MAKE TIME FOR SAFETY

AVOID HAZARDS WITH OVERHEAD POWER LINES

Fall harvest is the most likely time of year for farm-related accidents and fatalities. The number one factor in electrocution on the farm is an auger that hits a power line when being moved. Be aware of your surroundings and look up often.

Safe Electricity offers the following harvest safety tips:
1. Check the height of the farm equipment to determine clearance.
2. Be aware of the location of power poles and lines, including field entry and exit points, and plan a safe equipment route.
3. Always keep a minimum 10-foot safety radius around an electric line.
4. Use a spotter when moving tall loads near electrical lines.
5. Lower extensions to the lowest setting when moving equipment.
6. Never attempt to move a power line out of the way or raise it for clearance.
7. Know what to do if your equipment does make contact with a power line. It’s almost always safest staying in the cab. Call 9-1-1, warn others to stay away, and wait until the electric utility says it’s safe to get down.

Learn more at:
SafeElectricity.org
Mark Hatton
Wayne Malm

July-August 2020

Having more than 30 years at PKM
retirements. Rick Bye and Judy
service.

Minnkota and PKM boards, and we
board. Jeff Folland retired from the
Woinarowicz replaced Jeff Folland
replaced Jeff Folland on the PKM
secretary-treasurer. C.J. Peterson
president, as does Wayne Malm as
Mike Beaudry continues as vice
is the new board president and
the board reorganized. Mark Hatton
provided.

social engagement the meeting
many smiles, restored cars and the
meeting. Personally, I enjoyed the
Compliant. We have received many
and different while being COVID
we decided to try something new
meeting to be held annually, and
T
PKM News

Electrical Inspectors
Polk County
George Stage
218-264-1083

Marshall and Kittson Counties
Ronald Ditisch
218-779-6758

July-August 2020 (Vol. 74, No. 4)
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Cade Chwialskowski
Stephen-Argyle

Brandon Miller
Warren-Alvarado-Oslo

Anna Huck
Cookston

MariAna Kazmierczak
Stephen-Argyle

Dawson Feuillerate
Stephen-Argyle

Emma Oberg
Warren-Alvarado-Oslo

Serena Ratzlaff
MCC

Kylee Swanson
Warren-Alvarado-Oslo

Gretchen Theis
Cookston

Kyle Vonasek
East Grand Forks

Krystal Wikstrom
Sacred Heart

Sydney Aavinson
Sacred Heart
Dinos, drive-ins and democracy

PKM ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE SPINS PANDEMIC CONCERNS INTO UNIQUE ANNUAL MEETING ENGAGEMENT

The lot of the Sky-Vu Drive-In Theatre in Warren, Minn., was brimming with vehicles on July 14. Dozens of families had settled into their seats with popcorn in their laps and Pepsi in their cupholders. But “Jurassic Park” wouldn’t hit the large, wooden screen until the sun dropped in three hours.

This was PKM Electric Cooperative’s showtime.

“If I can have a motion, could somebody honk?” PKM president Tom Woinarowicz’s request passed through the 93.1 airwaves of car radios and was met with one quick honk.

“A second?” Honk, honk. Through a chuckle, Woinarowicz continued. His “All in favor?” was followed by chorus of beeps, and his “All opposed?” drew silence. “There you go, you guys are listening. This is really going good!” he beamed.

The uncommon business meeting was driven not by the desire for fun, but by the need for democracy.

Meeting reboot

When Rustad’s team received the green light from the PKM board, it was time to plan an entirely new way to celebrate cooperative membership.

“I was thinking, ‘How are we going to make this work?’ And if this works, we could do it every year,” said PKM CEO Mike Schmidt. He added that the co-op had been in a bit of an annual meeting “rut,” with the high school serving as the setting year after year.

For the members of many small rural electric cooperatives, the annual meeting is more than business – it’s a chance to catch up with neighbors from a few farms over and share a meal with co-op leaders. PKM wanted to ensure that sense of engagement and community continued with any new setup.

Health guidelines spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic forced PKM to postpone its 80th annual meeting scheduled for April. Cooperative bylaws require an annual meeting of the members every year. These meetings allow every member to have a voice in the election of their district directors for the board, to hear the co-op’s financial standing and to learn about the milestones of the past year.

“We knew we had to reschedule,” said Jeff Rustad, PKM manager of member services. “We talked about the drive-in and how easy it would be to do it here. You can socially distance if you want, and people can stay for a movie. Even if there was no COVID, this would be an awesome place to do it.”

At least 50 PKM members were needed at the meeting to establish a quorum. All sorts of Minnesota-plate-clad cars and trucks started rolling down the entry drive just after 6 p.m., a full half-hour before the gates were to open. A quorum wouldn’t be a problem.

“This is just mind-blowing,” Schmidt said. “I only see them a few times a year, usually at an event like this.”

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“Many of these people live so far out in the country that I don’t get to see them on a regular basis,” Schmidt said. “I only see them a few times a year, usually at an event like this.”

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was called to order around 7:15 p.m., 85 members had registered and around 200 attendees had dished up burgers, beans and potato salad.

After a short welcome, members were told the rules of voting by car – one honk for a motion, two honks to second a motion and a honk to voice approval or opposition. The president and CEO shared PKM’s focus on working safely, maintaining system reliability and using sound financial management.

Woinarowicz took a moment to recognize the years of service of Jeff Folland, a longtime co-op director who had to step down as a board member due to illness. The meeting’s peak came as three nominated director candidates (Steve Goodwin, C.J. Peterson and Mike Beaudry) stood before the members and were honked into their new terms.

With the meeting’s adjournment, Schmidt thanked the PKM staff for its creativity and planning. “We hope you find the meeting to your liking, and we hope you’ll stay for the movie,” he told the members.

**Lemonade out of lemons**

Certain industries have experienced a reemergence during a time of social distancing, such as food delivery services, puzzle companies and, of course, drive-in movie theaters. Sky-Vu owner Steve Novak says the drive-in has seen a lot of new business as people try to find ways to connect safely. He’s taken inquiries to host graduations, weddings and even funerals. “Now we have PKM out here for their annual meeting,” he said. “Just a lot more opportunities to come out to the drive-in.”

The new annual meeting setting sparked interest in people who may not have otherwise marked it on the calendar. Twenty-five-year-old Quentin Pankraz and his sister, Karron, said they remember attending PKM annual meetings as kids, but never really had an urge to return until this year.

**“It’s important to bring PKM members together, just to ensure our electrical system continues. All the pandemic has done here is give us an excuse to do something unique.”**

– PKM MEMBER JEROME VANEK

Albright said the online format allowed the co-op to establish alternative voting methods. “The change in voting will provide an opportunity for more members to vote,” he explained. At previous CCEC annual meetings, 250-300 members would vote for directors. “The new format using absentee and online voting provides the opportunity for over 44,000 members to vote.”

Red River Valley Co-op Power also went virtual this year, using YouTube Live to stream its Aug. 5 annual meeting. CEO Rich Whitcomb says the pandemic has forced the co-op to think differently when dealing with adversity.

“I was glad that our bylaws gave us some flexibility to roll with events outside our control,” he said. “Flexibility is a good thing during uncertain times, and we are certainly showing flexibility to our membership.”

Whether by movie screen or computer screen, co-op leaders are making sure the pillars of the cooperative – democratic member control, transparency, community – remain strong, even when it feels like the world is weakened.

“It’s important to bring PKM members together, just to ensure our electrical system continues,” PKM member Jerome Vanek said from the seat of his car. “All the pandemic has done here is give us an excuse to do something unique.”
2020 Annual Meeting Prize Winners

**Winner** | **Prize** | **Price**
--- | --- | ---
Wayne Porter | Energy Certificate - $25 |
Stanley Demeyer | Gift Card - $25 |
Robert Fagerstrom | Four Sky-Vu Drive-In Tickets |
Rodney Pomart | PKM Cutting Board |
Vicki Van Pankratz | Birdhouse |
Shirley Gaber | PKM Cutting Board |
Betty Knoll | Van Pankratz PKM Cutting Board |
Rovella Weiland | Todd Johnston First Aid Kit |
Robert Bratvold | Donald Taus Electric Grill |
Donald Taus | Birdhouse |

**Grand Prize:**

$500 Energy Credit - Brad Blawat

**Digging Soon?**

One free, easy call gets your utility lines marked and helps protect you from injury and expense. Safe digging is no accident: always call 811 before you dig.

Visit [www.call811.com](http://www.call811.com) for more information.

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**Cold Weather Disconnect Rule Notifications**

**216B.097 COLD WEATHER RULE; COOPERATIVE OR MUNICIPAL UTILITY**

Subd. 1. Application; notice to residential customer. (a) Municipal utility, cooperative electric association, or public utility may make a disconnection of the utility service of a residential customer during the period between Oct. 15 and April 15 if the disconnection affects the primary heat source for the residential unit and all of the following conditions are met:

(1) The household income of the customer is less than 150% of the state median household income.

(2) The household income of the customer is less than 200% of the state median household income.

(3) The household income of the customer is less than 250% of the state median household income.

(b) A municipal utility or a cooperative electric association may make a disconnection of the utility service of a residential customer on an emergency basis if the disconnection is necessary to prevent a violation of the law, a public utility statute, or a municipal code or ordinance.

(c) If, prior to disconnection, a customer appeals the notice of involuntary disconnection, the utility must not disconnect service until the appeal is resolved.

Subd. 2. Annual notice to all customers; inability to pay for services. (a) A municipal utility, cooperative electric association, or public utility must notify all residential customers annually of the provisions of this section.

(b) A municipal utility, cooperative electric association, or public utility must provide a notice to a residential customer requesting that the notice be sent to the customer's current address.

Subd. 3. Application to service limiters. For the purpose of this section, "service limiter" includes a service or load limiter or any device that limits an interruptible electric service.

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**Local energy assistance providers**

Northwest Community Action

800-866-3729

Marshall County Social Services 218-745-5124

Polk County Social Services 218-843-2689

Tri-Valley 866-264-3729

Kittson County Social Services 218-843-3201

Kittson County Social Services 218-843-2689

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**Enforcement.** This section may be enforced pursuant to chapter 216B. The jurisdiction of the court is limited to cases in which the residential customer's receipt of personally served notice, or within 10 working days after the utility has deposited first class mail notice in the United States mail, is permitted, unless a field representative of a municipal utility or cooperative electric association enters the premises to return to PKM Electric within 10 days.

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**Cold Weather Energy Assistance Program**

If you need help paying your electric bill, you may qualify for state or federal fuel assistance. For complete qualifications, applications and information, contact your local county social services or community action council listed above. These organizations may also provide budget counseling.
A regular meeting of the board was held on Tuesday, June 30, 2020. Tom Woinarowicz, president who presided, informed the directors that disconnect letters will be sent out, and that all directors were present.

The meeting was scheduled to be held at Minnkota. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the meeting was held electronically. The president also reported that the September meeting in Washington, D.C., has also been canceled. The NRECA regional meeting will be an online meeting, which will take place Aug. 18, 2020. Director Aarskog reported on his attendance at the Square Butte Cooperative board meeting held in June. He also updated the board about Project Turbine, including a projected project timeline and an in-depth financial update. Director Woinarowicz and Director Aarskog shared updates with the directors regarding business at Minnkota Power and Square Butte Cooperatives.

Minnkota will hold its annual meeting on Thursday, July 30, and they will limit it to three people from each floor. Mark Hatton, Paul Aarskog and Tom Woinarowicz will attend the meeting with Blake Owen as a backup. Discussion also included effects of COVID-19, budgets and rolling of wells. Upon motion duly made by Director Beauty, seconded by Director Math and unanimously carried, an executive session was called. The president returned the meeting to regular order, concluding the executive session at 9:45 a.m.

Line superintendent Joe Marcotte presented the monthly safety and operations report, indicating no accidents and no lost time. Minnesota Safety Inc. was here on June 11, updating our PCB and hazardous waste reporting with Nolan Buchner and crew visits. Terry Eli from NRECA was here June 22. He went over poisonous weeds, when the public gets hurt, hazard recognition and he also did a crew visit. The line superintendent gave a construction update of recent activities that included new services and service improvements. Olson Underground completed the cable installation at Lanesboro. They are buying some property north of the Twin Cities CEO. There will be another board meeting in September. In his son. Brad is fully retiring in September. Several questions the directors had on the 2020 annual meeting. Program. We are planning to bring them in this fall to do the most successful National Voter Registration Day ever. Here’s why:

Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

Clothes dryers make up a large portion of your appliance energy consumption. Clean the filter after each cycle and scrub the filter with a toothbrush once a month to remove film and increase air circulation.

PKM Electric Cooperative Political Leaders

Federal Legislators
President Donald Trump
The White House
1900 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20500
www.whitehouse.gov
Phone: 202-224-5641
Fax: 202-225-1593
www.collinpeterson.house.gov
Toll Free (866) 264-3729
Contact the energy experts at PKM Electric Cooperative to find the perfect power pick for your space.

State of Minnesota Legislators
Governor Tim Walz
Capital Building, Room 130
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-298-4700
sen.marc.johnson@senate.mn
Senator Mark Johnson
2105 Minnesota Senate Bldg.,
95 University Avenue W
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-298-4700
sen.marc.johnson@senate.mn
Representative Dan FaHLan
287 State Office Building
1107 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155
651-206-5391
rep.dan.fahlin@house.mn
Represeniative Dan FaHLan presented the operating and financial report for the cooperative. She reported May revenue and expenses were both under budget. With the reduced revenues we have experienced over the past couple of months, the added expenses due to COVID-19 and various other circumstances, the CFO stated she was pleased with the margin at this time. Historical data for margins for 10-15 PTD and YTD comparisons were provided and discussed. May revenue was $84,685 under budget. We booked a margin of $11,538 for the month with a year-to-date margin of $360,752. The CFO reported there is still nothing new to report on the possible refinancing of current RUS debt, but there is still discussion on the possibility of this developing. She stated this would be a great financial benefit for every cooperative regardless of size or current financial status. Other financial data was presented and discussed along with the current Tier of 2.49 and the equity ratio of 53.6%. The CEO agreed with what the staff had covered and the discussion that was held. He did not have anything to add.

An update was provided on the FEMA disaster declaration in North Red River Township. We will be replacing the existing 3 miles of overhead with underground coming in from the north. This is a state declaration, so PKM will receive 75% reimbursement upon final submission of the paperwork and approval from FEMA. The CEO shared information from the recent Carr’s board meeting. Brad and his brother owned the company and Brad stayed on to manage it. Steve then brought on his son. Brad is fully retiring in September. Several people expressed that they want to take over as CEO. There will be another board meeting in September. They are buying some property north of the Twin Cities and also looking over in the Fargo area. They are currently looking at future expansion. They qualified for a $3 million loan through the Payroll Protection Program. We are planning to bring them in this fall to do some work on the system.

At this time, staff updated and answered any questions the directors had on the 2020 annual meeting. The board of directors was in agreement to proceed with making arrangements for the date and location.

You’re a busy mom keeping up with two kids – choose an off-peak water heater.

Contact the energy experts at PKM Electric Cooperative to find the perfect power pick for your space.

If you’re navigating a summer at home with high-energy youngsters, make sure all of your hot water needs are covered with an electric water heater.
Your participation in the 2020 Census is important to all Minnesotans.

A complete and accurate count will benefit communities across our state. Census results determine our political representation, and help inform how billions of dollars are distributed for all kinds of community programs and services.

I want to do more. How can I get involved?

COMMIT TO BE COUNTED!
Text COUNT to 662020 to make a pledge to participate in the 2020 Census, and to sign up for text reminders.

JOIN THE CONVERSATION
Take part in spreading the word about the 2020 Census via social media, and see what other people are saying, using the hashtag #WeCountMN

FACEBOOK
Minnesota 2020 Census

INSTAGRAM & TWITTER
@MN2020Census

Your census response will guide more than $15 billion in federal funds to Minnesota communities, through programs like these:

- **Healthcare**
  Medical Assistance Program (Medicaid)

- **Infrastructure**
  Highway Planning & Construction

- **Food Assistance**
  Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

- **Public Safety**
  Assistance to Firefighters Grant

- **Family Services**
  Child Abuse & Neglect State Grants

- **Community Support**
  Section 8 Housing Assistance

- **Education**
  Head Start, Pell Grants

- **Employment**
  Unemployment Insurance

- **Entrepreneurship**
  Small Business Development Centers

- **Environment**
  State Wildlife Grants