 District 4 (Steve Woodhouse) and District 2 (Daren Matthes)**

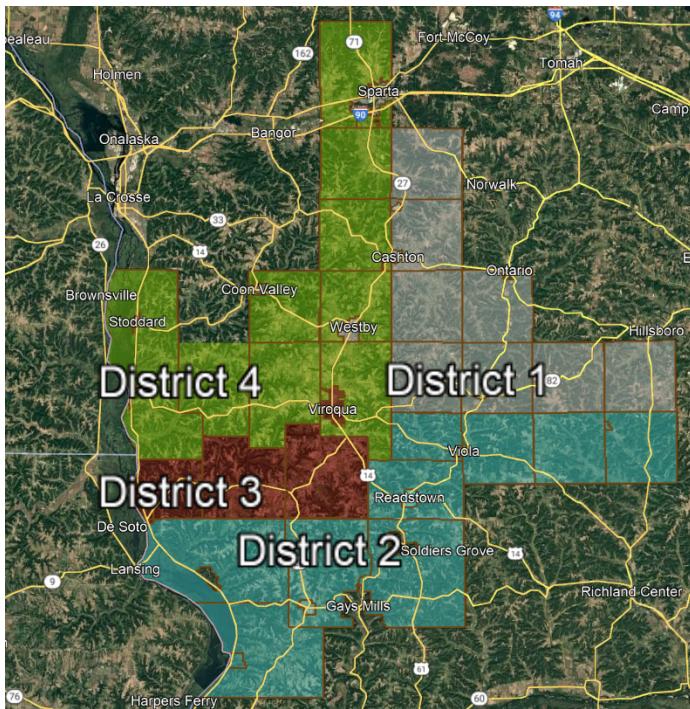
**2027 District 3 (Trudy Wallin) and At-Large (Mark Cade)**

**2028 District 1 (Dan Nelson) and At-Large (Greg Lawton)**

Here is a map of the districts and how they will look in their current make-up. Each and every year, as they have always done, the board will review the districts to see if they are properly administered in the best interest of the cooperative and membership. As expansion occurs, such as the projects currently being constructed, the territories will be adjusted in an effort to equitably split the locations within the districts.

Continued...





The cooperative will notify its members and provide a ballot, either via paper or electronically, if your district director is up for election. In the years that an at-large director is up for election, the entire membership will vote in that election.

I'm excited and grateful the board of directors have implemented these changes, as I feel it best represents the membership as we continue to expand our territory. It shouldn't be overlooked how much thought and work went into making these changes. This is the culmination of years of thought, and discussion.

If you have any thoughts or questions regarding these changes, please contact myself at the office, or reach out to your district director.

In addition to all of the above information, you are likely aware that we have moved forward with updating most, if not all, of our access gear equipment. If we have already upgraded the latest Optical Network Terminal (ONT) in your home or business, we sincerely appreciate your cooperation. It is necessary for us to enter your location to perform this equipment upgrade. This will provide more stability to the network, more capabilities for staff in assisting you, and even more capabilities for you as a member in understanding the health of your home or business network. We expect the full conversion will take about four years to complete, but with your assistance our hope is to decrease that estimate. If we have not been in touch with you for this conversion, we will contact you when you are within one of our target areas. If you are curious, or wish to upgrade sooner, you can give us a call to determine availability within your location.

This is a lot of new and exciting information happening .

Thank you for being a member of the cooperative, and I wish you a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Garin Mayer, CEO

## Employee News



Employees had fun dressing up in the office on Halloween. Hundreds of trick or treaters were out enjoying the popular celebration in our local communities.



VernonCom's 2026 calendar is now available in our office. Stop by and pick one up while supplies last. The beautiful photos in this calendar are submissions from, "The Heart of the Driftless" photo contest.





## Business Spotlight



M & M Trees is a family owned Christmas tree farm operated by Jim and Sandy Matthes in rural Viola. The beautiful farm sits on hundreds of acres with particularly breathtaking views. The family's first idea of Christmas trees started in 1972, and in 1978 the business plan came to fruition. The first trees were sold in 1980 and they have been selling ever since. It is truly a family run business where their three children, and now grandchildren, help with harvesting and selling the trees. Running a Christmas tree farm is no small task. Like all agriculture, weather, animals and natural elements, comes with tough decisions and lots of hard work. Deer are a particular problem because they like to eat evergreen trees, especially Fraziers, and can destroy the looks of a beautiful tree. The Matthes family are members of the Wisconsin Christmas Tree Association, which promotes the selling of real trees. They grow Balsam, Fraser and Canaan trees and plant about 1500 trees per season, with the hope of 10-15% making it to maturity. They purchase the trees as seedlings and also transplants, which are trees 12-16 inches in height. It takes approximately 8-10 years for a tree to grow once it is planted, with shearing beginning at about three years old. During harvest, the trees are shaken to get weeds and birds nests out, and then they are baled in the field. They begin selling the trees on the farm the day after Thanksgiving and continue through mid to late December. Trees can be purchased both cut and cut-your-own. Around 500 trees are sold each year and are not only sold on the farm, but wholesale and retail as well. The family also ties bows, and branches from the trees, and anyone purchasing them can make a free will donation. That money goes to "Trees for Troops", a national organization that delivers trees to military bases and their families. Last year, Trees for Troops

donated trees to 93 military bases across the nation.

The Matthes family also donates a tree to the Viola Methodist church and a tree to the Village of Viola to be displayed in town for Christmas.

M & M Trees uses VernonCom's internet service for ordering supplies as well as social media for updates on their business.

Christmas Tree hours are: 9:00 AM until dusk, beginning the day after Thanksgiving.



While the holidays are a time of celebration, food insecurity serves as a constant reminder of those who are struggling. VernonCom is accepting non-perishable food items for our local pantries. Consider a donation of food for families in need.

**Give the gift of Christmas joy;  
Donate a new toy!**

*VernonCom is accepting toy donations for Bethel Butikk and matching toy for toy until December 15th.*

**Lobby Hours:**  
8:00 am - 4:30 pm (M-F)  
(608) 634-3136  
[www.vernoncom.coop](http://www.vernoncom.coop)

**Payment Options**  
Go To: [www.vernoncom.coop](http://www.vernoncom.coop)  
and click "Pay Now"  
Call (855) 940-3938

EFT (Automatic Payment) - Sign up and get a one time \$5.00 credit.

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