

# MONTHLY NEWS

April 2026



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

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## 2026 Director Election

VernonCom's nominating committees have met and selected candidates to fill three-year terms as directors of the Cooperative for Districts 2 and 4.

The nominees selected for **District 2** are Terrance Jindrick and Daren Matthes (Incumbent).



Terrance Jindrick



Daren Matthes

The nominee selected for **District 4** is Steve Woodhouse (Unopposed/Incumbent).



Steve Woodhouse

Electronic ballots will be available online through SmartHub: <https://vernoncom.coop/annual-meeting/#director-election> until 10:00 A.M. on April 13, 2026. Election results will be reported at the Annual Meeting.

## VernonCom's Virtual Annual Meeting

Tuesday, April 14, 2026

1:00 P.M.

The Annual Meeting of VernonCom will be held virtually on Tuesday, April 14, 2026. Online pre-registration is required for this meeting and is available on the cooperative's website:

[www.vernoncom.coop/annual-meeting/](http://www.vernoncom.coop/annual-meeting/)

Members will hear opening remarks from Board President, Trudy Wallin. Garin Mayer, CEO, will give the Operations Report and the goals for the future. Crystal Morley, CFO, will give the financial report and Dan Nelson will have the secretary's report from 2025. The presentation of ten, 2026 scholarship recipients will be announced during the meeting.



Garin Mayer  
CEO



Trudy Wallin  
Board President



Dan Nelson  
Board Secretary/Treasurer



Crystal Morley  
CFO

## From The CEO

Greetings and welcome to April!

I hope at the time you're reading this you've had the opportunity to sign up for the upcoming Annual Meeting of the Cooperative. This year, the business meeting will once again be held virtually on April 14th at 1:00 p.m. Every year the meeting has been



virtual, we have seen an increase in attendance, meaning we're reaching more members every year with information about the Cooperative! I do hope you'll be able to attend.

Additionally this year, voting for the Board of Directors is being

held via electronic ballot. This was decided upon for a couple of reasons. First, we would like to reach as many members to vote as possible. Electronic voting is a great way to make it an easier, faster, more dependable and secure process for both the member and the ballot counters. Second, as you recall there are now four districts with two at-large directors. Next year, 2027, will be the first at-large election (that I could find record of) in the Cooperative's history. This means there will be more than 10,000 members voting! Electronic balloting is a far more viable solution considering the challenges of mailing and receiving such a high volume of ballots.

Last, contrary to the heavy winter storms we received in March, we should be seeing some beautiful spring days in April. With the nice days ahead, I'm sure the eagerness to get out and burn ditches and or yards is there. Again, I will ask you to exercise caution when burning ditches around Cooperative facilities. Every year, it seems we end up replacing a handhole that has been burnt, or



worse, a fiber case where new fiber needs to be replaced. This means there will be downtime for some in the network as we restore the facility. This also means that the person(s) responsible for the burn will see an invoice for repair, and these invoices can climb into the thousands. Please be diligent when burning and don't leave the fire unattended. If the fire is approaching a hand hole, make sure it doesn't burn the lid. Hand holes are usually marked by a post on either side with an orange warning sign. As obvious as that seems, if brush has grown up and around it, you may not know it's there.

As always, thank you for being a member, I hope you'll attend the annual meeting this year!

Garin

## Industry Data

Consumers demand speed and reliability only fiber networks can deliver

60% of homes in the U.S. now have fiber-to-the-home

U.S. fiber-to-the-home deployment in 2025 surpassed 11.8 million homes

63% of the U.S. population has used AI at their jobs, resulting in an estimated 8.7 hours of work saved per week

AI is at the tipping point of transforming almost every aspect of how we work, live and play

*Fiber Broadband Association*

## Go **PAPERLESS**, help save the environment!

Effective July 1, 2026, a \$2.50 fee will be applied to any mailed, paper statements. Go paperless to avoid this fee and help reduce paper waste.



- Easy access to your VernonCom account
- View and pay your bill
- Access billing and payment history
- Update account information
- Go to: [vernoncom.smarthub.coop](http://vernoncom.smarthub.coop)
- Electronic voting

## KnowB4

### Free! Public Hacking

How often do you see signs for free Wi-Fi access and charging stations for your mobile devices? These amenities are available for your convenience in many public spaces like coffee shops and airports. Unfortunately, cybercriminals love free Wi-Fi and charging stations, too. Cybercriminals can hack into public Wi-Fi networks and charging stations to steal your sensitive information.

### Public Wifi

Cybercriminals can gain access to a public Wi-Fi network with a fake access page phishing scam. This fake access page will prompt you to put in personal information like your name, email address, and phone number. If you share this information with cybercriminals, they can target you in future scams to steal more sensitive information, such as your credit card number or passwords.

### Public Charging Stations

Cybercriminals can use charging stations to access your device. While charging stations may seem convenient and harmless, cybercriminals can load malware onto public USB chargers. If you plug your device into the infected USB charger, cybercriminals will be able to look at and download your personal data, such as saved passwords. If you enter your login credentials, cybercriminals will use them to access your accounts and steal your sensitive information.

### What Can I Do to Stay Safe?

Follow the tips below to stay safe from public Wi-Fi and charging station scams:

- Always use a VPN. VPNs create a secure connection between your device and the internet, making it harder for cybercriminals to steal your information.
- Be careful using your mobile device when connected to public Wi-Fi. If you need to enter or review sensitive information, disconnect from the public Wi-Fi.
- Never plug any public charging accessories into your mobile devices. Instead, bring a spare device charger or battery with you for emergencies.

## Employee News



Two employees with a total of 45 years of experience received awards.

**Alicia Funk** celebrated her 25th year with the cooperative! Alicia is very knowledgeable in Outside Plant Engineering/ Mapping. She is a natural problem-solver that can solve most complex challenges with positive energy. She

never backs down from a technical hurdle and her unmistakable laugh makes her a joy to work with. Alicia celebrated 25 years with the employees and served treats for the occasion at a recent employee meeting.

**Gunnar Gretebeck** has been with the cooperative for 20 years. Gunnar has a broad knowledge in his field, which is Installation and Repair. Gunnar's inquisitive nature and desire to serve our members and co-workers are truly commendable. He is always willing to answer questions and thinks a process through to completion.



Garin Mayer, CEO, presented the two employees with service awards for their accomplishments. Congratulations to Alicia and Gunnar for making a significant impact on our team for 45 years!

## CALIX ONT CUTOVER

If you receive an email from us make sure to schedule an appointment for an equipment replacement

This mandatory upgrade is an exciting improvement, and you'll be receiving details soon on how to schedule your appointment



### NEXT GROUP OF CUTOVERS:

Liberty Pole: March 30 - April 10, 2026

Westby & Viroqua: April 13 - April 30, 2026

## Business Spotlight - Birch Point Distillery



Opening a distillery is no small feat and the journey for Staci and Scott Kring has been many years in the making. They are the proud owners of Birch Point Distillery, located at 916 Yule Ln. Westby, WI. The name comes from a beautiful birch tree on their home property. The dream of opening a distillery has been on Scott's mind for many years. They were living in Green Bay Wisconsin when he created a business model for a distillery in that area of the state. When that did not come into fruition, their dream was put on hold. Staci began working at Organic Valley in Marketing and that is where the story begins in the Driftless Region. Her background in the dairy industry and Scott's passion for distilling became a reality in January of this year. With the help of the Dairy Business Innovation Alliance (DBIA) grant, their vision, perseverance, and hard work made their dream come true.

As one of only three producers in the world with the expertise to distill whey into vodka and gin, they are true industry pioneers. They use cow, sheep and goat whey, which would typically be waste, and transforming the byproduct into a revenue stream. Not only have they created an amazing product, but they partner with local creameries such as Hidden Springs Creamery and Nordic Creamery, which makes an impact to the sustainability and community of this region.



They employ ten people from the area and include them in the creation of their craft cocktails. Every month they offer a new drink for the season with the inspiration of the employees, and the syrups incorporated in the drinks are made in house. The distillery is open on

Friday's from 4:00 - 8:00 p.m., Saturday's 1:00 - 8:00 p.m. and Sunday's from 1:00 - 5:00 p.m. The new, beautiful building has inside seating for people to enjoy their exquisite drinks. They also offer savory pizza and charcuterie boards for people to enjoy while socializing with friends and family. This summer, they are opening an outside patio and will have live music and a variety of food trucks. You can find information about these events on Facebook and Instagram.

Birch Point Distillery uses VernonCom's service for POS, internet and guest Wi-Fi, as well as phone service, and can be reached at **(608) 634-3100**. During the month of April, you can sign up for a chance to win a \$35.00 gift card to the distillery on our website, go to: <https://vernoncom.coop/spotlight/>.

## IMPORTANT NOTICE



Due to our service provider sunseting their email support, VernonCom will discontinue hosting MWT.net email accounts effective December 31, 2026.

To ensure you don't lose access to your messages, please transition to a new email provider before this date. There are several secure, reliable, and free options available, including Gmail, Outlook, Yahoo, and iCloud. We recommend selecting a provider that offers robust security features to keep your data safe. Please note that after December 31, 2026 your MWT.net account will no longer be accessible.

### 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.

103 N Main Street  
Westby, WI 54667

