



# 2022 Annual Meeting

**72<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting to be held on Thursday, Sept 22<sup>nd</sup>**

Calling all members – it's time for WCTA's 72<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting! This is an opportunity for you to find out what your Cooperative has been doing this past year. It's also a chance for you to learn more about the telecommunications industry and what the future holds for WCTA and its members.

This year's meeting will be held on Thursday, September 22<sup>nd</sup> at 6:30pm. You may attend in person at the Lake Mills High School gym or 'virtually'. If you wish to attend 'virtually', you may join online and watch the live video.

During the meeting, members will hear reports from President Mark R. Johnson and CEO Mark Thoma that will bring you up to date on telecommunications topics. See our website for more information.

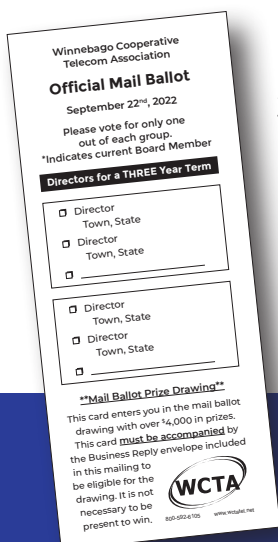
Drawings will be held for the Mail Ballot Prize and a total of eight Grand Attendance Prizes will be given away to lucky members! See back page for more details. Cookies and refreshments will be served following the meeting.

The ballot, prize card envelope, and attendance ticket will be sent in a separate envelope. The Mail Ballot must be returned in the designated Mail Ballot envelope. The envelope is your prize card. Ballots must be received in our office by noon on Thursday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>. The attendance ticket should not be returned with the mail ballot. Please bring your attendance ticket to the meeting.

WCTA is YOUR Cooperative. Attend the meeting in person or online and mark your calendar for Thursday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>. We hope to see you there!

**Members who register before 6:30 pm or attend virtually, & stay for the entire meeting are eligible for grand prize drawings. See back page for details!**

Watch for the ballot and prize card which will be mailed to you next week. Ballots must be received in our office by noon on Thursday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>.



## Be Sure to VOTE!

**Winnebago Cooperative Telecom Association**

**704 East Main Street Lake Mills, Iowa**

**www.wctatel.net 800-592-6105 wcta@wctatel.net**

# Directors' Report



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

**Dividend Payment:** Earlier this year the board approved a \$2 million dividend payout. The payments represent the deferred dividends for members who had service with WCTA in 1999 and 2005. Nearly 9,500 dividend checks were issued to members in May, and a total of 100% of the allocated dividends for 1999 have been paid back to members. Additionally, a total of 63% have been paid back for 2005.

**Supply Chain:** Supply chain disruptions continue to be a major challenge as the world economy recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic. Subsequently, WCTA has not been immune to these rising challenges.

Since the start of the pandemic in 2020, WCTA has experienced widespread delays in obtaining communications equipment of all kinds. The known causes for these delays include lack of available raw materials, limited manufacturing capacity, and increased demand for equipment, including fiber, routers, and other essential technology equipment. Supply chains rely on people and equipment, and if either is in short supply, delays

and cost result. Through effective and flexible planning, WCTA has geared up our supply of fiber and equipment to prepare for the challenges of today and tomorrow.

**Construction Updates:** WCTA continues to expand our Fiber-to-the-Premises (FTTP) footprint, and we have added many new customers in the past year. Our fiber networks allow us to provide the speeds and services of today, as well as tomorrow, to our members.

We are working on bringing fiber services to rural Alden and Kiester, Minnesota. Crews are working hard to build these areas and be ready to connect customers in early 2023.

Currently, work continues on our multi-year project to overbuild Albert Lea, Minnesota. Crews are doing a combination of FTTP on the west side of the city and are continuing the urban duct loop in preparation for targeted building areas, called 'Fiberhoods'. The schedule to build in these 'Fiberhoods' was determined by neighborhood residents' combined interest in getting WCTA services and a requirement to reach a set commitment level. To achieve this goal, we have purchased land for a new building to house the electronic equipment for these areas.

**Broadband Funds:** WCTA continues to explore opportunities for funding to provide our current and future customers with our ultra-fast and reliable fiber optic internet services. One of the many ways we are able to do this is to capitalize on any broadband development efforts from our Federal or State Governments. We apply for broadband funds regularly and once we're approved, we utilize that money accordingly. Thanks to these public government broadband funds, we will be able to support the expansion of our fiber optic broadband services to many new customers in unserved and underserved areas.

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

## WCTA Employees

Belica, Kris "Duke"	Network Operations Technician	McDonald, Kevin	Technician
Boysen, Ross	Technician	Neiber, Nick	Technician
Buhmann, Heather	Account Representative	Niebuhr, Mark	Engineer
Caylor, Clay	Business Systems Technician	Nitcher, Dylan	Technician
Chodur, Deb	Account Representative	Obermeyer, Heidi	Account Representative
Christianson, Jody	Account Representative	Pederson, Jeff	Business Solutions
Davis, Paul	Network Manager	Petersen, Dan	Technician
Ducommun, Chad	Operations Assistant	Pins, Marty	Controller
Eastvold, Tom	Network Operations Technician	Piper, Mike	Network Operations Technician
Eaton, Chris	Inventory/Purchasing Coordinator	Reichert, Brenda	Residential Solutions
Hagen, Sarah	Accountant	Renneker, Rob	Operations Manager
Henderson, Melanie	Account Representative	Rentz, Josh	Network Operations Technician
Holtan, Jason "Kirby"	Technician	Ringham, Jayne	Customer Service Manager
Johnson, Aaron	Office Network Admin	Savoy, Steve	Network Administrator
Johnson, Greg	Technician	Swenson, Tyler	Construction Technician
Joynt, Ryan	Operations Assistant	Tegland, Travis	Technician
Kesler, Ryan	Network Operations Technician	Theisen, Austin	Technician
Kirgan, Erica	Marketing Specialist	Thoma, Mark	CEO
Klebsch, Bob	Plant Administrator	Thompson, Angie	Project Coordinator
Kloster, Chad	Field Operations	Thompson, Scott	Construction Technician
Korbel, Jared	Technician	Thoreson, Eric	Accountant
Kroger, John	Regulatory Manager	Throne, Ashley	Account Representative
Lackore, Darcy	Account Representative	Walden, Logan	Technician
Lucas, Jason	Plant Designer	Waller, Garrett	Technician

# Cable vs Streaming, Phishing, & More

Just like that, the 2021 telecom year has come and gone. 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; it contains some important topics for members to know. I've got a couple additional items to cover so read on for a quick review.

**Is Streaming or Cable Better for You?** As the demand for entertainment continues to rise, streaming services are taking over the television industry. It's not that streaming services weren't popular before the pandemic hit, but the Coronavirus provided these platforms with more opportunity. Since their popularity has increased so much, one thing is for sure, streaming providers are here to stay.

Making the switch from cable to streaming TV has become a popular trend in recent years, so much so that millions of Americans have made the switch.

So, which option is best for you and your family? Both deliver live and on-demand television, but there are subtle differences between the two.

All you need to enjoy a great streaming experience is a quality device like a laptop, smartphone, or smart TV along with WCTA's ultra-fast and reliable Fiber Internet and GigaSpire. Then, you can enjoy quality content in high definition on any device you desire. Since you're relying on your internet to watch shows and movies, you'll want to make sure that the internet in your home can keep up with the high bandwidth demand. Additionally, your Wi-Fi router will be essential to prevent any streaming setbacks. Upgrading your internet speed to WCTA's 200M or 500M options will help avoid buffering, so you can watch your favorite shows and movies without any issues! In addition to upgrading your Internet speed, also consider upgrading your wireless router to a GigaSpire from WCTA. The GigaSpire wireless router will provide seamless and reliable coverage throughout your entire home, allowing you and your family to stream on multiple devices simultaneously! The major differences between cable and streaming include price, content, and channels.

**Price:** The price of streaming remains somewhat consistent whereas cable will increase subtly each year. Most streaming services offer a month-to-month subscription with no contract required. This makes it easy to cancel your service if you decide it's not for you.

**Content:** When it comes to content, streaming and cable are just about evenly matched. Both streaming and cable offer a variety of TV shows and movies. The main difference is that streaming services allow you to watch content on demand, while cable TV requires you to watch shows as they air, unless you have a DVR.

**Channels:** Another huge difference between streaming and cable is the number of channels offered. Cable TV typically provides a larger selection of channels than streaming services, although the number of channels you actually watch is probably much smaller. Streaming gives you several apps and services to choose from, so you can pick and choose what shows and movies you want to watch based on what streaming service you subscribe to. The best part is that you can stop them at any time to try another. Also, these services are all reasonably priced and therefore affordable!

So, is switching from cable to streaming worth it? It really comes down to your individual preferences. If you love the variety of channels that cable provides, and you don't mind paying for it, streaming probably isn't worth it. But if you're tired of unnecessary channels and paying an expensive monthly bill, then streaming could be a viable choice for you.

**Phishing:** According to phishing.org, phishing is a cybercrime in which a target is contacted by email, telephone, or text message by someone posing as a legitimate company to lure individuals to providing sensitive data, such as personal identification information, banking details, and login credentials. If you fall victim to this cybercrime, your information could be used to access important accounts and can result in identity theft and financial loss.

Recognizing a phishing attack can be tricky, but if you know what to look for, you could be saving yourself from a lot of potential problems. Common features of phishing attacks can include lucrative offers and/or attention-grabbing statements that have a sense of urgency, hyperlinks, attachments, spelling & grammar errors, emails sent from an unusual sender, and more.

Protecting yourself from phishing attacks is simple with these four steps. **1)** Protect your computer by using Avast CloudCare through WCTA, **2)** Protect your cellphone by updating your software frequently, **3)** Protect your accounts by using multi-factor authentication, and **4)** Protect your data by backing up your devices on a regular basis.

If you suspect a phishing attack, do NOT click on any links, and do NOT reply to sender. If you think a scammer has your information, like your Social Security, credit card, or bank account number, go to IdentityTheft.gov. There you'll see the specific steps to take based on the information that you lost.

**In closing,** I'd like to thank our WCTA staff members who work relentlessly every day in order 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 commitment to our members and your guidance. 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.



# *2021 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 23rd day of September, 2021, 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. Steve Thorland, Vice-President, 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 Roger Solomonson.

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 24, 2020, 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, 2020, financial report. Motion carried.

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

WCTA Attorney Tim Casperson 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 Bonnie Charlson, 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:	Larry Foley
	Mike Stensrud
	Steve Thorland

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 22<sup>nd</sup> – 6:30pm

In-Person & Virtual

Call to Order

Roll Call

Opening of Business Meeting  
& Announcement of Quorum

Financial Report

Nominating Committee Report

Election of Directors

CEO's Report

Old & New Business

Adjournment

Prize Drawings

## Watch your mailbox . . .

Your **BALLOT & ATTENDANCE TICKET** will be mailed soon –  
Be sure to bring your **Attendance Ticket** to the **Annual Meeting!**



## Prize Drawings . . .

- ① 4 – 50” 4K Smart TVs
- ② 3 – Apple iPad Air Tablets
- ③ 2 – iRobot Roomba Vacuums

Members who register before 6:30 pm or attend virtually, & stay for the entire meeting are eligible for grand prize drawings. Must be present to win!



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