

Minutes of the Montana Renewable Energy Association  
Quarterly Meeting, July 10, 2007  
Sage Mountain Center, near Whitehall, MT

Present: (6 of 9 board members present, 5 required for a quorum)

Dave Ryan, President and Board Member  
Chris Borton (Sage Mountain Center), Vice President and Board Member  
Chris Daum (Oasis Montana), Treasurer and Board Member  
Patrick Judge (MEIC), Secretary and Board Member  
Dirk Ellis (Strawhouse), Board Member  
Kathi Montgomery (DEQ), Board Member  
Georgia Brensdal (DEQ)  
David LeMieux (DEQ)  
Tom Bishop (Sunelco)  
Conor Darby (Independent Power Systems)  
Orion Thornton (Independent Power Systems)  
John Campbell (NorthWestern Energy)  
John Jones (Highmark Media)  
Ben Brouwer (AERO)  
Martin Richard (InSolar)  
Nicky Phear, Missoula  
Tom Thiel, Butte

**Call to Order:** President Dave Ryan called the meeting to order at 12:08 pm. He led a round of introductions.

**Minutes:** Chris Daum moved that the minutes of the April 11, 2007 meeting be approved. Chris Borton seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**Treasurer's Report:** Chris Daum reported that MREA had \$5,901.84 in its bank account, and that there were currently 36 members who had paid their 2007 dues.

**Sustainability Fair:** Chris Borton reported that the Sustainability Fair would be held this Saturday, July 14th, in Livingston from 9:00 to 5:30. Dirk Ellis will be bringing the trailer down. Chris Daum offered to have MREA compensate him for his mileage. Dave Ryan explained the safety issues involved with unloading and re-loading the trailer. DEQ, Sunelco, SMC, IPS, AERO and others will be attending. Orion Thornton reported on the Missoula Earth Day event, and offered to have IPS work on a tilt arrangement for the trailer's solar panels. Chris Daum offered to reimburse IPS for any costs. Conor Darby stated that IPS considered the ramp work they had done as a donation. Borton suggested that the trailer would need to be painted soon.

**Safety and Certification Report:** John Jones updated the group on the safety and licensing issues we've been discussing. The overall objective is to provide for safety training, a way to validate that training, and a certification process to inform and protect consumers. He reported

that there will be a training on August 9th in Bozeman, possibly at NorthWestern Energy's field office, that will last from 1:00 to 8:00. The training will involve crane operation signaling instructions and certification with Ed Skubitz, and a general introduction and session on fall protection with Mike Foreman of OSHA. Jones talked about the importance of establishing a craft identity, and forming an alliance or partnership with OSHA. Dave Ryan, John Jones, and Mike Foreman will arrange a meeting to talk about the details. Dave Ryan formally appointed the following MREA members to a "Safety and Health Committee" to continue meeting and working with John Jones and Mike Foreman (the group already met one time):

Steve Aagenes  
Henry Dykema  
Tom Bishop  
Orion Thornton

Dave Ryan requested that the installers report back to the MREA Board with a recommendation for how to proceed with the OSHA agreement -- partnership vs. alliance, and also how MREA would pay for any expenses incurred as a result of increased recordkeeping or administrative costs related to certifying installers (if MREA were to enter into a partnership).

John Campbell of NorthWestern Energy suggested that there may be some USB money available to help MREA develop these programs.

Patrick Judge moved that MREA support the August 9th training by offering a 50% cost share (\$100 of the \$200 cost for each participating business). Kathi Montgomery seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

The group was reminded to visit the website / blog that was set up by John Jones for Montana's renewable energy installers:

**[www.montanareinstallers.com](http://www.montanareinstallers.com)**

**Bioneers Update:** Chris Borton reported that this year's Bioneers Conference would take place at the Emerson Cultural Center in Bozeman, October 19th - 21st. Chris Borton moved that the group participate again this year (and to bring the trailer), Patrick Judge seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

**NCAT Sustainability Fest:** Kathi Montgomery moved that MREA participate with a booth again this year, Chris Daum seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously. The group chose NOT to participate in the Greening Yellowstone Conference, or to take out an ad in the Global Corporate magazine that Dave Ryan presented to the group. Kathi Montgomery also volunteered to update the MREA "Dealers List" to make sure it is current (Joe Preet of Anaconda should be included, for example).

**Harlowton Update:** The festival of the wind that took place in Harlowton this year was well attended, with about 45 people in the alternative energy presentation, and a large crowd of people for the tour of the Judith Gap Wind Farm. The festival is a week long event. Steve Aagenes took the MREA trailer to Harlowton for the second weekend, but many people had left by then. It was suggested that next year MREA might arrange to have the trailer on display for the entire week.

**Cycle Montana Report:** On May 9th, Chris Daum had polled the MREA listserve about

sponsorship for a student in this course. There were no objections to supporting Katie Prichard with a \$700 scholarship. The 3 week, 700 mile bike tour of Montana energy facilities was a tremendous success. Dave Ryan passed around a thank-you card he had received, and Nicky Phear (an instructor for the course) gave a full report. She also made available digital photographs of Katie in her MREA t-shirt at the Judith Gap wind farm. The journey was chronicled on the New West online magazine. See the following links:

[http://www.newwest.net/index.php/topic/article/cycle\\_montana\\_contemplating\\_our\\_energy\\_choices/C38/L38/](http://www.newwest.net/index.php/topic/article/cycle_montana_contemplating_our_energy_choices/C38/L38/)

<http://www.wrfi.net/courses/cyclemontana.html>

**Net Metering Update:** Chris Borton asked if it would be possible for NWE to disclose on its bills to the net-metering customers the "balance" of credits that had accrued in their "bank account." John Campbell explained that there are only about a half-dozen customers who actually accumulate credits (by producing more kilowatt-hours in a month than they consume), and that it would require a new billing system. The Oricom billing system is quite old, and not fully supported anymore, but would require \$35 million to \$50 million to be replaced. NWE processes thousands of bills each month. There are other things people can do to keep track themselves, by reading the output on their inverters, installing dual meters (at their expense), etc.

**Other Updates:** Georgia Brensdaal reported that Montana-Dakota Utilities has a new Renewable Energy / Energy Efficiency staff person, and that the Governor's Climate Change Advisory Committee had its final face-to-face meeting Monday in Missoula. For more information, go to: <http://www.mtclimatechange.us/>

Kathi Montgomery reported that the Alternative Energy Revolving Loan Program continues to grow. There is currently \$1.7 million in the account, and there are 21 loans that have gone out this year for a total of \$411,000. This compares to \$260,000 in 2006; \$40,000 in 2005; and \$47,000 in 2004, so the program is definitely taking off.

**Next Meeting Date:** The next meeting will be held Wednesday, October 10 in Missoula. The exact time and location will be determined later.

**Adjournment:** The meeting was adjourned at 2:57 pm, in time for a tour of Sage Mountain Center and a barbeque at Dave Ryan's house in Butte.

These Minutes were prepared by Patrick Judge, Secretary.