

Minutes of the Forsyth Amateur Radio Club - 12 November 2018

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

1. Call to Order and Welcome: The 12 November 2018 meeting of the Forsyth Amateur Radio Club at the Red Cross Building, 690 Coliseum Drive, was called to order by President David Shoaf, KC4X, at 1931 hours. David welcomed all attendees, approximately 34, for coming out this evening, and invited each to give their name and callsign.

2. Treasurer's Report: Kent Englebert, K4HKE, gave a brief treasurer's report. Our balance in the bank is \$4,031.55 as of 4 pm. Kent reminded everyone that Amazon.com makes a charitable contribution to the club for every purchase made through the program. You can do this by logging in at smile.amazon.com and selecting the Forsyth Amateur Radio Club or using our affiliate link below.

<http://smile.amazon.com/ch/58-1562772>

Kent reminded everyone that he was still holding a number of name tags that had not been picked up yet, and to let him know if you need one - he'll make it and have it ready for the next meeting.

3. AUXCOMM Report: Harlan Cobert, W1HRC, reported on the ECOMM Net Controller class held on Saturday, Nov. 10th. We had 14 attendees. The course will be repeated probably sometime in February. The course prepares you walk into the EOC or forward operating base and act as a net controller or radio operator there. You will become familiar with and receive copies of all the ICS forms you would need to manage the task. Harlan is working with Emergency Management on a tour of the EOC and a quick overview of WebEOC some Thursday night - it would take the place of that week's AUXCOMM net.

We are considered one of the top three AUXCOMM groups in the state in training and qualifications, and Harlan plans for us to beat the group currently in the number one position.

To meet current ICS and state AUXCOMM requirements, we will be getting new AUXCOMM badges starting next year, with a basic badge for operators and a second badge for the Communications Team Leaders.

Harlan reminded everyone that the AUXCOMM net runs every Thursday night from 8:30 until about 9:00. We are running it on the 145.47 repeater for right now and will go to the 147.315 if we have to. The Vagabond net is running on Jerry Minor's 147.315 repeater and the EchoLink node has been moved to that repeater as well.

4. Program: Ken Kayser, K2KXX, gave a program titled "A Fully Functional Panadapter for Every Ham Station". Slides from Ken's presentation are available on the club website:

<http://www.w4nc.com/files/SDR%20Panadapter%20Presentation.pdf>

Ken explained that a panadapter acts like a spectrum analyzer, letting you observe all of the signals in a band. He described the software packages you would use so the SDR receiver, PC, and rig can communicate, allowing you to click on a signal the SDR displays in the computer screen and tune your rig to that frequency instantly. This is very helpful for the hunt and pounce mode of contesting.

Ken is using the SDRplay RSP1A, which covers the RF frequencies from 1 kHz to 2 GHz, and finds that it hears as well as his regular rig. <https://www.sdrplay.com/rsp1a/>

5. Testing Report: Dale Mierisch, WB9SZL, reported that they ran two sessions and three tests. Dale congratulated Brent Goodwin, KN4ACN and Larry Osborne, K4LWO on their upgrades to General, and recognized the VEs for their support.

6. Repeater update: Dale Mierisch, WB9SZL, gave a repeater status report.

The 146.640 repeater at Baptist Hospital is working ok, but seems to be suffering some interference from a 250 watt paging transmitter at 152.480 MHz, not very far away from our antenna. The 444.275 machine at the same location is experiencing the same issue. The repeaters are running on the old hardline, which tests ok as far as SWR goes, but it may be leaking signal. (Construction in the area has made it inaccessible, and may have damaged it.) We have run a new hardline, but our work day was cut short by a thunderstorm. We are waiting for the weather to get a little more inclement before scheduling another work day...

The 145.47 repeater at Sauratown Mountain has been through a couple of moves. Construction forced it off the mountain and Jerry Minor, K4GW, offered the use of his tower near Midway, then he found us a new location a little bit down the mountain. It initially ran well in this latest location, but there has been a lightning strike which knocked a link receiver off line and may have damaged a jumper up around the 170 foot level on the tower. The Comet antenna analyzers Dale and Harold Richardson, N4HER, tested with claimed infinite SWR, but they were apparently being swamped by the high RF levels. Harold brought his telescope and Tektronix TDR, and David McDonald, N5WNB, brought a Bird SiteHawk which he uses servicing commercial radio systems. Neither of those gave a clear indication of a problem with the hardline or antenna. The TDR showed squirrely reflections up at or near the antenna itself, which could just be the phasing harness. The TDR function on the SiteHawk, which can be tuned to the antenna's resonant frequency, did not show any unexpected reflections, but it did show a slight variation in SWR when the wind came up. That may just be the antenna flexing nearer and farther away from the tower. The jumper seen through Harold's telescope looks a bit shorter than the one we sent up for installation - it may have been there and looked good initially, but failed when the lightning strike occurred. Currently, we think the antenna may be ok and the jumper probably should be replaced. Right now, we are using a diplexer to share an antenna Jerry has on another of his repeaters as an interim measure to keep us on the air. The tower climb to replace the jumper runs about \$700; we've been putting that off to try and save the club funds. The board authorized spending up to \$2,000 at the last meeting (before the latest diagnostic visits) for a new antenna, potential hardline replacement, and a tower climb. We are hoping to split the cost of the climb with another user at the site whose antenna system also needs attention. That is still under negotiation. The technical team has probably been up to the site four times, with three or four people each time, so they have probably clocked over one hundred man-hours plus David's work at home researching things like availability of a replacement phasing harness. Please stay tuned, and we appreciate your patience.

The Vagabond net is now running on Jerry's K4GW repeater at 147.315, and Dale has rehomed the EchoLink node at his house over to that repeater.

7. Business Meeting: David, KC4X, reminded everyone about our upcoming business meeting next Monday at Sixty-Six Pizzeria on Frontis Plaza Drive, right near the new Academy Sports. The meeting starts at 7:30; we get there between 6:00 and 7:30 to eat, and hang around until 9 or so.

8. Christmas Meeting: David, KC4X, reminded everyone our next meeting will be Monday, December 3 at Mi Pueblo, located at 644 Stratford Rd. The friendly gathering will commence about 6PM, eating dinner starting around 6:30 and with the meeting starting after dinner. (Wording shamelessly stolen from the club website:) <http://www.w4nc.com>

9. Nominating Committee Report: Jim Register, KV4SJ stood in for the chairman, Harold Richardson, who was unable to attend. Jim listed the nominees, President: Sam Poindexter NI4TG; Vice-president: Ian MacArthur W4STH; Treasurer: Kent Englebert K4KHE; Secretary: Stacey MacArthur W1LLO. After calling for nominations from the floor, and hearing none. Don Edwards, WS4NC, moved that the slate be accepted by acclamation, there were multiple seconds, and the motion was passed unanimously.

10. Field Day Results: Doc Holliday, WB4QIZ, congratulated the club for coming in second in our class for Field Day. Don, WS4NC, provided some details. Out of nearly 3000 Field Day entries, there were 1,253 Class A (emergency power) entries. There were only 4 entries in Class 9A. Potomac Valley Radio Club came in number 1 with roughly 16,000 points; we had 13,050 points, third place had something like 2,800 points. Potomac Valley ran all CW, and had lots of contacts. The Raleigh group we normally compete with had more points, but they ran Class 9AB, on battery. Our digital and CW stations were being clobbered by our phone operators on the same bands; we need to work on our antenna orientation and some other issues to improve our score.

11. Adjournment of Meeting: A motion was made and seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 2049 hours.

12. Partial List of Meeting Attendees: Below is a partial list of FARC meeting attendees.

David Shoaf KC4X, Jerry Minor K4GW, Kent Englebert K4HKE, Jim Register KV4SJ, Jeff Stafford AC4YN, Bill Hampton N3WGM, Doc Holliday WB4QIZ, Adam Martin KN4GCB, Jim Sarfert N3LBJ, Gene Bowman WB4MSG, Steve Weifenbach KN4LKP, Bobby Meier AA9AU, Dave Griffith WA4MKK, Michael Pope K4OLD, Van Key KC4WSK, Steve Patterson WA3RTC, Sam Poindexter NI4TG, Mike Brown W4LKN, David Ramsey W4OIL, Harlan Cobert W1HRC, Gaff Pearce W4GYP, Geoff Rudy KK4MOV, Terry Good W3NPS, Ron Gregoire W4UDB, Mike Vernon W4MAV, Ken Kayser K2KXK, Logan Weddle KN4MZR, Mark Gaines KM4TUK, Derek Godfrey KN4OCW, Steven Mierisch KG4JWU, Don Edwards WS4NC, Pedro Tomas KN4GKY, Dale Mierisch WB9SZL.