

Minutes of the Montana Renewable Energy Association
Quarterly Meeting, October 13, 2004
Last Chance Gulch Building, Helena, MT

Present:

Marla McCombie (BPA), Chair and Board Member
Dave Ryan (NCAT), President and Board Member
Chris Borton (SMC), Vice President and Board Member
Patrick Judge (MEIC), Secretary
Chris Daum (Oasis Montana), Treasurer and Board Member
Georgia Brensdal (DEQ), Board member
Mikey Strickland (Dearborn Solar), Board Member
Roy Nollkamper (Glacier Electric), Board Member
Kathi Montgomery (DEQ)
Lu Marie Strickland, Dearborn Solar Electric
Paul Farley, Energy Outfitters
Leslie Segal, Alternative Energy Engineering
Lee Tavenner, Solar Plexus and Board Member
Mary Hamilton, Solar Plexus
Keith Colbo, Invenergy, Wind Park Solutions
Jenni Bryce, Pine Ridge Products

The meeting was called to order at 12:45 pm.

Dave Ryan moved to accept the minutes from the July 7 meeting, with the correction that Kathi Montgomery was incorrectly identified as a board member. Chris Daum seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

Treasurer's Report: Chris Daum reported that there is currently \$4056.02 in the account, following the LED Christmas Light purchase and the Sustainability Fair Costs. Dave Ryan called on the members to begin marketing the lights aggressively. Chris reported that there are 21 paid members for 2004. The group recommended that we begin sending invoices for 2005 memberships soon. Mikey Strickland moved that the group accept the Treasurer's Report. Dave Ryan seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

Executive, Membership, and Education Committees:

The larger group agreed to revisit the whole committee structure at the January meeting. The committees have been very inactive.

Policy Committee:

Patrick Judge reported on the continuing threats to the USB renewables program. Another legislative priority for MEIC will be to advance a Renewable Portfolio Standard for Montana. Patrick also reported that E+Green (NorthWestern Energy's green power program) is severely undersubscribed.

Georgia Brensda reported on the Farm Bill renewable energy grant and loan program, which is currently out for public comment. There were no renewable energy or efficiency grants made to Montanans in 2004. Nationally, the efficiency grants are less competitive (more grants available than applicants), while the renewable grants are pretty competitive. The definition of “rural” is less than 50,000 people, which captures most Montana “cities.” Lots of people were turned away because they filled out the forms incorrectly. Anyone wishing to comment on the program can contact Georgia. Georgia may work up some draft comments for MREA, with Pat’s assistance.

Fundraising and Membership Committee:

Kathi Montgomery moved that we restructure our membership rates. Chris Daum seconded. After some discussion, the group unanimously agreed upon the following rates:

Living Lightly / Student	\$10
Individual	\$25
Business / Government	\$75

There was also agreement on allowing a business membership to include multiple representatives to the board.

Dave Ryan will update the membership brochure, and send the draft around for comment. We will print 400 brochures. The brochures will also advertise membership perks, such as access to members-only lectures or workshops.

Old Business:

Sustainability Fair: This was the 5th year, and had the best attendance ever: 3,000 - 4,000 people. The fair was also more energy oriented this year. The trailer and mister were a success, but only two new members signed up.

Solar Homes Tours: Chris Borton described SMC’s 2004 solar tours. They included 20 locations around the state, and had good media coverage. Next year, SMC will try to keep all of the homes closer together (city limits perhaps).

Pat Judge reported on MEIC’s Helena area solar tour, which was also very successful (63 participants, had to turn away a dozen or so more). MEIC’s tour included 5 locations.

Solar Video: Dave Ryan promised to look into the current status of NCAT’s 30 minute solar video, and to start thinking about distribution and viewing opportunities (PBS Earth Day? Channel 11?).

Trailer Issues: Dave Ryan gave the group a tour of the trailer. The group also agreed to accept Kathy Hadley’s offer to provide parking for the trailer. The trailer is not for general use, but may be lent out “subject to review.” Dave described the various dangers posed by the trailer (to the uninitiated).

Dave Ryan and Paul Farley are going to look into delivering the trailer to the Bioneer’s conference.

Chris Borton asked a question about the property tax incentive that is available for renewable systems. Thus far, homeowners haven’t generally been assessed higher tax liabilities due to these systems. But if they are, homeowners can use the exemption. Pat Judge agreed to research this issue further.

New Business:

Paul Tschida described Montana's new energy-related building codes, which will go into effect on December 9. He also invited submissions for articles to appear in the Montana Building Industry Association's quarterly newsletter, which goes to 2000 subscribers.

The Wind Working Group will be meeting later this month. While they have mostly focused on larger projects, they are starting to take some interest in distributed systems. They've been handing out lots of information to agricultural groups. So far, many MT farmers & ranchers appear to be more interested in owning their own systems, rather than entering into lease agreements with large scale developers.

Kathi Montgomery gave an update on the Harvesting Clean Energy conference. The group agreed to support the conference at the \$500 "Basic" level. The group also agreed to figure out staffing for the booth at the next (January) meeting.

Patrick Judge has been reviewing the MREA By-Laws, and will send around a draft red-lined version suggesting changes, prior to the January meeting.

At the January meeting, the group will also elect its 2005 board members and officers.

Next Meeting: The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 12 at the same location: 1100 N. Last Chance Gulch (the new DEQ digs, in the old Armory Building) Room 112 at 12:30 pm.

Meeting adjourned at 3:45.

These Minutes were prepared by Patrick Judge, Secretary.