

Meeting 3/03

2 July 2003

Not for general publication

Meeting called to order at 1 p.m. in North Conference at the National Center for Appropriate Technology, 3040 Continental Drive, Butte.

Present: Marla McCombie (in the chair), Dave Ryan, Rip Hamilton, Lee Tavenner, Kathi Montgomery, Georgia Brensdal, Chris Daum, Jake Donaldson, Matt Isaesse, Kathy Hadley, Jim Tracy, Chris Borton, Patrick Judge, Tony Boniface, Mikey Strickland, Gail Snow, John Walden, Kathy Hyzy.

Apologies: Roy Nollkamper, Mikey Strickland.

Minutes: Minutes of the April 2003 meeting were read and approved with one amendment reflecting MREA's agreement to contribute \$1,000 to co-sponsor Sustainability Fair 2003 in Livingston.

Treasurer's Report: Chris Daum submitted a written report showing that the MREA had \$5,471.57 in its account as of July 1, 2003.

Old Business

- A. Reporting on energy policy, Pat Judge noted that NorthWestern Energy launched its E+ Green Program, which allows customers buy the environmental benefits associated with renewable energy that is being generated in the northwest and Wyoming. The purchase helps fund new renewable energy projects. Customers may choose to buy as many blocks as they like. Judge, energy policy director for the Montana Environmental Information Center, reported that Wheat Montana Bakery & Deli, became the first customer to subscribe to the program.

Judge also reported on the June 13 meeting of the Energy and Telecommunications Interim Committee. The committee is studying energy efficiency and conservation practices and building codes and evaluating universal system benefits charges and allocations of funds among programs for natural gas and electricity.

The committee is discussing whether to increase the allocation of USB money to meet the energy needs of low-income people, Judge said. He suggested that MREA and others interested in renewable energy meet with advocates for low-income energy assistance and discuss USB allocations. "We're going to have to sit down with these other groups and come to a reasonable compromise," Judge said. He suggested that groups with a stake in USB may want to consider placing an initiative on the ballot that would set percentages for allocating USB money.

- B. Georgia Brensdal reported on a meeting of state energy office representatives she attended in Denver in June. Much of the discussion focused on efforts to integrate renewable energy and energy efficiency in state energy plans.

MONTANA RENEWABLE ENERGY ASSOCIATION

Meeting 3/03

2 July 2003

Not for general publication

- C. Dave Ryan reported on a biomass-conversion project at the Eagle Stud Mill in Hall. The project developers, including MREA member Jo Radtke, were seeking a \$37,000 U.S. Department of Agriculture renewable energy systems and energy efficiency improvement grant. The grant was to be used to help pay for the installation of equipment to turn wood waste into energy. Eagle Stud Mill has also applied for \$56,000 in co-funding for the project from the Universal System Benefits fund administered by NorthWestern Energy, Ryan said. That grant was contingent upon the USDA award. Ryan said the cogeneration system - which uses reciprocating steam engine technology - is expected to produce 750,000 kilowatts and supply about a third of the plant's electricity.
- D. Chris Borton reported on Sage Mountain Center's effort to organize a free, statewide, self-directed tour of grid-intertied solar-electric systems on Saturday, Oct. 4. All of the homes or businesses featured in the tour would have systems installed using USB funds, Borton said. He said the tour would be promoted through a news release and newspaper ads and would also be featured on the Sage Mountain Center, NorthWestern Energy and Montana Green Power websites.
- E. Dave Ryan suggested that the wind working group and biomass working group organized by Secretary of State Bob be folded into the Montana Renewable Energy Association. Ryan noted that Brown hoped to develop wind and biomass projects on state lands to bring in more revenue for schools.
- F. Kathi Montgomery of DEQ reported that the Alternative Energy Loan Program issued three loans in May for systems in Helena, Black Eagle and Bozeman, and had two loan applications pending approval. Montgomery said the loan fund had grown to \$525,000.
- G. MREA agreed to accept nominations for an MREA Annual Renewable Energy Award. The award recognizes a business, organization or individual for "demonstrating an outstanding commitment to the promotion of renewable energy technologies." Nominations were to be submitted by e-mail or letter to secretary Jim Tracy by the October quarterly meeting. Receipt of the award is to be based on original and innovative contributions to the advancement of renewable energy technologies. The recipient must show exceptional contributions during the past year in the field of renewable energy through the promotion of renewable technologies, through acting as an advocate for public policy development, or through active participation in renewable energy education forums. Any dues-paying member of MREA may make a nomination for this award. Nominations may be made any time during the calendar year but will be solicited during the October through November timeframe. A brief written narrative documenting the basis for nomination must accompany each nomination. The group agreed that the award should include a plaque and be accompanied by a release

MONTANA RENEWABLE ENERGY ASSOCIATION

Meeting 3/03

2 July 2003

Not for general publication

issued to Montana news media, possibly in conjunction with Energy Awareness Month in October.

- H. Jim Tracy reported that he had ordered \$982.80 worth of LED Christmas lights, but that the lights were still in crates in Seattle and likely would not arrive in time for sale at the Sustainability Fair. Tracy also reported on a solar video NCAT is producing for the Department of Energy's Million Solar Roofs program showing how Montanans are using photovoltaics and solar thermal energy.
- I. Chris Borton reported that Sage Mountain Center had received 60 requests to do renewable energy site assessments through a program funded by universal system benefits charges. The site assessments were advertised through a NorthWestern Energy bill insert. Borton said. He said he had received 500 inquiries. Borton also reported that Sage Mountain Center had finished two of six scheduled solar mini-seminars. He said a seminar in Helena drew 45 attendees, while a seminar in Butte drew 40 attendees.
- J. John Walden described the Renewable Energy Demonstration Trailer MREA is building with a grant from NorthWestern Energy's Universal System Benefits program. Walden said the trailer will include photovoltaic, small wind, solar hot water, and efficiency displays. The trailer will also house a battery bank, allowing it to be used as a power source at a variety of sites. MREA hopes to display the trailer at regional renewable energy fairs, home shows, appropriate conferences, and trade shows. Walden said the trailer will also be used for hands-on demonstration at a series of seminars MREA is conducting in 2003-2004 for electricians and electrical inspectors. Walden said NCAT would insure the trailer until MREA is able to do so.
- K. MREA voted to contribute \$500 to help fund the Montana Energy Education Council (MEEC) calendar, an annual project of the non-profit educational organization. Montgomery noted that the 2004 calendar would be devoted to renewable energy. MEEC provides educational resources for teachers and students, including energy-related curriculum materials. Each spring, MEEC conducts an energy calendar poster contest and also sponsors student awards for energy-related projects entered in the State Science Fair.
- L. The board elected Chris Board vice president of MREA on a voice vote.

The board set its next meeting for Wednesday, Oct. 8, at NCAT in Butte.

The meeting adjourned at 4 p.m.