

Minutes of the Montana Renewable Energy Association  
Quarterly Meeting, April 19, 2006  
StrawHouse Market, Helena

Present:

Dave Ryan (NCAT), President and Board Member  
Chris Daum (Oasis), Treasurer and Board Member  
Patrick Judge (MEIC), Secretary and Board Member  
Georgia Brensdaal (DEQ), Board Member  
Kathy Hadley (NCAT), Board Member  
Mikey Strickland (Dearborn Electric), Board Member  
Conor Darby (Independent Power Systems) with Tony Boniface proxy  
Steven Aagenes (InSolar), Board Member (pending resolution of dilemma)  
LuMarie Strickland (Dearborn Electric)  
Kathi Montgomery (DEQ)  
Tom Bishop (Sunelco)  
Matt Elsaesser (SAVE Foundation)  
Jim Boyer (DEQ)  
Dirk Ellis (StrawHouse Market)

President Dave Ryan called the meeting to order at 12:34 pm. He led a round of introductions.

**Minutes:** The minutes of the February 8, 2006 meeting were approved unanimously with two minor edits (Chris Borton not Chris Burton & SJR 36 instead of SR 24). Further discussion ensued regarding the election of new board members at the February meeting. Some members recalled that BOTH Tony Boniface and Steven Aagenes were elected, but that would put the number at 10 rather than the allowed-for 9. Dave Ryan explained that Lee Tavenner had resigned, creating an extra position. But minutes show that Lee had resigned prior to the January 2005 meeting. (Following the meeting, Georgia Brensdaal announced that she would retire from the board, thereby resolving the situation. Pat noted that an election needed to be held for 2006 regardless, and that it would take place at or before the next meeting.)

**StrawHouse Update:** Dirk Ellis reported that the StrawHouse Market would be reopening in mid-May or June, with a new emphasis on the restaurant and a new chef. Dirk, Steven, and Dave discussed the problems commercial customers have had with their net-metering systems not getting full credit for the energy they produce. (It sounds like NWE may be adding the power from Dirk's array to the total demand instead of subtracting it). Dave offered to help resolve the situation. A broader policy solution may also be required at the utility, agency, or legislative level. Lee Tavenner has observed similar problems in the past. Dirk said he did not pursue LEED certification because it can add substantially to the cost. Georgia said that LEED has an option for existing buildings.

**Old Business:** Dave said he would update the brochures in time for the Earth Day event this weekend.

**MREA Website:** There was some question as to whether the link was still working, but it was later confirmed to be. The website desperately needs an update. Kathi Montgomery moved that Chris Daum be authorized to remit up to \$500 annually to NCAT for purposes of updating and maintaining the web site. Lu Marie seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

**Earth Day:** Matt Elsaesser discussed the upcoming SAVE Foundation Earth Day event in Helena (4/22/06 at Memorial Park). Dave Ryan agreed to drive the MREA trailer to Helena and remain at the event from 1:00 to 5:00, with assistance from Steven Aagenes. Chris Daum moved that MREA sponsor the event at the \$250 level and Steven seconded the motion. It passed unanimously. Matt also talked about a second SAVE biodiesel tour scheduled for September, and invited MREA participation (Dave suggested that the trailer could run an amp for the country singer). Matt also invited people to check out the new [www.biodieselmontana.org](http://www.biodieselmontana.org) website.

**Upcoming DEQ Biodiesel Workshops:** (largely geared toward the oilseed producers)

June 13 Whitefish

July 13 Havre

July 19 Sidney

DEQ is also getting a new E-85 GM truck. There was a short roundtable discussion about the costs and benefits of biofuels. NCAT has a biodiesel paper out already, and is about to release the ethanol paper.

**Treasurer's Report:** Chris Daum reported \$6079.71 currently in the account (AFTER the Livingston Sustainability Fair sponsorship, but before the expenditures approved at this meeting). Chris reported that 27 businesses or individuals had paid their 2006 dues.

**License Plate Idea:** It was proposed that MREA consider sponsoring a MT license plate emphasizing renewable / sustainable energy. Research needs to be done regarding next steps.

**Sustainability Fair:** This year's event will be held July 8 in Livingston. It sounded like there would be plenty of MREA members present, to help staff the booth. Dave Ryan will be giving a workshop on solar water heaters.

**Sustainability Festival:** Kathy Hadley reported that NCAT will be hosting a Sustainability Festival at its Butte location on Thursday, August 24, from 12:00 - 8:00 pm. There will be no fee for setting up a booth for the first year's event.

**Alternative Energy Loan Program:** Kathi Montgomery reported that as of June, 2005 there were ten loans out for a total of \$80,000. Since then, 6 more were added (at \$91,000) increasing the total to \$171,000. 6 more are pending (at \$111,000) which

would increase the total to \$282,000. The program is growing, and the average loan is growing (partly in response to the legislative changes made in 2005 increasing the loan limit from \$10,000 to \$40,000).

**Other Reports:** Georgia reported that the small wind book had been reprinted and that the NREL book would be updated as well. Pat heard ads on public radio for the E+Green program, and was planning on inquiring about current enrollment. Conor discussed some problems IPS has been seeing with people only being able to afford light duty machines but placing them in heavy duty winds. On the topic of small wind, Logan and Jenni Bryce are currently in Washington D.C. lobbying for a federal small wind tax incentive. Pat announced that the Energy & Telecommunications Interim Committee of the legislature was going to be meeting in Helena on Thursday and Friday discussing numerous topics, including distributed generation.

**Judith Report:** Dave Ryan said that the Judith Gap wind project was successfully producing power, but was experiencing some turbulence and fast ramp rates (0-100% in 15 minutes). NorthWestern is working with Seattle-based Three Tier on better predictability. There are already 3 upwind met towers, with more to be installed. GE performed a warranty fix to remove a redundant shut-down system that was making the turbines overly sensitive to turbulence.

**Montana Geothermal Working Group:** Kathi Montgomery reported that the newly-formed group had their first meeting at NCAT with 13 participants. A second meeting is planned for Thursday, May 18 at Fairmont from 10:00 am - 4:00 pm, and a block of rooms is set aside for the night before.

**Committees:** There was discussion about revisiting / reactivating the MREA committees. The newly formed committees are:

Policy -- Pat Judge, Georgia Brensdal, Conor Darby, Matt Elsaesser, Kathy Hadley  
Fundraising & Membership -- Kathi Montgomery, Chris Daum, Tom Bishop, Lu Marie Strickland

Education -- this will remain dormant for now, although Dirk had some great ideas about a kiosk

The policy committee was charged with looking into an Economic Impacts Analysis quantifying the benefits of alternative energy.

The Fundraising & Membership committee was charged with follow-up on license plates, t-shirts, hand-crank flashlights, etc.

**Next Meeting Date:** The next meeting will again be held at the StrawHouse Market in Helena, on Wednesday July 5 at 12:30 pm. We will send out a press release advertising the meeting to the public (in the hope of expanding our membership).

These Minutes were prepared by Patrick Judge, Secretary.

