

Minutes of the Business Meeting of the Forsyth Amateur Radio Club - 19 November 2018

By Jim Register (KV4SJ)
Secretary, Forsyth Amateur Radio Club

1. Call to Order and Welcome: The monthly Board of Directors Business Meeting, Forsyth Amateur Radio Club, was held on Monday, 19 November 2018 at Sixty Six Pizzeria, 3440 Frontis St, Winston Salem. The meeting was called to order by FARC President David Shoaf, K4CX, at 1923 hours, welcoming all meeting attendees.

2. Meeting Attendees: A partial list of the meeting attendees (approximately 21) is as follows: Steven Mierisch KG4JWU, Ian MacArthur W4STH, Stacey MacArthur W1LLO, Dale Mierisch WB9SZL, Jim Register KV4SJ, Sam Poindexter NI4TG, Pedro Tomas KN4GKY, Bobby Meier AA9AU, Geoff Rudy KK4MOV, Kent Englebert K4HKE, Terry Brown AK4D, Henry Heidtmann W2DZO, Ron Gregoire W4UDB, Michael Pope K4OLD, Steve Patterson WA3RTC, Harold Richardson N4HER, Don Edwards WS4NC, David Shoaf KC4X, Harlan Cobert W1HRC, Jerry Minor K4GW, Jeff Stafford AC4YN.

3. Hamfest: David Shoaf, KC4X, brought up FirstFest, our hamfest happening on Saturday, January 5, from 7:00 am until noon. David asked for someone to coordinate the load-in team schedule, so someone is there to support all of the vendors planning to load in on Friday, January 4 from 5:00 pm to 6:30 pm. Harold Richardson, N4HER and Steve Patterson, WA3RTC will be there; Harlan WW1HRC and David KC4X plan to be there as well; other volunteers will be appreciated. Harold and Steve plan to get there earlier in the afternoon to start setting up tables. Known attendees so far will be Mike Atkins, N4VE, ACDC Electronics (Debra and Larry from Jamestown).

4. AUXCOMM/ARES: Harlan Cobert, W1HRC, has been spending time in the EOC due to the Business 40 shutdown. He showed pictures of his equipment setup and the AUXCOMM area. Harlan reported that August Vernon, Director of Emergency Management, came to him about midday to ask how Emergency Management could support AUXCOMM. Harlan noted that it is unusual for someone at his level to directly approach AUXCOMM, and that August and the County are excited about Amateur Radio's involvement and support for EM.

Harlan reported that Kernersville is picking up the tab for installing an antenna and coax at their EOC for AUXCOMM use. This will probably happen around April.

Harlan asked who came to the ECOMM Net Controller class, and stressed the importance of becoming WebEOC qualified. There is not a new class scheduled, but Michelle plans to schedule one probably in later January or early February. The class would be held on a Thursday afternoon, running from 1:00 to 4:00. If Harlan gets enough interest, he may be able to get her to schedule it on a different day, but it would have to be available to everyone.

5. Treasurer's Report: Kent Englebert, K4HKE, reported that we have 4,031.55 not including the dues received tonight. After Harlan W1HRC and Jerry K4GW informed Kent they would pay their dues after the meeting and he could go ahead and add them in, he reported the new balance would be \$6,237.00. We believe that may be a tad optimistic.

6. New Officers: David Shoaf, KC4X, thanked Sam NI4TG, Ian W4STH, Kent K4HKE, and Stacey W1LLO for stepping up and stated that the outgoing officers will be glad to help or point fingers and laugh, whichever seems appropriate.

7. Repeater Report: Dale Mierisch, WB9SZL, gave an update on the repeater work and current status after Harold, N4HER, played a brief fanfare.

Baptist Hospital 146.64 and 444.275 repeaters: Good News/bad news - the new hardline is in, but the antenna didn't get installed because of a thunderstorm. The intention is to install the new antenna on the new hardline and establish a new baseline, since we suspect the existing hardline is damaged in some way. The plan is to run split antennas for a while, and run SWR curves and other tests to see what the difference is.

Yaesu DR-2X Fusion repeater trade in: Our application has been approved, and the new one is in Dale's basement. It's very nice, with two receivers and one transmitter. The analog is not too bad to set up, but the digital side is being a bit of a bear. Dale discovered that we will need a \$32 board to convert DTMF tones for control, but that board includes a voice capability as well. He recommends we purchase and install the board. Additional features, to be discussed at a later date, are available to users with digital transceivers. Dale hopes to have the new repeater up at Baptist by mid-December so we can do some testing, but we need to get the new antenna there first.

Dale has a personal goal to write up the application for the second DR-2X by about 10 Dec. to get it in and approved before the program closes on 31 Dec.

Dale commented that we thought that was a \$1,700 repeater, but the LAN board makes it into a \$2,200 repeater we got for about \$500, making it a pretty good deal. Dale will go through the LAN board features at another club session.

145.47 Repeater: We feel that the 47 repeater got hit by lightning sometime in the past few months. It looked like it took out the link receiver, but that only needed to be reset and reconfigured. The repeater looks ok, but we weren't sure about the antenna and jumper, up at the 170 foot level. We are currently running on Jerry's repeater antenna up on the same tower; things seem to be okay, but we're still hearing the crackling on low power signals.

We had tested with Dale's and Harold's \$450 Comet CAA500 antenna analyzers with identical results - infinite SWR and pegged meters, leading us to believe the lightning had fried the antennas. Harold brought his TDR to look for impedance bumps on the line, and it appears that there is one just below the antenna - probably at the jumper to the hardline. We looked through Harold's telescope, and it appears that the eight foot hardline we had sent up with the tower crew had shrunk to about two or three feet. It would appear that they used the old one - no telling what happened to the one they were sent up with. We believe the old one was already slightly degraded and the lightning did further damage, causing the issues we are seeing now.

To work on that theory, David McDonald, N5WNB, got permission from his employer to bring up a Bird SiteHawk and test the hardline and antenna. This showed a good SWR that had some minor variation. This seems to indicate that the antenna is ok, but the problem might be in the jumper. This means we

have probably saved the cost of the antenna; we just need to get a jumper up there to get the thing in good shape. There's the cost of the jumper, plus \$700 to get the tower climbers to go up.

Waiting seems to have paid off. There is another tenant on the tower who also needs a tower crew, and we are about eighty percent we can split the cost of the climb with him. Gene Bowman, WB4MSG, believes he has some half-inch hardline with connectors, so that will help with the costs. Harold took the TDR out to Mike Atkin's shop, and he has several pieces of half-inch hardline well over 200 feet long, so that's another option.

Lesson learned - the Comet units work great at home, but cannot necessarily distinguish a signal being received by the antenna from one being reflected by the antenna - both look like a high SWR.

Internet: Getting internet on the mountain is still on hold from the last meeting pending resolution of other repeater items.

Other discussion: This tenant may choose to leave, and his spot up at the top would then become available - would we want to move to that spot? We discussed whether we know that hardline is good, and what kind of antenna we would put up there - the fiberglass antennas do not fare well without a top support.

Harold Richardson, N4HER, moved that we purchase two DTMF boards for the Yaesu DR-2X repeaters, estimate about \$40 each including tax and shipping.

8. Project list: Project list will meet at Don's on Tuesday night.

9. Thanks to outgoing officers: Dale mentioned that we are at the end of a good two years, and we should thank David Shoaf for his service as president. David suggested we thank the other officers as well. Applause was heard...

10. Adjournment of Meeting: Motion to adjourn the meeting was made, seconded and meeting was adjourned at 2005 hours.