

Big Rapids Area Amateur Radio Club

May 2016

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Presidents Message

Greetings,
Another successful Ham-in-a-Day is under our belts. Ten students took the class. They ranged in age

from 13 up and at least three were from the emergency services sector. The failure rate was higher this year with 7 of the 10 passing. The VEs report that there were 3 upgrades of which 2 passed. The complimentary one year memberships will account for 7 out of 31 members or 22% of the membership.

We are now heading into our busy part of the year both for the club and our home lives. The club will be working on “Girls on the Run” and “North Country Trail National Parks On The Air” on June 4, “Bulldog Bike Tour” on June 18, and “Field Day” on June 25-26. And home life includes graduations, family reunions, weddings, wedding anniversaries, and vacations.

The two-meter repeater is having problems these days. In the tradition of last year it is losing receive sensitivity. This seems to be happening mainly on the warmer days

and times when the usage is higher. I checked out the trail to the WDEE tower and it is mostly passable. Some branches will force you off the two track a couple feet but not a major problem. I hope to take the pruning shears next trip and make it passable. With any luck we will get the new repeater installed before Independence Day.

Speaking of repeaters, Yaesu has issued new firmware for our repeaters. Our intent is to set up the uninstalled repeater to replace the 440 machine. This will give us a chance to evaluate the new squelch (which now includes hysteresis). The present squelch has been dropped to its lowest level but it seems to stay on even when it is below a decipherable level.

There will be many chances to volunteer for activities during the summer months.

Happy Hamming

Dan (WA8AEN)

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Minutes From The Meeting – 7 April 2016

Bruce Werner, WB8TVD, Secretary

Here's what you missed if you were not at the meeting on 7 April 2016:

Dan, WA8AEN, opened the meeting at 7:03pm with 17 members and guests in attendance.

(TVD NOTE: Dan had received word that the firefighters needed the larger meeting space at DPS, so on the spur of the moment, a decision was made to hold our meeting at the Big Rapids Community Library lower level. The firefighter group will only need the larger meeting room two times a year, apparently March and April, coinciding with our meetings. By the way, the overhead projector did indeed work at the library.)

Sheets for attendance and net control were passed around

A few reminders:

Please sign up for net control of our two nets.

The next club breakfast will be 30 April, 9:00 am at Sharon's.

The next BRAARC meeting will be 5 May, 7:00 pm at BRDPS.

Secretary report: The minutes from the meeting in March were published in the April newsletter and were approved by consensus.

Treasurer report: The treasurer's report was accepted by consensus.

Jens was sick and could not attend the meeting, but sent along the usual D&C sheets for consideration and a summary was given.

Jeff, Mecosta County EC: Is planning a work session at the Mecosta County EOC in April.

Crouch Communications is moving ahead on the EOC communications trailer, including installing Amateur Radio equipment and antennas.

Repeaters: Mike, KD8DIB, notes that the 2 meter link repeater is having some keying problems.

The 440 Fusion repeater is awaiting a firmware update to solve some keying problems. It is up to 20 watts and the squelch is set at the mid-point.

Work is on hold on the 2 meter Fusion repeater until "Spring" allows entry to The Hill.

6 Meters: Dan reports that the repeater is bundled up and covered with plastic and ready to go to be returned to The Silo. (TVD: I talked with Jeff B. informally over the weekend. He has healed after a hip operation [replacement?] and is looking forward to helping George with some antenna work. Extending an assumption, I would guess he would be willing to help with re-installing the 6 meter repeater in its home at The Silo.)

Old Business: Mike, 'DIB, announced that the BRAARC library was at the back of the room for any browsing and checkouts.

Delcy reminded everyone that the Ham-In-A-Day session is set for 16 April. Registration for testing should be done by 4:00pm with the test at 4:30. The class itself will be at 9:00am, with check-in at 8:30.

New Business: Jeff reminded everyone that our radio activation of the North Country Trail (as part of NPOTA) will be 6 August. He also noted that there will be an attempted activation of the entire trail on 4-5 June. Consensus was that we would like to join the activation at the "schoolhouse" near White Cloud. Jeff gave a summary of the rules and logistics of our portion of the activation. (TVD question for the next meeting: Are there any other groups who might want to activate the same location? How do we work that out, and who might coordinate that?)

Signup sheets were passed around to assess interest in helping with Field Day, Girls on the Run and NPOTA (National Parks On The Air).

The Bulldog Bike Tour may still be on, but BRAARC has not yet heard anything from the organizers. Their website allows registration to 18-19 June, with the event the same weekend as Field Day. Even if they contact us soon, we might not have time to organize a response. Field Day location was discussed: It may yet be at the School District office grounds, but we would need to rent a Porta-John. Alternatively, we might be able to use Northend Park.

Tech Corner: With a working video projector, we were able to watch the vintage Ham Radio video suggested by Bruce. (TVD: For those not attending, it was a very interesting look back at both society and Ham Radio in the 1930s. Search YouTube: "pete smith ham radio video". "Radio Hams" should be at the top, after a sponsored video or two. After viewing that video, look below the video frame, then below the title. Click on the callsign, wa6tkq, to find a video on Hiram Percy Maxim. I have not viewed that one yet.)

Dan offered some interesting examples of using Smith Charts, expanding on his introduction at the last meeting. He was able to show various patterns with a variety of inductance and capacitance combinations.

Jeff demonstrated some BlueTooth applications for Ham Radio. He showed how an Android phone can be used as a TNC and to trigger APRS. This would be especially useful in an ARES function, by using an app on the phone to send the GPS location to APRS on the handheld.

Another demonstration used his Yaesu FT 817 and a BlueTooth app called "BlueCat".

Dan notes that there were 6 people on the signup sheet for Field Day, and 2 for Girls On The Run. Bev gave Mike, 'DIB, one of the club scrapbooks.

Nobody offered to bring refreshments to the next meeting.

George won the 50/50 drawing.

The meeting was adjourned about 8:22 pm. No Hams or guests were harmed in the conduct of the meeting. We all went home. Well, mostly.

Announcements:

Saturday, April 30, Breakfast at Sharon's in Rogers Heights, 9:00A.M.

Thursday, May 5, Regular BRAARC meeting at Big Rapids Public Safety Bldg, 7:00P.M.



The month
For remembrance



Preferably with experience and a climbing belt. (Hard hat would be a nice touch) I'm sure I'm not the only one who needs someone to work on antennas/rotators/cables at height, but is no longer able or brave enough to do it himself or herself. If we had a cadre of willing (cheap would be good, too) climbers, it would be a boon to all members!

In my specific, current, case, I have 40' freestanding aluminum tower with a large TV array (I still use it for FM broadcast, otherwise, I lost all TV during the digital revolution). The rotor has ceased to respond to the control box and has twisted in the wind. Eventually, I would like to replace the TV antenna with a small HF beam and new coax, hoping the rotator will handle it. In the meantime, I need to get the skinny on whether a wire has come loose on the rotor and if it can be resurrected and realigned. I have an idea to try the TV antenna (really broadband) for at least receiving Ham VHF/UHF frequencies and maybe transmitting, if the preamp and filters can be bypassed. Thank you! --Bruce, WB8TVD (e-mail or phone in the club directory)

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