

10/08/2003 Montana Renewable Energy Association Meeting Minutes

Meeting called to order at 1 p.m. on Wednesday 10/8/03 in North Conference Room at the National Center for Appropriate Technology, 3040 Continental Drive, Butte.

Present: Marla McCombie (in the chair), Dave Ryan, Lee Tavenner, Georgia Brensdal, Dan Healy, Kathy Hadley, Chris Borton, Patrick Judge, Mikey Strickland, John Walden, Mark Hines, Ray Schott, Fred Davison, Jenni Bryce, Logan Bryce, Roy Nollkamper, Tim Engleson, Elizabeth Andrews, Tom Butts & Dale Horton (in & out)

Minutes: We dispensed with the reading of the minutes from the July 2003 meeting and accepted them as written.

Treasurer's Report: The treasurer's report from Chris Daum was unavailable at the time of the meeting and was to be faxed or e-mailed to John Walden by Chris.

Business:

- A. Jim Tracy no longer works at NCAT and his future participation as a member and secretary of MREA is unknown at this time. Contact John Walden @ NCAT for more details.
- B. Pat Judge (MEIC) said that \$1.725M of USB money has been reallocated to low income bill assistance and weatherization program (\$262,500?). November 20th was the deadline for input on the future of the USB funds/program (sorry). USB money is protected from NorthWest Energy's creditors, but not from the MT legislature. NWE launched their green choice program with 890 blocks of 100kWh purchased. NWE is working on their default supply portfolio by pre-approving some contracts.
- C. Georgia Brensdal (DEQ) reported that there is a \$600k proposed grant for Paul Williamson's Hydrogen Futures project and there is a combined heat and power (CHP) application center in Seattle (MT DEQ is a member). DEQ has approved loans for eight systems so far. Also, 2004 MEEC (Montana Energy Education Council) calendars are available.
- D. Lee Taverner (Solar Plexus) asked Pat Judge for some clarification on the USB fund status and after a lengthy discussion, the future of the USB program was summarized by Pat Judge saying that it comes down to the big money of coal versus renewable energy which doesn't make the future of the USB program sound very promising.
- E. Kathy Hadley (NCAT) added to the USB discussion that there is a group called "Energy Share" within the low income community that serves people who fall thru the cracks of low income programs. They want the USB renewable money to go to bill assistance. While bill assistance is nice in the short term, we all agreed that it doesn't help the long term problem of high monthly energy bills.
- F. Chris Borton (Sage Mountain Center) had nothing new to report for the education & market development committee.

- G. Dave Ryan (NWE) said that MREA should support MEIC's efforts to get the MT legislature to direct USB funds to renewable projects.
- H. The MREA annual award was discussed yet again and several members voted that we give it to Bob Anderson (formerly with the PSC) for his lifetime achievement in working with renewable energy. Presentation of the award to Bob Anderson is to take place at the next MREA meeting in January with media coverage and some sort of press release. Chris Borton is working on the plaque to present to Bob and Dave Ryan (?) is going to write up a press release.
- I. Chris Borton reported that there were ~3500 people at the Sustainability Fair in Bozeman and that the show producers would like MREA to be more involved with putting on the fair (i.e. they want more money from us).
- J. John Walden reported that the MREA solar video is almost finished. Marla McCombie suggested that we send copies of this video to the media and let them use clips during the Bob Anderson MREA award.
- K. John Walden and Chris Borton reported that the MREA renewable energy trailer is almost finished and is at Dave Ryan's house. It should be ready for the next major fair or conference that MREA attends.
- L. Dave Ryan reported that he has sold enough Christmas LED light sets to cover our costs and that he only has 60-70 strings left.
- M. John Walden reported that only 3 people in MT had signed up to take the North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) Solar PV Installer Certification exam on 10/25/03.
- N. Someone (can't remember who) reported that there will be a "Bioneers Conference" in Bozeman on 10/17-10/19. If MREA was to have a booth at the conference it would cost \$200. We all agreed that MREA would skip this year's conference and that Dave Ryan would notify the sponsors.
- O. Chris Borton reported that there were 30 homes on the Solar Home Tour and he sent out 178 maps. An average of 7 people visited each site and Chris is waiting for feedback from them. Chris said that more advertising probably would've helped stir up interest and increased attendance.
- P. The subject of MREA membership in the Sustainable Energy Coalition. Dave Ryan pointed out that while it is nice for one group to support another group by becoming members of each other's organization, it really doesn't help either one monetarily. Pat Judge said that the Sustainable Energy Coalition is a Washington DC based group far removed from Montana's local issues and needs and he suggested that we look into NorthWest Energy's Coalition instead. Pat said that he would put together some figures comparing the two coalitions.
- Q. Logan Bryce talked about his plans to install a Bergey XL.1 wind turbine tied to an 1800W SMA Windy Boy grid-tie inverter. He also said that African Windpower also has a turbine available for use with the Windy Boy inverters.
- R. Dave Ryan pointed out that any USB funds available for renewable energy projects will be done on public buildings and not residences or businesses since that would give them an unfair advantage over other individuals or businesses. Dave suggested that we all think of ways to make RE "cool" and that we should send letters to the PSC urging them to direct USB money to RE.

- S. Chris Borton asked for feedback from RE dealers regarding his site assessment services. There were a few replies from the dealers in the room and all were very positive.
- T. Georgia Brensdal said that there may be opportunities to install RE systems on federal facilities with funding through FEMP. Contact her for details.
- U. Vigilante Co-Op is offering green power along with 4-5 other MT Co-Ops.
- V. John Walden suggested concentrating some MREA time and money to educate the MT Co-Ops to bring them up to speed and see how they can help promote RE. Someone said that Co-Ops get some funding from DEQ similar to USB so there may be money for Co-Ops to apply to RE projects. Dale Horton and John Walden said that they will do some brainstorming to see how they can bring the MT Co-Ops into the MREA and RE fold.
- W. Tim Engleson with Lincoln Electric Co-Op talked about the net metered PV system they installed on their building and he passed a picture around. He said it was a lot easier to install operate than the fuel cell system they worked on previously.
- X. We had a conference call from Rhys Roth of Climate Solutions(?) to discuss the possibility of holding the 5th annual Harvesting Clean Energy conference in Montana. Tom Butts of AERO added that he thought a joint effort by MREA and AERO could help raise the estimated \$20k necessary to bring the Harvesting Clean Energy conference to MT. January '05 in Helena was suggested for the conference so MT legislators could attend.

The meeting adjourned at ~4:15pm.