

Big Rapids Area Amateur Radio Club

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Presidents Message

Greetings,
This will be my farewell President's message. I have been president for two years and it is

time to clean up some of my home projects that have been put on hold. It has been an interesting two years. I've tried a couple of Tech Corners that failed miserably and had a couple that came off well. I guess that is the way things work.

I would like to thank the club members for assisting me in this endeavor (I may never figure out how that computer at Public service works). It is interesting that the club president puts his own spin on how things are done. Such as special events and potluck lunches. I have never had either of these events. That is my fault. The club is often called a radio and eating club (I've never had an eating meeting other than the Christmas pot luck). My failure has reduced the satisfaction of the members

and left a void for the next president to easily fill. I also have never had a project to build or a kit to assemble during the meeting, again another void to be filled. It was never my priority to have a Board of Directors Meeting (I think we had two meetings and one short one called during a club meeting). I try to be a good follower and have never had to do much leading. So it would pretty easy to improve on my record and the club would be better off.

So now that you know how easy the job can be we will elect a president and vice president at the next meeting. Please show up and make your opinions known.

Thank you all for making the last two years interesting and enlightening,
Dan (WA8AEN)

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Minutes From The Meeting – 1 September 2016

Bruce Werner, WB8TVD, Secretary

Here's what you missed if you were not at the meeting on 1 September 2016:

Dan, WA8AEN, opened the meeting at 7:05pm with 12 members and guests in attendance.

President Dan noted the lower attendance and we came to a general agreement that we were so close to Labor Day that the holiday could likely be a factor. He also expressed concern that there was a slow trend to meetings with fewer attendees which is also reflected in the membership roster. But, carrying on....

Each attendee introduced himself or herself as appropriate.

A few reminders:

Please sign up for net control of our two nets: 440, Sunday, 7:30pm; 2m, Tuesday, 9:00pm.

The next club breakfast will be 1 October, 9:00 am at Sharon's.

The next BRAARC meeting will be 6 October, 7:00 pm at BRDPS.

Secretary report: Bruce, WB8TVD: The minutes from the meeting in August were published in the September newsletter. There being no additions or corrections, the minutes were approved by consensus.

Treasurer report: Josh, KE8EKC, distributed a summary sheet of the club finances and gave a brief rundown. He noted that the transition has been a little rough, coordinating everyone to sign the required papers and transferring the books. Josh also noted that the Club has a half-year dues arrangement for anyone joining on or after 1 July.

Another suggestion from the recent audit is that cash transactions be dealt with using a paper receipt book. The trail for expenses is covered well. Josh will purchase a cash receipt book and have it available at meetings.

The treasurer's report was accepted by voice vote, unanimously.

Attendance and net control sheets were passed around.

EC Report: Jeff, K8OE: Jeff has submitted a grant request to Trans Canada pipeline corporation for funds to cover the cost of very low loss coax cable to be used when the EOC antennas are relocated to the "new" dispatch tower. A question was raised about why Trans Canada. Simply put: They have pipelines in this area and have a vested interest in having emergency communications available in the event of some disaster.

Repeaters: Mike, KD8DIB, has moved the cabinet for the deceased repeater out of the way.

All firmware for both repeaters has been updated.

Mike explained the details of a new repeater that can transmit and receive simultaneously on both 2 meters and 440 (TVD: Much in the manner of a linked repeater).

He also notes that a problem with low audio and RF output (TVD: Which?) could be attributable to differences in cooling and lack thereof.

Dan notes the 6 meter repeater is still cooling its heels in his basement.

The assembly entered an informal discussion of the methods of linking repeaters and the newer dual/dual options available. In linking, there would be a need for only two 222 MHz transceivers, with appropriate control units.

President Dan entered the election cycle by noting the offices available for election: President, vice president, treasurer and secretary. He asked if there were nominations for any or all of the positions. The only two to speak up were current treasurer Josh, KE8EKC, and current secretary Bruce, WB8TVD. There being neither nominations, nor apparent interest at the moment for the positions of president and vice president it was offered and accepted unanimously by consensus that voting proceed for the offices of secretary and treasurer. A motion was made and seconded to accept Bruce, WB8TVD, as secretary for the year

September 2016 through September 2017. The assembly approved by unanimous voice vote. In a like manner, a motion was made and seconded to accept Josh, KE8EKC, as treasurer for the year September 2016 through September 2017. The assembly approved by unanimous voice vote.

(TVD: Neither office holder offered a victory speech)

There being no nominees for the office of president and vice president, Dan, WA8AEN, agreed to remain in office until the next meeting on 6 October, therefore the election of the offices of president and vice president was tabled.

In the meantime, it was agreed that those members not present would be informed of the situation (TVD: verbally, since these minutes will not be available until the next newsletter is delivered several weeks hence) and asked if any has interest in seeking the office. (TVD: Pretty please!)

Informal discussion began on the general state of the Club, and the direction it might be taking. We, as an organization are generally less active than we used to be and we wondered if this might be some sort of general trend, or something specific to BRAARC.

Russ, KD8SFN, talked about what he might be looking for in an organization.

(TVD: What do members want? What direction should the Club be going? Should we?)

Returning to business: Mike, KD8DIB, mentioned it was time to renew the club's domain at GoDaddy. Expenditure for renewal was approved by acclamation.

Tom, KB8TYJ, renewed his call for volunteers for the CROP Walk on Sunday, 9 October. The group will meet at 1:00 pm at the Ferris IRC Connector. The walk starts at 2:00 pm, but the extra time will allow personnel to organize locations, equipment and signs and travel to initial stations. Assuming chilly weather, everyone is advised to dress accordingly. This is a fun activity and good experience for anyone who has not had a lot of air time yet.

(TVD: Note that this will be the day following the Simulated Emergency Test organized by EC Jeff, K8OE)

Tech Corner: Dan explained and demonstrated helical filters and showed a YouTube video covering the topic. He also showed the construction of a helical band pass filter, including tuning and case assembly.

As a general discussion, the topic of interference from LED bulbs was brought up and mulled over, concluding that not all manufacturers were abiding by the rules for interference suppression. (TVD: Caveat emptor, choose reliable "name" brands you trust)

There was no 50/50 drawing.

Josh volunteered to bring refreshments to the October meeting.

The meeting was adjourned about 8:55 pm. No Hams or guests were harmed in the conduct of business and interesting discussions. We all went home. Well, mostly.

Should U.S. ham tests be given abroad?

By Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

A couple of weeks ago, I received an e-mail from a reader who wanted my opinion about a thread on the HamRadioHelpGroup mailing list. The e-mail that started the discussion was a message from an American living in Italy who wanted to take the Technician Class exam. In her e-mail, she told of her troubles finding a test session, and then when she did find one, what she perceived as “irregularities” in the testing process. Reading the thread was a little disconcerting, and I blogged about this issue (<http://www.kb6nu.com/u-s-amateur-radio-license-exams-given-outside-u-s/>).

I understand why foreign national go to the trouble of taking the U.S. license exam. Some of them even buy my study guides. About a year ago, for example, I swapped some e-mail with a guy from Malaysia about why he purchased my study guide and why he wanted a U.S. license. He said that it was because a neighboring country offered reciprocal operating privileges to U.S. licensees, but not Malaysian licensees! He mentioned that he tested for the license in Thailand.

Basically, my Malaysian friend was using the U.S. licensing process to circumvent the Malaysian licensing process. Australians seem to do this, too. Apparently, according to one of the VKs who commented on the thread, getting a U.S. Tech license is easier than testing for an Australian Foundation license. So, some Australians get a U.S. Tech license first, then get the Australian government to issue them a VK Foundation license based on the reciprocal operating agreement between the U.S. and Australia.

Another reason that some outside the U.S. obtain U.S. amateur radio licenses is the challenge. That’s the reason Martin Butler, M0MRB/W9ICQ, of ICQPodcast fame, gave when I spoke to him about this recently.

Are these reasons "good enough" to continue this program of licensing non-U.S. citizens? My first reaction was that no, it's not good enough, and I questioned whether or not the ARRL VEC should sanction non-U.S. VEs and whether or not the FCC should even allow testing outside of the United States.

I didn't see the need for conducting these test sessions or the desirability (to the U.S.) of licensing foreign nationals. I reasoned that not only was there a greater possibility of test fraud, this program could lead to foreign authorities claiming that the U.S. was meddling in their affairs.

This post garnered a lot of comments. Several of them took me to task for voicing this opinion and were in favor keeping the current licensing program in place. There were a variety of reasons.

One of the reasons in favor of using the U.S. licensing process is that in many countries, amateur radio license exam sessions are not very frequent. Another is that they often are quite expensive. This creates an artificial barrier to getting an amateur radio license. Using the U.S. licensing system breaks through this barrier and allows many more to enjoy amateur radio.

Of course, for everything to be on the up and up, the foreign authorities would have to condone the use of U.S. license tests. Apparently, this is the case in Thailand and Australia. I don't know about Italy, but I'm guessing that the authorities there don't really care about Italians obtaining U.S. licenses.

Perhaps the best comment came from Thida, HS1ASC/KH6ASC. He noted that the tests in Thailand were administered very strictly, and says, "The U.S. may lose some callsigns, but what the U.S. and U.S. hams get from us is goodwill, very positive feeling. Everyone who gets U.S. license is so proud, and others look at them respectfully." Since Part 97.1(e) lists as one of the purposes of amateur radio, "Continuation and extension of the amateur's unique ability to enhance international goodwill," I'm now all in favor of offering U.S. ham tests abroad.

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Dan, KB6NU, is the author of the "No Nonsense" amateur radio license study guides, and blogs about amateur radio at KB6NU.Com, and you can contact him by e-mailing cwgeek@kb6nu.com. When he's not pondering the vagaries of the U.S. licensing system, you'll find him working CW on the HF bands.

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Our Club

Bruce Werner, WB8TVD, Secretary

What's wrong with the Club? Why isn't anyone attending meetings? What direction should we be taking? Who is stepping up to take leadership posts?

Does that sound like Big Rapids Area ARC? Maybe. Probably true of any club or organization where membership is completely voluntary – as opposed to being required as part of a career or society.

BRA-ARC is in a much better situation than most. It's an extension of a hobby, after all, and nobody needs to be part of it – or even attend meetings if they don't much feel like it. And that's the beauty of being a part of Amateur Radio. You can put as much or as little into it as you feel like. Total immersion or total hermitude or somewhere in between.

So, what am I getting at? Well, membership and attendance at meetings has been a tad low. That's okay, but if we really want to do things and get together to learn and socialize, we really need a large base of active members. The club won't die. George and I are the remaining charter members from 1973, when the club was given birth (right before my daughter) in a room in the basement of the building behind what is now Lake Osceola State Bank at Maple and Michigan (it used to be the Big Rapids Public Schools, if my memory serves me).

We've had crises and disputes and fears of the death of the club, but it has survived. People have come and gone, but it has survived. I am still a member, but it has survived.

Why am I flip or light-hearted about this? Because, as I said, this is all part of a hobby. Nobody's livelihood or life is likely to be threatened with or without it, nobody will be ostracized because they are or aren't a member. It is part of a hobby. Anyone can put as much time and participation into it as they want. Or none at all. Heaven knows, there have been times when I was not able to give any time, and, sad to say, a few times when I just plain didn't feel up to it. I never stopped being a member, and that's okay. It's okay for anyone to be a member and stop (and, hopefully, come back), or never join at all.

Where am I going with this? The Club and its activities are still part of a hobby, even though the Club is an ARRL Special Services Club. Our meetings serve three (there may be others as well) purposes: to publicly conduct a bit of business and share news and event notices with anyone attending; to share some aspect of Ham Radio through a program and/or Tech Corner; and a bit of socialization to put a face to the names we so briefly hear on the air. That last purpose is highlighted by the annual Winter Pot Luck and white elephant auction at the December meeting. The Club also sponsors, as one of its service activities, the Ham-In-A-Day class, which often brings a few new Hams into the world of Amateur Radio. As our ARRL Section Manager, Larry Camp, WB8R, recently pointed out, "Clubs truly are the lifeblood of amateur radio." The Big Rapids Area Amateur Radio Club hopes and tries to be that kind of lifeblood for West Michigan.

It would be wonderful if every Ham in the area ("Big Rapids Area") was a member and shared in the joy of Ham Radio in person at meetings, but that isn't possible, or even likely. Half would be great! A greater level of activity by those who are members would be wonderful, but ditto the practical and likely. We have always had members who simply want to come to a meeting to be entertained, and sometimes they are disappointed. We do need to conduct a modicum of business and sometimes the program isn't as entertaining as it might be, or the presenter is unable to attend or somehow we just couldn't work up a program. It happens. Remember, we are a hobby organization, and everything is done by volunteers, those people who give a little extra, and try their best to put together a meeting or outside activity that will appeal to as many as possible.

This message will be in the Club's monthly newsletter, which goes out to members, and will be available on the BRA-ARC website. But not everyone who should hear this will. I encourage anyone reading this and feeling some pride in being a Ham share it with others they feel might like to be part of our organization, if only to come and socialize with other Hams and exchange ideas and views.

By the way, I don't know how many times I have heard, "That repeater is dead most of the time." Ummmm.... If you know it's dead, you no doubt have your VHF/UHF rig on. If everyone is listening, and nobody is talking, then it will be dead! Get on! Chatter! Talk about your latest DX; talk about your newest interest in the hobby! Talk about that VHF contact you made in some opening! Talk about anything! Okay, except religion, politics and sex (aren't those topics just so boring anyway?). With 2½ repeaters (the 6-meter machine is just waiting for a crew to tackle re-installing it), there are many opportunities for talking. If you can't reach the 2-meter machine from the south, try the 440 machine, and vice versa. If it's too quiet, announce you are on the air! (I'm as guilty as anyone of turning on my rig and just letting it idle while I putter around the house) (I putter. It's my nature.)

So..... While the club is not as robust as it has been, it is not in its death throes. We have hit some bumpy spots before and people have stepped up to fill the voids that seem to blossom like black holes. Elections were held at the September meeting (some people think it was a bit of railroading, but....). BRA-ARC has a secretary and treasurer for 2016-17, but the president and vice president positions are open, with President Dan, WA8AEN, continuing for a bit longer, hoping to "retire" after two terms in office. Our vice president has departed for other locations.

I have served in all offices, and often joke that I was president three times -- twice voluntarily (I was VP when the pres. moved out of state.) Yes, we often joke about how difficult the leadership positions are, but, as I said several times already, this is a hobby and the work involved in being an

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8	9	7	6	2	5	3	4	1
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Solution to last month's puzzle

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