

Minutes of the Montana Renewable Energy Association
Quarterly Meeting, April 11, 2005
Last Chance Gulch Building, Helena, MT

Present:

Dave Ryan (NCAT), President and Board Member
Chris Borton (SMC), Vice President and Board Member
Patrick Judge (MEIC), Secretary and Board Member
Kathy Hadley (NCAT), Board Member
Georgia Brensdal (DEQ), Board Member
Roy Nollkamper (Glacier Electric), Board Member
Lu Marie Strickland (Dearborn Solar), Board Member
Wendy Kleinsasser (Wind Park Solutions)
Paul Farley (Energy Outfitters)
Kathi Montgomery (DEQ)
Lee Tavenner (Solar Plexus)
Rip Hamilton (Solar Plexus)
Steven Aagenes (InSolar)
Tony Boniface (Independent Power Systems)
Charles Day
John Campbell (NorthWestern Energy)

The meeting was called to order at 12:15 pm.

Kathy Hadley moved to accept the minutes from the October 13, 2004 meeting. Georgia Brensdal seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Announcements: Earth Day, Biomimicry events coming up -- DEQ's mobile pulverizer and MREA's trailer will be present at some of these events. Waste Not Conference is this week in Chico. Dave Ryan was going to check on MREA's corporate status, to make sure everything is in order (see bottom of this message for that report).

Treasurer's Report: Patrick Judge gave Chris Daum's report. There is \$6827.92 in the bank account (up from \$5230.30 last meeting), and 27 members paid for 2005. MREA did sponsor Matt Elsaesser for the Harvesting Clean Energy conference, and Matt joined MREA.

John Campbell's Report: John Campbell updated the group on NorthWestern's 2005 USB-funded renewable energy grants. Generally, he predicted "business as usual" with about \$1 million going to renewable projects (\$700,000 now, and holding back the rest for projects being proposed later on.) Thus far, he has received proposals for 26 projects totalling \$3.8 million, and requesting \$2.1 million in co-funding. He felt that this round was more competitive than usual. But he said that NWE would continue to take proposals throughout the year. The criteria that NWE is looking at are:

- geographic diversity (too much going to Missoula?)
- public vs. private (too much private in the past?)

NWE is proposing dropping the rebate for solar-electric private projects from \$4 per watt to \$3.50 per watt. Wind would stay at \$2 per watt (but could go higher if other benefits being provided -- education, etc.)

Campbell reported that they are looking at some different and unique applications, including geothermal. One proposal is to locate net-metered geothermal power plants at Fairmont, Boulder, Bozeman (and one other) hot springs. The water is at 240 degrees. The projects would use a binary cycle engine (and a heat exchanger with a low boiling point liquid), and an open loop process that would reinject the water at a second well. NWE is thinking of providing 30-40% funding for one of the four, to start with. It would only be funded once it is up and running (no dry holes funded with USB). The developer is using some DEQ funds to do the study. The capacity would start out around 50 kW per project, but could eventually get to 1 MW.

NWE is looking for wind proposals.

Tony Boniface said that Bergey is finally taking orders on 50 kW machines.

Charles Day pointed out the controversial history of Church Universal Triumphant geothermal projects in the vicinity of Yellowstone, as the geologic 'plumbing is all connected.'

Another geothermal project NWE is looking at is to heat the Parrot Mine Complex in Butte, which includes historic steel and glass buildings that are too expensive to heat with natural gas. The project would use a heat exchanger immersed in Berkeley Pit water (which is 120 - 130 degrees, because of geothermal heating and chemical reactions). There is increasing interest in the residential and commercial solar demonstration program, with participation by 5 or 6 installers now.

NWE is also continuing with the fire stations project, and the Bozeman Library.

Other proposals were received from HomeWORD and Garden City Harvest in Missoula, which likely will be placed on hold for now.

Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation (also in Missoula) has a proposal for a "solar wall," and the Strawhouse Market in Helena is installing a large PV array that will be funded to some extent.

Northern Plains Resource Council has a proposal for their new office in Billings.

There are more stock watering project proposals from RSO, but NWE is looking for more geographic diversity and more wind. Fish, Wildlife, and Parks has another proposal too. Lee Tavenner disputed the premise that having lots of projects in one area is a bad thing. Campbell mentioned the possibility of reducing the grant size for areas that are getting relatively more saturation, to encourage the dealers to market outside their traditional areas.

John Campbell said he would be willing to have an official MREA rep. on the USB Renewables Advisory Committee.

On the education front, Campbell said he received 11 proposals requesting \$300,000 total, and that NWE planned on putting in about \$100,000 again this year. The approach will probably be to fund more materials (publications, videos, workbooks) to allow people to do "self assessments"

Update on Harvesting Clean Energy Conference: Kathi Montgomery reported that the conference was a great success, and that the proceedings are available on Climate

Solutions' website. Kathi also reported on SB 50, the bill which expanded the alternative energy revolving loan program.

Update on USDA Rural Wind Grants: Georgia Brensdal passed out an information sheet and brochure, and reported that this is the third year of a five year program, and that applications are due to John Guthmiller by June 27. There will be an emphasis on small scale projects -- 90% of people who applied got funded. There are grants for both renewable energy (electric and heating, grid-tied and off-the-grid) and energy efficiency for farm production (not residences) ranging from \$2500 to \$500,000. \$10,000 project is the smallest eligible project. There is a sample application for small wind projects on-line, and workshops planned for May. There will be further informational sessions for larger projects later this summer.

Dave Ryan pointed out the irony of it -- that you have to demonstrate need, but you have to come up with 3/4 of the funds on your own. Kathy Hadley thought that the application process should go better this year, but that it would still be tough and recommended starting now.

Update on Sustainability Fair: Chris Borton reported that they loved the trailer and mister last year, and wanted us to participate again (as sponsors). The date will be July 9 in Livingston. Kathi Montgomery moved that MREA sponsor at the \$1000 level, and Roy Nollkamper seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. DEQ will again have a booth with fuel cell kit, car, doodads for the solar pavillion, etc. Tony Boniface volunteered to lend his solar oven.

Legislative Update: Patrick Judge gave an update on renewable energy legislation, emphasizing the continuation of the USB program (SB 365) and the Renewable Energy Standard bill (SB 415, which had a hearing in the House Energy Committee following this meeting). He also talked about the bill creating a new, more favorable property tax rate for wind projects (SB 115) and the resolution calling on Congress to extend the production tax credit by at least ten years (SJ 17).

Updates on Member Activities: Chris Borton reported that Sage Mountain Center has a new brochure, Wendy Kleinsasser reported on the Judith Gap Project approval by the PSC . . .

<Patrick Judge had to leave, so Georgia Brensdal took over with the minutes at this point. . .>

Dave Ryan reported on the "Bring Wind to the Ground" meeting in Joliet. Organized by Beartooth RC&D, this meeting had speakers on community wind from Minnesota, Northwestern Energy USBC program, DEQ loan program, and Dave reported on Windparks project. Over 60 people attended.

Tony Boniface is working with NCAT on solar stockwater systems for ranchers. He feels the key to a successful project is the correct pump specifications.

Kathy Hadley mentioned the solar stockwater systems projects on ranches, and commented that farmer and ranchers need to see these systems working to be convinced.

Charles Day suggested the Board consider a chapter membership with the American Solar Society. He will look in to the requirements and report back at the next meeting.

Roy Nalkamper, Glacier Electric, reported that the Coops groups are updating their net metering policies, and overall becoming more favorable to renewable interconnections on their systems. Safety and more costs to the coops customers are the major issues that coops will question. He also reported on the status of a number of small-scale wind projects around Browning. Also, he mentioned that the Alberta Canada Pincher Creek wind project was expanding to include some of the newest commercial turbines. They are shipping the units through the state over the rails. This plant is about one hour north of Cut Bank, and he can make arrangement for the group to tour. He has some electric customers who might be eligible for rural small business grants from usda.

Next Meeting Date: July 6 in Butte, with a possible tour of the PV plant (?)

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned around 2:45.

These Minutes were prepared by Patrick Judge, Secretary.

Subsequent Report by Dave Ryan:

Subject: RE: MREA Annual Report

Date: Tue, 12 Apr 2005 08:22:22 -0600

I just checked the Secretary of State website, MREA is a corporation in good standing, last annual report filed on January 14, 2005. Thanks to Chris Daum for taking care of this.

Dave Ryan