



2023 Annual Meeting

73rd Annual Meeting to be held on Thursday, Sept 21st

WCTA's 73rd Annual Meeting will be held on Thursday, September 21 at 6:30pm. It will be held in person at the Lake Mills High School Auditorium. This year's Annual Meeting will be a business meeting and will not include attendance prize drawings or refreshments.

The mail ballot will be sent in a separate envelope. The mail ballot must be returned in the designated mail ballot envelope and received in our office by noon on Thursday, September 21. Ballots will not be accepted at the Annual Meeting.

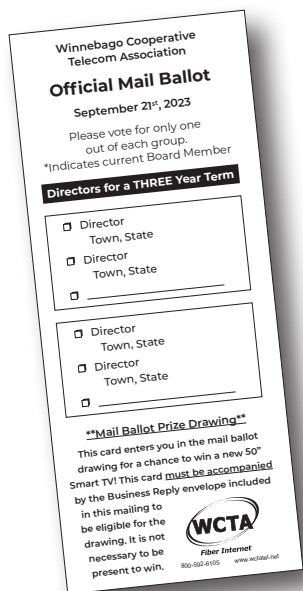
There will be one Mail Ballot Prize winner! The winner will be contacted after the Annual Meeting to arrange delivery.

In lieu of attendance gifts and door prizes at the Annual Meeting, we are excited to shift focus to Member Appreciation Day. Member Appreciation Day gives us the opportunity to celebrate our members in a more casual setting. We will have free food, giveaways, and more! Our 1st Annual Member Appreciation Day will be Wednesday, September 6, 2023, from 4:00-7:00pm at the Leonard Fjelstad Memorial Sports Complex in Lake Mills! We hope to see you there!

Reminder!

This is a business meeting. For attendance prize drawings and a meal, join us at Member Appreciation Day on Sept. 6th, from 4-7pm at the Leonard Fjelstad Memorial Sports Complex in Lake Mills!

Watch for the ballot which will be mailed to you next week. Ballots must be received in our office by noon on Thursday, September 21, 2023. Ballots will not be accepted at the Annual Meeting.



Be Sure to VOTE!

Directors' Report



L to R: **Curt Helland**, Director | **Larry Foley**, Director
Shanan Redinger, Director | **Dale Meinders**, Vice President
Mark R. Johnson, President | **Steve Thorland**, Director
Mike Stensrud, Secretary/Treasurer

Thank you to all WCTA members and staff for another successful year! Serving our members is the reason we exist, and our employees make it happen. Our role as the board is to set policy and govern the cooperative to serve the membership.

Member Appreciation: In previous years, our Annual Meeting was the time for our members to gather, learn about WCTA's present and future, and enjoy the excitement of refreshments & prize drawings. While we will continue to hold our Annual Meeting each year, we are very excited to introduce Member Appreciation Day for the first time in 2023. Member Appreciation Day allows us to celebrate the reason for our success – our members. This year's Member Appreciation Day is on September 6, 2023, and we hope you will join us to celebrate!

By switching our focus from the Annual Meeting to Member Appreciation Day, we are hoping for the chance to get to know and connect with our members in a more casual setting. Our attendance gifts and door prizes have been moved to Member Appreciation Day and we welcome you all to come and enjoy. We are eager to see this interactive event expand each year and give us a chance to meet more of our members.

Dividend Payment: The board approved a dividend payout of \$2 million. The dividend refund is a result of the efficient operation of your Cooperative and is based upon the amount of deferred patronage dividend allocations for the years 2000 and 2005. The payments represented 100% of the remaining deferred dividends for the year 2005, and 76.1% of the allocated dividends remaining in the year 2000. We printed nearly 8,000 checks for the 2023 retirement.

Construction Updates: WCTA has been working hard in the last year to provide new customers with a fiber optic network. Our fiber optic network provides our members with a future-facing, reliable and stable connection.

In 2022, we began bringing our fiber optic network to rural Alden and Kiester. We have buried more than 250 miles of fiber and made more than 600 drops to residences. This year, we are working to construct the Alden urban area, with 320 locations so far. Our construction for the Albert Lea multi-year project surges ahead, with just over 1,900 locations passed. Lastly, the Mason City, Manly, and Ledyard projects are steadily moving forward.

Re-Connect: WCTA will always search for new opportunities to provide our members with fast, reliable, and stable fiber optic

internet services through Federal or State broadband funding. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Rural Utilities Service (RUS) provides loan and grant funding for broadband buildout projects across rural America through their Rural eConnectivity Program (ReConnect) to aid in the economic development of rural areas. Funds go toward the construction, improvement, or the acquisition of facilities and equipment that provide reliable, high-speed internet in rural areas that do not have adequate access to broadband service. ReConnect has provided \$1.15 billion in grants, loans, and grant-loan combinations.

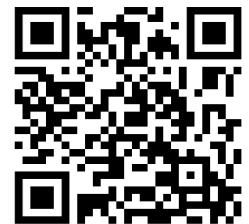
In 2021, the RUS announced their application window for ReConnect Round 3. WCTA surveyed rural locations in eastern Freeborn County and discovered a huge need for reliable, fairly priced broadband service which led WCTA to apply for ReConnect 3 funds in the 1st quarter of 2022. In the 3rd quarter of 2022, WCTA received notice that our ReConnect-3 application for \$12,556,772 grant and \$12,556,772 loan was approved. We are currently waiting for environmental studies to be approved before construction can begin to expand our fiber optic broadband services to new members.

We are very proud to provide our members with state-of-the-art Internet, TV, and phone services and will continue to be watchful for new opportunities that may benefit members. Thank you for the continued trust you put in the co-op, the board, and staff. We never take it for granted.

**HAPPY WITH OUR SERVICES?
TELL US YOUR THOUGHTS!**



**REVIEW US
ON GOOGLE**



**We strive to meet your
expectations and want to earn
your Google 5-STAR Rating!**

Cutting the Cord, Information Security, & More

Each year seems to pass more quickly than the last; here we are with the 2022 telecom year behind us. Thank you to President Mark R. Johnson and the Board for their efforts on your behalf during this past year. I encourage you to read the Directors' Report as it contains some important topics for members to know. I have a few additional topics to cover so read on for a quick review.

Cutting the Cord – To Do or Not To Do

Although the popularity of On-Demand streaming services such as Netflix and Hulu skyrocketed over the pandemic, some have debated whether cutting the cord – moving away from cable entirely – is worth it. Because you may have to subscribe to multiple platforms to watch your favorite shows, what was initially a low cost, rises as you add more subscriptions to your home. Similarly, YouTubeTV and other live TV streaming services commonly have extra costs for additional channels. The decision to cut the cord is not always clear, but the decision is yours.

To Do: I Want to Cut the Cord

If you choose to move away from cable TV, we can help you find the best streaming platform for your entertainment needs. With StreamNow (www.gostreamnow.com/wcta), your streaming decisions are made easy. You can:

- Review your streaming service options, such as on-demand and live TV. Plus, see which live TV streaming services offer your favorite channels!
- Compare popular streaming devices' pros & cons and/or read our how-to tips if you've recently invested in a new device.
- Check out our FAQ to answer your most common streaming questions.

Once you've decided on your preferred streaming method, we can provide you with the right internet services to give you the best streaming experience.

To Not Do: I Don't Want to Cut the Cord

If you decide against cutting the cord, we can help you make the most of it. We know the struggle of tuning in to your favorite show a little too late and missing the first few minutes, or an interruption taking you away from the TV. Our Digital TV customers are all given the ability to pause and restart live TV to watch your shows around those interruptions. Our Whole Home Cloud DVR service gives you the added convenience of recording a show when you're away or watching something else.

If your favorite feature of streaming is the convenience of watching anywhere, WatchTVEverywhere (www.wtve.net) is available to all of our Digital TV subscribers as well – allowing you to register, download apps from your favorite networks, and start watching from your devices. Not all networks have apps available for every platform, but the added availability can give you a more fluid viewing experience.

No matter what you choose to do – or not do – we're here to support you and provide you with the guidance, and the services you need.

Simplify Your WiFi

As the number of devices connected to your home network

grows, managing your devices and internet usage is more important than ever.

The WCTA Managed WiFi app is a tool to help you organize your home Wifi and stay safe with the added benefit of Security Plus. Security Plus helps you protect your Wifi from the router level, alerting you when unwanted visitors try to enter, and allows you to create a guest network to keep

your home network safe. You can add parental controls to block specific categories or applications, set time limits and usage limits, and run speed tests to ensure your Wifi is running efficiently. From Managed WiFi, you can even name your devices and assign them to a designated room. This can help you easily track device usage, and help you troubleshoot if one of your devices isn't working. Better yet, you can prioritize devices to ensure the best connection for your most important tasks.

Information Security

47% of American adults have had their personal information exposed by cyber criminals. Both your Internet Service Provider and you should remain vigilant to protect your information. WCTA offers information protection in a variety of ways, starting from the initial sign up of services. Our members' accounts can only be discussed with Authorized Users and require an account password.

By adding Avast CloudCare, an antivirus software, it can help protect your computer from malware. You can also sign up for Managed Wifi with Security Plus to be alerted of any suspicious activity on your network.

As robocalls are still prevalent, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) implemented the STIR/SHAKEN policy. This means that when a spam caller spoofs a number, STIR/SHAKEN attempts to identify the origin of the caller, and mark them as spam. Because this isn't 100% effective at identifying every phone scam, it is also up to you to protect your information.

Important security updates often come with your device software, so make sure your devices are always up to date. Once your device is protected, use passwords that are complicated and do not include personal identifying information. Password managers can help you create and save these, but it's important that your master password is strong and lengthy – at least 16 characters. You can also enable multi-factor identification, so your accounts don't rely solely on a password, but also include other methods of verification. Lastly, with the rise of social media and online sharing, avoid oversharing on those platforms, such as geotagging your locations.

In closing, I'd like to thank our WCTA employees who work relentlessly every day to fulfill our commitment to our members and provide you with the services you expect and deserve. I also want to thank the Board of Directors for your guidance and commitment to our members. Finally, thank you to our members for trusting us to serve you and for your encouragement for current and future projects. After all, if it weren't for our members, there wouldn't be a WCTA.



CEO's Report

2022 Annual Meeting Minutes

The annual meeting of the Winnebago Cooperative Telecom Association was held at the High School Gym in Lake Mills, Iowa, on the 22nd day of September, 2022, at 6:30 p.m., pursuant to previous action of the Board of Directors fixing said place and time for holding the annual meeting and pursuant to notice.

The meeting was called to order by President Mark R. Johnson who presided during the meeting. Mike Stensrud, Secretary/Treasurer, acted as Secretary during the meeting and kept the minutes thereof.

There being a total membership of 9,204 members and said members present in person being more than the 92 in number (a list of which is kept on file at the WCTA business office), the President declared a quorum for the lawful transaction of any business to come before the meeting.

President Johnson stated that the ballots of those voting by mail were counted earlier in the day by the Inspectors of Election. All ballots turned in at the meeting were then delivered to the inspectors who proceeded to count them. President Johnson announced the Inspectors of Election committee members: Bonnie Charlson, Mardene Lien, Bonnie Rodberg, Wayne Van Veldhuizen, Daryl Sherman, and Mike Dugger.

A motion was duly made and seconded to waive the reading of the Notice of Annual Meeting. Motion carried.

A motion was duly made and seconded to waive the reading and approve the September 23, 2021, annual meeting of members' minutes. Motion carried.

The financial report of the previous year was then presented and read by the CEO Mark Thoma.

A motion was duly made and seconded to accept the December 31, 2021, financial report. Motion carried.

President Johnson introduced the Board of Directors and Attorney to meeting attendees.

Kenneth Hansen of the Nominating Committee then presented and read the Nominating Committee report.

The Cooperative's CEO, Mark Thoma, presented his annual report to the members.

The President then called on the Inspectors of Election committee for the Director's election results.

The Certificate of Inspectors of Election report was presented and read by Daryl Sherman, a member of the Inspectors of Election, certifying that the following members, having received the highest number of votes cast, have been duly elected directors of the Cooperative to hold office for the term specified or until their successors shall have been elected and qualified.

Three-year term: Mark Johnson
 Dale Meinders

The Cooperative's CEO, Mark Thoma, presented his annual report to the members. There being no further business to come before the meeting, President Johnson declared the meeting adjourned.

Meeting Agenda

Thursday, September 21st – 6:30pm

In-Person

Call to Order & Roll Call

Business Meeting

Election of Directors

Old & New Business

Adjournment

Watch your mailbox...

Your **BALLOT** will be mailed soon -
Don't forget to **VOTE!**



WCTA Employees

Beenken, Nathan	Technician	Obermeyer, Heidi	Customer Support Specialist
Boysen, Ross	Technician	Pederson, Jeff	Business Solutions
Brock, Jesse	Technician	Petersen, Dan	Technician
Buhmann, Heather	Customer Support Specialist	Peterson, Zachary	Technician
Caylor, Clay	Business Systems Technician	Pins, Marty	Controller
Chodur, Deb	Customer Support Specialist	Piper, Mike	Network Operations Technician
Christianson, Jody	Customer Support Specialist	Porter, Nathan	Technician
Davis, Paul	Network Manager	Reicherters, Brenda	Residential Solutions
Ducommun, Chad	Operations Assistant	Renneker, Rob	Operations Manager
Eastvold, Tom	Network Operations Technician	Rentz, Josh	Network Operations Technician
Eaton, Chris	Inventory/Purchasing Coordinator	Riles, Chaden	Engineer
Garver, Saige	Marketing Specialist	Ringham, Jayne	Customer Service Manager
Hagen, Sarah	Accountant	Savoy, Steve	Network Administrator
Johnson, Aaron	Office Network Admin	Swenson, Tyler	Construction Tech
Johnson, Greg	Technician	Tegland, Travis	Technician
Johnson, Melanie	Customer Support Specialist	Theisen, Austin	Technician
Joynt, Ryan	Operations Assistant	Thoma, Mark	CEO
Kesler, Ryan	Network Operations Technician	Thompson, Angie	Project Coordinator
Kirgan, Erica	Marketing Specialist	Thompson, Scott	Construction Tech
Klebsch, Bob	Plant Administrator	Thoreson, Eric	Accountant
Kloster, Chad	Field Operations	Throne, Ashley	Customer Support Specialist
Kroger, John	Regulatory Manager	Tiedemann, Jason	Technician
Lackore, Darcy	Customer Support Specialist	Walden, Logan	Technician
Lucas, Jason	Plant Designer	Waller, Garrett	Technician
Neiber, Nick	Technician	Willert, Trevor	Technician
Niebuhr, Mark	Engineer	Wogen, Scott	Technician
Nitcher, Dylan	Technician		



Fiber Internet



**THE #1 CHOICE FOR
FIBER INTERNET!**

Winnebago Cooperative Telecom Association

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