

Big Rapids Area Amateur Radio Club

May 2015

PO Box 343 Paris MI 49338 Pres. Dan Astleford Web Page: www.braarc.net Editor: Phil – phildolly@power-net.net



Presidents Message

As summer approaches we see much more activity in BRAARC. KD8DIB is planning a foxhunt the weekend of the

Dayton Hamfest (May 16 or 17). This will be combined with a potluck picnic after the fox hunt. More information should be available after the next club meeting.

The Ham in a Day class was a success. Nine students arrived for the class. After six hours of intensive class work eight of the nine went on to pass the Technician class test. As with any event like this it wouldn't happen without the support of the club members. Phil KC8QOV worked through the study guide to explain the concepts behind the 37 pages of text. Good job Phil.

The behind scenes activities were administered by Sue (KC8IFP), Patricia (KD8GGD) and Cathy (first lady). They handled the registration of the students, receipts, snacks, etc.

The end results of this effort include eight new Technician hams, two upgrades from Technician to General, and one upgrade from General to Extra class. This would not have happened without the efforts of Jeff Sell to supply the local VEs and conduct the

testing. A huge THANK YOU for all involved. Please also welcome the following when you see them, as they are the new members that just passed their exams: Andrew Banks, Brandon Bassett, Christian Benedict, James Finch, Therese Goebel, Howard Mordue III, Phil Vroman, and Darren Watson.

During the Ham in a Day class an audit was run on the BRAARC books and found to be in compliance. Sue (KC8IFP) and Mike (KD8DIB) did this task. Thanks for the help guys. And thanks Jens (KC8OIV) for providing the data and receipts.

Coming up in June we will have both "Girls on the Run" and Field Day. Girls on the run will need someone to organize our part of the event (what the course is, where to place the observers, and net control). There are presently six members signed up to help at "Girls on the Run". For Field Day we will need to locate and transport the generator, radios, antennas, cables, and computer logging software. Past organizers know most of this data, we just need to discuss it and assign tasks.

Dan, WA8AEN

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Minutes From The Meeting – 2 April 2015

Bruce Werner, WB8TVD, More-Or-Less Permanent Secretary

Here's what you missed if you were not at the meeting on 2 April 2015:

Dan, WA8AEN, opened the meeting at 7:10pm with 20 in attendance.

As has happened before, the larger portion of the room had been scheduled to another group, so we made do with what we had. Rumor had it that the other group would be done within a half hour. (TVD: It didn't happen, see later in minutes)

A few reminders:

Please sign up for net control of our two nets. A sign-up sheet was passed around.

The next club breakfast will be 2 May, which is also the date for the Cadillac Hamfest. (TVD: If you eat fast, and drive fast, you can make it to both!)

The next BRAARC meeting will be 7 May, 7 pm in the DPS classroom.

The secretary had not gotten the minutes ready for the Newsletter, so had several copies available in print, as is done with the treasurer's report. It was also discussed whether to "publish" the minutes on the BRAARC website. Mike will give it some consideration.

The secretary and treasurer reports were accepted as published.

Jens asked Dan about the insurance.

Jeff, Mecosta County EC: The ARES quarterly meeting on 26 March, in Reed City was well attended.

The radio equipment that was ordered for the EOC about a year and a half ago has arrived: There is a Kenwood TS-2000 and three Kenwood TH-72A handhelds. Jeff will inspect the units and set them up as needed in the EOC. He noted that the handhelds can be available during emergencies and drills to "loan" out as needed. Jeff will also pursue using APRS and look into various digital VHF/UHF modes, including D-Star. There is some equipment in use in West Michigan. A member in Texas has reported using the Yaesu digital system. Icom is offering a special deal on their D-Star repeaters, which Jeff will look into.

Repeaters:

Mike reports that during the ARES net on 1 April, he did a test to switch the 2-meter repeater to "Weather Alert Mode". It was successful.

6M: Mike is waiting for Jeff B. to return a recent phone message.

440: He also noted that the 440 repeater seems okay, but the Echolink system is down. He has not noticed any auto-keying lately.

Dan and Mike have turned in the club's non-profit forms to State Of Michigan.

Jeff wanted to know if there was any interest in moving the ARES net to a different time or date. He will send an e-mail to judge interest.

Dan notes that the Special Service Club (SSC) forms have not yet been submitted, and that the Michigan Amateur Repeater Council (MARC) needs to be notified to update some of our information.

Club membership recruitment: Nothing has been done this period.

Upcoming Events:

Ham-In-A-Day will be 11 April. Jeff will check to see if he has all the necessary forms.

Girls On The Run will be 7 June. Dan is passing a sheet to sign up to recruit operators. The activity needs a coordinator.

Bulldog Bike Race will be 20 June. We will need a lot of people.

Field Day is 27-28 June. We have gotten approval from the City to use Northend Park overnight.

Mike measured George's antenna. It looks okay, but he will check the solenoid for any problem(s),

Early Fall Potluck (NOT the December meeting dinner): Mike suggested that the potluck be held on 16 May, in conjunction with a Fox Hunt.

As part of our Tech Corner, Mike led a discussion of Fox Hunting equipment, including a receiving antenna and "fox" transmitter.

Select Band Captains

Divide and conquer is a key element of a fun time for all. All of the planning and work can not be left to one or two people. This is not a lot of fun for the few and can cause some difficulty. A useful strategy that can be used is the Incident Command System, after all Field Day is a type of **Getting Ready for ARRL Field Day** emergency exercise.

A Field Day Coordinator is designated to help with over all coordination of the planning and the event. To assist the coordinator, Band Captains are assigned to spearhead operation on a particular band or activity. This group is designated to plan and conduct preparations for the event. Ask your members to contribute in the areas they are interested in.

Establish a Budget

A part of the planning process is establishing a budget and securing funding. There are many ways to accomplish this but it is a vital activity to the planning of your event. As you begin to develop your budget there are many questions that will be asked and answered. This defines the activities that your group will undertake. Are you going to open your Field Day to the public and what level of services can you offer to your guests. Additional budget items to consider include the following: fuel, food, facilities, equipment, maintenance, awards, incentives, and promotion are just some examples of budget items to consider.

Secure a Location

The location can make or break your Field Day event. Does the location support the activities you'd like to accomplish? Field Day is a 24 hour event and that means the first criteria is... **WHERE IS THE RESTROOM?!?**

Consider what will your participants need and expect from a Field Day site. RV parking is becoming more important for BRAARC to encourage participation. We need a communal area for meals and we want to be close to restaurants that have takeout. We've given up trying to prepare meals on site. We are there to operate radios not cook.

Equipment and Supplies

What equipment and supplies does your club have available? Is that equipment useable or in need of maintenance? This is when the club Quartermaster can provide some helpful input both for the budget and planning. A club generator needs periodic oil changes and prior to Field Day is a great time to conduct this maintenance. Club antenna kits need inspections and repairs as required.

All Band Captains must communicate with the Quartermaster to eliminate any confusion in the assignment of club equipment. You do not want two different Band Captains assuming that they are using the one club radio. Work these details out as part of your planning sessions.

Site and Participant Safety

There are some recent Field Day tragedies that we all want to avoid. Creating a safety plan for your event and establishing a Safety Officer can be useful in preventing injury and damage. The Safety Officer's role is to monitor the activities and assess compliance with the event safety plan. They must also have authority to stop an activity and call for a review by the event coordinator and band captains to determine the safe way to proceed.

The first step in creating a safety plan is to survey your Field Day location and look for hazards. We want to know up front what the hazards are at the site so we can implement countermeasures to eliminate the

hazards. Look for overhead and underground utilities, assess the walking and working surfaces, consider expected weather conditions and determine traffic flow as a starting point. Involve all your Band Captains in this preplanning.

Site Set-up

Once on site, the work begins. A pre-work briefing should be held to discuss the event safety plan and set-up activities. Because you've pre-planned your Field Day event, the location of operating stations, antenna farm, and other services are established. Executing your plan becomes the mission. Assign work crews as necessary to begin the work. Provide them with instructions, equipment and a leader.

Occasionally, this is the point where someone wants to jump in as a last minute participant or even Band Captain. This can be disruptive but this energy should be redirected and the person encouraged to "join in" with the work at hand. Field Day is a cooperative activity and a lot of fun that we want to share with everyone. Your plan should include and accommodate these last minute participant / Band Captains. However, it can't be expected that all last minute changes can be accommodated. Encourage participation in the pre-planning to make Field Day run smooth.

Operation

Band Captains should determine an operating schedule and recruit operators to fill their schedule. BRAARC attempts to maximize the amount of operators and operation time by encouraging operation of multiple stations. Typically we operate three to four contest stations, a GOTA (Get on the Air) station, and VHF/UHF stations when possible. This is a 24 hour contest and requires many operators to keep these stations on the air the entire length of the event.

Teardown

The work doesn't end with that final contact. The tear down of the operating locations, accounting for club equipment, disassembling the antenna farm, and restoring the site to original condition requires planning also. Hopefully, you are as lucky as BRAARC when it comes to tear down. Many club members, even if they did not operate, return to assist with teardown. It's nice to have fresh help in this phase of the event as it can be hazardous. Be sure to include tear down as part of your plan to minimize these hazards. A successful event includes being ready, for both people and equipment, to deploy again soon after the event.

Debriefing

Holding a short meeting to discuss any problems, concerns, improvements, and of course successes is extremely important. Document these comments for implementation next year or by the next group. Also, by reporting back to your organization this creates a continuous cycle of improvement.

Happy Hamming!
Mike, KD8DIB

What Would You Do?

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

For the past three or four years, I've been threatening to buy a new radio to replace my ICOM IC-746PRO. The IC-746PRO is a great rig, though, and I've had trouble pulling the trigger on a \$3k – \$5k or more purchase. The radio that I've had my eye on is the Elecraft K3. Without a doubt the K3 is a better rig than the 746PRO, and it's certainly worth the price that Elecraft is asking. The question I keep asking myself, though, is, "Am I going to have \$5,000 more fun with a K3?"

To put it another way, the question is, assuming that I have a \$5,000 budget to spend on amateur radio gear over the next year or two or three, what's the best way to spend it? How can I maximize my purchases so that I have the most fun?

At this point, I think that I've decided not to buy that new rig and instead buy equipment that will help me make my own rigs. Some of the items that I have my eye on include:

- * Aoyue 968A+ SMD Digital Hot Air Rework Station (I have actually already purchased this unit.)
- * Rigol DS1102E 100MHz, Dual Channel, 1 GSa/s Digital Oscilloscope
- * Rigol DSA815-TG Spectrum Analyzer
- * A more professional workbench to replace the folding table that I'm currently using.
- * Peaberry SDR V2 Kit
- * More keys! I'd love to get a fancy Begali or N3ZN paddle, and the other day someone told me about the UR5CDX keys, which look like great deals.

Even if I purchased everything on this list, I'll have spent less than \$5,000.

One consequence of going this route is that I'll have less time for operating. I'm betting (hoping?) that the extra time spent on tinkering will be just as much fun, or even more fun than I'm having now.

It also means that I'll be going to Dayton with a much different mindset than I have the past couple of years. Instead of spending my time configuring the perfect K3 in my head, I'll be looking for kits and scouring the flea market looking for parts.

I may be overthinking this, but like most amateurs, I have a limited budget to spend on amateur radio. That being the case, making conscious decisions about how to spend that money should help me have more fun with ham radio, and that's the goal, isn't it?

What do you think? Is this the right way to go, or am I going to regret this decision? If you've made a similar decision, I'd love to hear from you.

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When not making crucial decisions about his amateur radio career, you'll find KB6NU working on updates to his "No Nonsense" study guides, teaching one-day Tech classes, or blogging about amateur radio at www.kb6nu.com.

This Month's Technical Question:

Antenna voltage is:

- a. Inversely proportional to the square of its length
- b. Proportional to its effective height
- c. Measured voltage times length in feet
- d. Always proportional to field strength
- e. None of the above

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Solution to last month's puzzle

May 2015
PO Box 343 Paris MI 49338

