

Meeting 3/01

25 July 2001

Not for general publication

Chris Daum called the meeting to order at 12:30 p.m. on Wednesday, July 25, 2001, at the Montana Power Company Office, 1903 Russell, in Missoula, MT

**Present:** Chris Daum (in the Chair), Bob Anderson, Georgia Brensdal, Chris Borton, Ed Brunsvold, Bill Bullock, Van Jamison, Whitney Lake, Roy Nollkamper, Tim Ranf, Dave Ryan, Joanne Smith, Jerry Spencer, LuMarie Strickland, Mikey Strickland, Lee Tavenner, Zac Taylor, Jim Tracy, and Kimberly Warren.

**Apologies:** Tony Boniface, Marla McCombie

**Minutes:** Minutes of the April 11, 2001, meeting were read and approved.

### **Treasurer's Report:**

Treasurer Chris Daum reported that the association had \$1,593 in its account, and still was waiting for dues from some members. The treasurer's report was accepted. Chris Daum also released the following list of those who have paid dues:

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### **Old Business:**

1. Jim Tracy reported that paperwork was nearly completed for the MREA to file for 501 (c) 3 tax-exempt status with the IRS.

### **New Business:**

1. Dave Ryan acknowledged a \$500 donation to MREA from the Fanwood Foundation (Bob and Hopie Stevens of Helena) and expressed the association's gratitude for the gift.
2. After a brief discussion, members agreed that the MREA likely would not participate again in the Missoula Holistic Health Fair (June 23-24). Dave Ryan said that, while the MREA booth did enjoy considerable traffic at the health fair, MREA's should find more appropriate venues. He noted the MREA booth was located across from the Montana NORML booth. NORML's aim is to reform marijuana laws. The group also finalized plans for MREA to participate in the Sustainability Fair Aug. 24-25 in Livingston. "We could really have an interesting collection of hardware there," Ryan said. Lee Tavenner of Solar Plexus donated the use of a tent; Dan Healy of Sunelco donated its solar pumping demonstration system, and Logan and Jenni Bryce of Pine Ridge Products donated a 1kW Bergey wind turbine. Ryan, Tracy and Mikey and LuMarie Strickland volunteered to staff MREA's booth at the Sustainability Fair.
3. Bob Anderson reported that the National Wind Coordinating Committee, or NWCC, of which he has been a member for seven years, planned to meet to meet in Billings, Great Falls or Helena Oct. 3-4. (The committee has since changed the meeting location to Big Sky). Anderson described NWCC as a U.S. consensus-based collaborative formed in 1994 to identify issues that affect the use of wind power,

establish dialogue among key stakeholders, and catalyze appropriate activities to support the development of an environmentally, economically, and politically sustainable commercial market for wind power. Anderson said members include representatives from electric utilities and support organizations, state legislatures, state utility commissions, consumer advocacy offices, wind equipment suppliers and developers, green power marketers, environmental organizations, and state and federal agencies. Anderson noted the Department of Energy's Wind Powering America Montana Wind Forum would be held on October 3 at the same location.

4. Georgia Brensda reported on the Harvesting Clean Energy in Montana through Agriculture, Forestry, Wind & Solar, Oct. 9-11 (Tuesday–Thursday) in at the Heritage Inn in Great Falls. Brensda said conference will be the first statewide gathering devoted to helping Montanans learn about alternative energy. It is intended to provide access to expert practitioners and financial resources in solar, wind, fuel cell and biomass energy technologies, she said. The group agreed to hold the next MREA meeting in conjunction with the Conference. The meeting tentatively was set for the evening of Wednesday, Oct. 10.
5. Chris Daum reported on the Midwest Renewable Energy Fair she attended June 22-24 near Amherst, Wisconsin. “Many years ago, in central Wisconsin, there was a pocket of farms, an Amish community,” Daum reported. “When electrical power was put in to the region, it was not provided to this patch of farms. After a while, many of the Amish moved elsewhere—and the people who bought their places largely decided to put in off-grid power systems. As time went by, they decided to have an educational celebration to show folks what they were doing and how. Thus the Midwest Renewable Energy Association was born, and their annual celebration of renewable energy technologies is now the present fair.” Daum said the fair included workshops “on every possible subject related to renewable energy.” She also reported that her home near Stevensville was among the stops on a recent solar home tour.
6. Chris Borton reported that he had visited Real Goods Store's headquarters in Hopland, California.
7. Jim Tracy reported that a Montana Renewable Energy Association website will be available. Members can access the site – temporarily located at <http://www.montanagreenpower.com/mrea/> – and submit comments and suggestions to him at [jimt@ncat.org](mailto:jimt@ncat.org).
8. Missoula firefighter Ed Brunsvold, who led the effort to place a PV system on Missoula Fire Station No. 4, the first in Montana to be partially solar powered, asked the group for help assembling a solar curricula for school children. He was directed to online resources such as the Florida Solar Energy Center, the Alliance to Save Energy, and the Interstate Renewable Energy Council.
9. Van Jamison of the U.S. Department of Energy reported on efforts to develop wind energy data for Montana. A recent project funded by universal system benefits revenues administered by the Montana Power Co. will produce high-resolution wind maps of Montana, Jamison said. But while the maps will be high resolution, they will not provide site specific, accurate wind data for the state. The only way to

gather that type of data, Jamison said, is through “anemometry,” or systematic wind measurement.

10. District 3 Public Service Commissioner Bob Anderson, handed out a copy of a “Electric Policies in the Public Interest, (Recommended by Some State Utility Regulators).” The 16-page paper can be downloaded at: <http://psc.state.mt.us/pdf/BAElectricityPoliciesinthePublicInterest.pdf>. Anderson also voiced his opposition to attempts to repeal House Bill 474. HB 474 revises laws relating to electrical energy. In general, the bill:

- allows customers who elected an alternative electrical energy supplier an opportunity to receive electrical energy from the default supplier (Montana Power Co.);
- authorizes the board of investments to invest in new generation projects that meet certain criteria;
- provides eligibility criteria for the projects, including long-term contracts with the default supplier or a Montana industry for the purchase of the electrical energy generated by the projects;
- makes the state a party to the contract in the event of default in payment by default supplier;
- extends the duration of the universal system benefits charge;
- modifies the default supplier licensing rules;
- creates a consumer electricity support program;
- provides that an electricity buying cooperative may serve as a supplier or promoter of alternative energy and conservation programs;
- clarifies the definition of “universal system benefits programs” to include irrigated agriculture;
- provides for procedures for a transition to customer choice;
- provides for the default supplier’s recovery of electricity supply costs;
- establishes a Montana Power Authority and allows the authority to purchase, construct, and operate electrical generation facilities or electrical energy transmission or distribution systems and to enter into joint ventures for these purposes;
- authorizing the Board of Examiners to issue revenue bonds for the Montana Power Authority to acquire electrical generation facilities and to build electrical energy transmission or distribution systems;
- and provides that the principal and interest on the bonds is payable from the sale of electrical energy from the facilities and from electrical energy transmission and distribution charges.

Anderson said he’s satisfied that language in HB474 allows the Public Service Commission to retain regulatory control over electricity prices. He cited this specific section of the bill: “The commission shall use an electricity cost recovery mechanism that ensures that all prudently incurred electricity supply costs are fully recoverable in rates. The cost recovery mechanism must provide for prospective rate adjustments for cost differences resulting from cost changes, load changes, and the time value of money on the differences.”

Anderson said further that he believes electricity rates likely will rise to 10 cents/kWh in July 2002 from 6-7 cents/kWh.

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The meeting adjourned at 2:48 p.m. following a motion by Tim Ranf, seconded by Chris Borton.

**NEXT MEETING:** Wednesday, Oct. 10, Heritage Inn, Great Falls.