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February 2026 **NEWS**

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THE FEMA EMERGENCY

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**2026 ANNUAL MEETING
INFORMATION INSIDE**





FROM THEN TO NOW: *Honoring Our Past, Powering Our Future*

by Craig Buros, CEO & General Manager



There's something special about an annual meeting. It's more than a required agenda item or a review of numbers on a page—it's a moment to pause, reflect, and reconnect. For Vernon Electric Cooperative (VEC), the annual meeting represents where our past and present come together, reminding us who we are, why we exist, and where we're headed next.

In the early days of rural electrification, the goal was simple but ambitious: bring power to places investor-owned utilities deemed too remote or unprofitable to serve. Electricity wasn't about convenience; it was about survival, opportunity, and progress. Homes were dimly lit by kerosene lamps, chores were done

by hand, and businesses were limited by what daylight and manual labor allowed. When the lights finally came on, it changed everything.

VEC was founded by the innovative mindsets of local farmers, business owners, and neighbors who came together with a shared belief that if they worked collectively, they could build something better for future generations. These early leaders made difficult decisions, and invested in infrastructure that would serve members for decades to come. They couldn't have imagined advanced meters, automated substations, renewable energy, or instant communication, but they understood something even more important: the power of cooperation.

Back then, operations were simple

by today's standards. Meters were read manually. Power outages were reported by phone or by word of mouth. Communication traveled slowly, and meetings were often held in modest spaces with handwritten notes and paper ledgers. Yet, even with limited tools, the cooperative model worked because it was rooted in trust, accountability, and member participation.

Fast forward to today, and the world looks very different.

Electricity is no longer a novelty, it's an expectation. Reliability is of utmost importance. Members rely on power not only for lighting and heating, but for internet access, medical equipment, farming operations, manufacturing, education, and nearly every aspect of daily life. Our cooperative has evolved

OFFICIAL NOTICE

of the Annual Meeting of Vernon Electric Cooperative

Date: Thursday, February 26, 2026

Place: Vernon Electric Cooperative Headquarters
110 Saugstad Rd., Westby, WI 54667

Registration: 4:00 – 5:30 p.m.

Pasta Dinner: 4:00 – 5:30 p.m.

Business Meeting: 5:30 p.m.

Additional items of business that may be acted upon at the business meeting include but are not limited to the following:

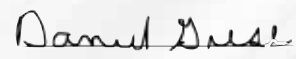
- Report on Director Elections
- Action upon amendments to the bylaws as recommended by the District Committee Conference. The proposed amendments fall into two categories, intended to:
 1. Reduce the number of Director Divisions from Ten to Nine.
 2. Clarify voting procedure for District Delegates and clarify Indemnification requirements.

The full text of the amendments and an expanded explanation will be available on SmartHub or by request to the Cooperative.

Meeting materials will be available at registration and can be previewed on your SmartHub account under "Documents." On the Documents page, choose "Annual Meeting" from the drop-down menu for "Document Type."

We sincerely hope that you are able to attend.

Dated January 29, 2026


Daniel Griese, Secretary

to meet those expectations, investing in technology, infrastructure, and programs designed to deliver reliable, affordable, and increasingly sustainable energy.

Today VEC uses advanced metering infrastructure, real-time system monitoring, and data-driven decision-making to enhance reliability and efficiency. Our crews respond to outages more quickly and safely than ever before. Members can manage their accounts online, receive outage alerts on their phones, and participate in programs that help control costs and reduce peak demand.

We've also seen a shift in how energy is produced and consumed. Renewable energy, energy efficiency, battery storage, and demand response programs are no longer concepts of the future—they are part of our present. As the energy landscape continues to evolve, our cooperative remains focused on providing safe, reliable and affordable energy at the core of every decision.

While the tools and technologies have changed, the heart of the cooperative has not.

That's where the annual meeting comes in.

The annual meeting is one of the most important traditions we uphold

because it reflects the very foundation of the cooperative model. In the past, annual meetings were often one of the few opportunities members had to receive updates and connect directly with leadership. Today, while communication happens year-round through newsletters, social media, and digital platforms, the annual meeting still holds a special place. It remains a symbol of transparency, accountability, and shared ownership.

The meeting allows us to look back on where we came from and recognize the work that has been done by employees, directors, and members alike. It's also a chance to look ahead. Energy policy, technology, and member needs are constantly evolving, and the annual meeting provides a space to discuss those changes openly.

Just as importantly, the annual meeting reminds us that VEC exists—because of its members. Unlike other utilities, we are not driven by shareholders or profit margins. We are governed by neighbors serving neighbors, guided by the seven cooperative principles that emphasize democratic control, concern for community, and long-term sustainability.

It's easy to take electricity for granted today. Flip a switch, plug in a device, and expect it to work. But moments like the annual meeting encourage us to slow down and appreciate the journey—from dirt roads and hand-built lines to a modern, resilient electric system.

If our original board members could attend an annual meeting today, they might be amazed by the technology, the scale of operations, and the complexity of the energy industry. But they would also recognize the familiar faces, the shared values, and the sense of community that still defines the cooperative. They would see that while the world has changed, the mission remains the same: to serve members reliably, affordably, and responsibly.

As we gather for this year's annual meeting, we honor those who laid the groundwork before us and those who continue to build upon it today. We celebrate progress while staying rooted



H.O. Melby, the original board president of VEC, helped guide the organization during its formative years.

in the principles that brought us together.

The future will undoubtedly bring new challenges and opportunities just as the past did. But if history has taught us anything, it's that when we come together as a cooperative, we're capable of far more than any one of us could achieve alone.

That's what the annual meeting represents. Not just a look at where we've been, but a shared commitment to where we're going together.



N.F. Leifer, an early leader in rural electrification, reviews cooperative documents during the formative years of electric service in the region.

Original Vernon Electric Board of Directors

President: H.O. Melby

Vice President: Ray Clark

Secretary: Melvin Olson

Treasurer: C.V. Gorman

Otto Henry

Nick Dorscheid

Richard Grimsrud

A.J. Ristow

Joe Hora

ANNUAL MEETING DOOR PRIZES

- ☑ Electric Blackstone Griddle
- ☑ \$50 Gift Card to Von Ruden Meat Processing
- ☑ \$50 Gift Card to Steve's Country Meats
- ☑ Five \$25 Bill Credits

Members will receive an attendance gift following the meeting!



MEETING AGRICULTURE'S CHANGING NEEDS FOR 28 YEARS

By Leah Call

When Byron Aspenson looks back on nearly three decades of running his business, he sees more than just years on a calendar. He sees an agricultural landscape that has changed dramatically and a business that has evolved right along with it.

Drawing on ten years of experience and training at Solverson Agronomics, Aspenson and his wife Jan launched Ag Consulting & Products in 1997. After purchasing the old cheese factory in Liberty Pole, the Aspensons added new buildings for chemical storage and invested in state-of-the-art application equipment. Those early decisions laid the groundwork for a business that would serve generations of area farmers.

When the business began, farming in the region looked very different. The majority of farms were dairy farms,



Jan and Byron Aspenson launched Ag Consulting & Products in 1997.



Ag Consulting & Products has served local farms for 28 years, evolving with the changing agricultural landscape. Founded by Byron and Jan Aspenson in a former cheese factory, the family-run business continues to provide feed, fertilizer, and custom services to farms of all sizes across the region.

growing their own alfalfa, oats, and corn. Aspenson spent long days applying crop inputs at hundreds of farms throughout the area.

That picture has shifted. Many small farms have been consolidated into a handful of large farms. “That’s life, and we have worked to adapt with the times and meet the needs of the larger farms, while also continuing to support our smaller family farms in the area” Aspenson said.

Diversification

While the profile of Ag Consulting’s customer base changed, its core services remain strong. The company continues to provide feed, fertilizer, chemicals, seed, and custom application services for crop farms, including smaller dairies still operating in the region.

Expertise and diversification have enabled the business to thrive. Today it serves a wide range of livestock producers, from 100-cow dairies to

homesteaders with a few cows, chickens, goats, or llamas.

A key component of the business’s success is its specialty feed and nutrition services. Ag Consulting offers unique blends that can be difficult to find

The company continues to provide feed, fertilizer, chemicals, seed, and custom application services for crop farms, including smaller dairies still operating in the region.

elsewhere in the area. Aspenson credits that distinction to Steve Wagemester, Ag Consulting’s nutritionist who has been with the company for 11 years. “Steve strives to find something that fits for everybody.”

Family-Run Success

Family has always been central to Ag Consulting & Products. Aspenson’s sons, Ryan and Ian, joined the family business after completing their postgraduate education. Though Ian has since pursued other interests, his wife Hannah is a familiar face to customers who stop by Ag Consulting’s office.

For the past 15 years, Ryan has worked alongside his dad, utilizing his business degree to guide the company through periods of growth and change. Aspenson envisions the business thriving well into the future, with Ryan eventually taking the reins.

Reflecting on the joys of working with family, Aspenson noted, “It’s beautiful. They have my best interest in mind, and I have theirs; and, of course, our focus has always been on what is right for our customers.”

Craig Buros, CEO & General Manager

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Trevor Clark, Editor

