

Due to concerns about the COVID-19 pandemic, this meeting was held via teleconference. There was no program and no show-and-tell.

The meeting was called to order at 7:07 pm by President Eric McFadden, WD8RIF.

Attendance

Nick Arnold, KD8FKB
Michael Baxla, KE8ICP
Bob Curtis, KD8FRQ
Carl Denbow, N8VZ
Kirk Groeneveld, KC8JRV
Drew McDaniel, W8MHV
Eric McFadden, WD8RIF
Marc Richards, KC8MCW
Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ
Joe Weber KE8LRZ

Corrections/Additions to Minutes

Due to this being a teleconference-only meeting, no hard-copies of the April Minutes were distributed. Members had been requested via email to read the minutes on-line prior to the meeting

A motion to accept the April Minutes as published was made by Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ. The motion was seconded by Marc Richards, KC8MCW. The motion passed without dissent.

Treasurer's Report

Due to this being a teleconference-only meeting, no hard-copies of the Treasurer's Report were distributed. A PDF of the Treasurer's Report will be published on the ACARA website along with these Meeting Minutes.

Treasurer Drew McDaniel, W8MHV, presented the Treasurer's Report. The club treasury holds \$3,749.31 in unencumbered funds. The *Jim Crouse Memorial Fund* holds \$90.28.

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reported that a representative from Intellwave had contacted him via email for postal address and phone number; we are to expect the invoice for the tower work performed by Intellwave to arrive soon.

Marc Richards, KC8MCW, made a motion that the Treasurer's Report be accepted as delivered. Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ, seconded the motion. The motion passed without dissent.

Old Business**VHF System Fusion Repeater**

VHF Repeater Trustee Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reported that the Yaesu DR-2X System Fusion repeater continues to work well in both analog FM and C4FM digital modes.

Michael Baxla, KE8ICP, asked about signals heard recently on the repeater. These signals were from operators using a distant repeater reaching the ACARA repeater via enhanced propagation. Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ, was able to identify the distant repeater as the 145.15 MHz repeater in Pikeville, Kentucky.

Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ, reported he has been speaking with a representative of ARES about using System Fusion for ARES functionality.

UHF System Fusion Repeater

UHF Repeater Trustee Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ, reported that the UHF System Fusion repeater is working well in both analog FM and C4FM digital modes, although the repeater footprint seems to be smaller than that of the VHF repeater.

Marc Richards, KC8MCW, asked about the repeater's output-power level. Jeff reported the UHF repeater is currently running at the mid-power setting of 20 watts. Since the repeater is coordinated with the Ohio Area Repeater Council (OARC) for 50 watts output, Jeff will test running the repeater at the high-power setting (50 watts).

VHF DMR Repeater

Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ, reported no updates on this project.

Jim Crouse Memorial Radio Station

Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ, reported that the Hustler BTV antenna is still lying on the roof. An antenna party will be scheduled once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted to allow access to the Red Cross Chapterhouse.

Athens EMA Radio Station

Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ, reported no updates on this project.

Club Construction Project – Copper 2m J-Pole Antenna

Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ, reported this project is on-hold due to the COVID-19 situation. We will look at the possibility of scheduling a building-session in late summer. Watch for an email from Jeff.

Club Construction Project – nanoVNA

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reported that this educational project on the use of the nanoVNA, a low-cost vector network analysis device, is currently on-hold due to the COVID-19 situation but suggested a session might be performed remotely: members could order their nanoVNA units themselves and Drew McDaniel, W8MHV, could do his presentation on the use of the nanoVNA via teleconference. Drew agreed this would work.

Members are asked to watch for an email from Drew with details on ordering an original nanoVNA or the larger, more rugged, and more expensive nanoVNA-F. Details on the remote session will follow later.

Weekly 2m FM Net – Mondays, 7:00 pm

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reported that the weekly 2m FM net continues to have good participation, with check-ins from Athens, Meigs, Washington, Morgan, Noble, Fairfield, and Hocking Counties in Ohio and from Wood County in West Virginia.

Eric expressed thanks to all the control operators who have stepped up to run this net.

Weekly 70cm FM Net – Mondays, following end of 7:00 pm 2m FM Net

Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ, reported the 70cm 2m FM net has been going well for several weeks. The repeater footprint appears to be smaller than the 2m repeater's footprint, but check-ins have come from participants in Athens and Meigs Counties in Ohio and in Wood County in West Virginia.

Weekly 2m C4FM (System Fusion) Net – Thursdays, 5:00 pm

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reported that the weekly 2m C4FM (System Fusion) net has continued to have good participation, despite few local hams having System Fusion transceivers.

Weekly 70m C4FM (System Fusion) Net – Thursdays, following the end of the 5:00 pm 2m C4FM net

Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ, reported that the weekly 70cm C4FM (System Fusion) net has drawn low turnout, probably due to the low number of System Fusion transceivers in the area and the smaller footprint of the UHF repeater.

All Athens Special Event Station

Carl Denbow, N8VZ, reported no updates on this project.

ACARA Constitution & Bylaws

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reminded the membership that this issue has been tabled until Summer, when the Executive Committee will perform a re-write of the Constitution & Bylaws for presentation to the membership in September or October.

Communications Drill/Event:

Nationwide Red Cross Radio Drill – Saturday, May 30, 2020

Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ, reported that the Nationwide Red Cross Radio Drill, scheduled for Saturday, May 30, 2020, will be a test of messaging to and from simulated shelters, and message traffic will be sent primarily through Winlink.

Jeff reported that since so few Athens County hams have Winlink stations, it is probably too late for us to participate in the exercise this year.

Jeff added that those interested in Winlink can build a station for VHF using a 2m FM transceiver, a Tigertronics Signalink USB interface, and software called Winlink Express.

Carl Denbow, N8VZ, expressed interest in building a Winlink station with Jeff's help.

Communications Drill/Event:
Athens County Functional Drill for the EOC

Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ, reported that this event, which had previously been rescheduled for June 30, 2020, has now been postponed further or canceled altogether.

UPDATE May 20, 2020: *Following the meeting, Jeff reported via email that the Functional Drill has been postponed until Fall and a full-scale drill for the same scenario will take place in Spring 2021.*

Public Service Event:
Athens Gravel Challenge – Saturday, August 1, 2020

Event Sponsor: Team Athens Cycling / Todd Acheson

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reported that this event has been rescheduled for August 1, 2020 if state COVID-19 restrictions are lifted sufficiently to allow the race to be held.

Watch for emails from Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ.

Red Cross Volunteers

Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ, reminded the membership that the Red Cross still needs volunteers to staff blood mobiles, serve as blood ambassadors, serve as communications volunteers for shelters, etc.

Marc Richards, KC8MCW, reported he has registered for Red Cross Training.

Future Meetings

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reported that members should anticipate the continued need to meet via teleconference. Watch email, the ACARA website, and the ACARA Facebook page for updates.

Kirk Groeneveld, KC8JRV, made a motion that the ACARA continue to meet through the summer, on the third Tuesday of the month, during the ongoing coronavirus situation. Marc Richards, KC8MCW seconded the motion. The vote passed without dissent.

The next ACARA meeting will be Tuesday, June 16 at 7:00 pm.

ACARA Meetings via Teleconference

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, asked if the ACARA should consider switching to Zoom for remote meetings.

Carl Denbow, N8VZ, reported that he had been unable to connect to this meeting via the web using the browser Palemoon but was able to connect via telephone. During previous meetings, other have had trouble connecting via telephone to the meeting.

Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ, reported that he has purchased an upgrade to his Zoom account which will allow him to host ACARA events.

After discussion, it was decided to move to Zoom for ACARA remote events. Jeff will update the ACARA website with updated instructions.

New Business

2m FM Simplex Net

Joe Weber, KE8LRZ, suggested the club should hold an occasional 2m FM simplex net, noting that clubs in neighboring counties do so to good advantage. Joe has already contacted Mike Cooper, KC8WMY, about serving as net control for such a net, since Mike's station is well located for a simplex net.

After discussion, it was decided that the ACARA will try a 2m FM simplex net. Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, will contact Mike to set up the first such net.

Upcoming Event:

June Picnic – Tuesday, June 16, 2020?

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, asked if the club could safely hold the annual June Picnic during the ongoing coronavirus situation. Eric suggested that, given the fact that most of the club's members fall into the more vulnerable demographic, the ACARA should cancel the June Picnic this year.

After discussion, Drew McDaniel, W8MHV, moved that the ACARA cancel the June Picnic for 2020. Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ, seconded the motion. The motion passed with one dissenting vote cast by Kirk Groeneveld, KC8JRV.

Upcoming Event:
ARRL Field Day – June 27-28, 2020

<https://field-day.arrl.org>

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reported that prior to the April meeting, Joe Weber, KE8LRZ, had contacted Ranson Calloway of the Athens County Fair Board and had successfully reserved the use of the brick building at the Athens County Fairgrounds for ACARA's Field Day operation.

Eric reported that Governor DeWine's May 19 order, "Ohioans Protecting Ohioans", includes recommendations for maintaining six-foot spacing between individuals and a limit of ten persons per gathering. In addition, the order recommends that those Ohioans with underlying conditions (those over age 65 or anyone with underlying medical conditions, including moderate to severe asthma, compromised immune systems, diabetes, obesity, chronic kidney disease) should continue to stay at home.

Eric further reported that as of the meeting date, Athens County has had thirteen confirmed COVID-19 cases, up from nine cases the day prior.

Eric referred to four statements from the ARRL and a piece by N8BHL in the May 18 edition of the ARRL Ohio Section Newsletter, *Postscript*, before suggesting that the ACARA should not hold a group Field Day effort in 2020:

<http://www.arrl.org/news/field-day-2020-a-time-to-adapt>

<http://www.arrl.org/news/arrl-suggests-taking-a-creative-approach-to-field-day-2020>

<http://www.arrl.org/files/file/Field-Day/2020/Creative%20Approaches%20to%20Field%20Day%2020.pdf>

<http://www.arrl.org/planning-your-arrl-field-day-2020-operation>

<http://arrl-ohio.org/news/2020/ps-05-18-20.pdf>

Based on the ARRL recommendations, Eric suggested that individual club members perform their own Field Day operations, using their own call signs and equipment. These operations could take place inside their own home stations and using their permanent antennas in Class 1D with commercial power, or in Class 1E with emergency power. Or these operations could take place in the field—in the member's yard in a park while maintaining safe distance from others—with temporary antennas in Class 1B or Class 1B-Battery. Operators would include the club name

“Athens County ARA” in their submission to the ARRL; the published Field Day results in QST and online would include each operator’s club-affiliation.

Eric further suggested that the club might sponsor a certificate or an award to the member with the highest submitted score or the highest submitted QSO count, and suggested that a friendly competition could be had between ACARA and SCARF to see which club could produce the higher cumulative score.

Discussion ensued. Marc Richards, KC8MCW, asked about new hams who lack equipment and experience and who see Field Day as a valuable learning experience. Bob Curtis, KD8FRQ, suggested the club perform a group operation at the fairgrounds but produce a schedule to limit the number of operators on-site at any one time. Drew McDaniel, W8MHV, suggested that those members who own Flex transceivers configure their station to allow remote operation via internet and invite new or inexperienced hams to operate the stations remotely. Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ, offered to make his portable station, deployed on his deck, available to new hams on a one-at-a-time basis.

Jeff Slattery made a motion that the ACARA abandon the idea of a group operation for Field Day in 2020. Carl Denbow, N8VZ, seconded the motion. The motion passed with one dissenting vote cast by Bob Curtis.

Subsequently, Jeff Slattery made a motion that the ACARA present a gift certificate from DX Engineering in the amount of \$25 to the member with the highest number of QSOs in their submission to ARRL. Drew McDaniel seconded the motion. The motion passed without dissent.

Fox Hunts

Kirk Groeneveld, KC8JRV, asked if there’s interest in the club again sponsoring fox-hunts, which are also known as transmitter-hunts. Kirk explained he has built a tape-measure yagi and has ordered a fox-hunt attenuator kit.

Discussion revealed that the club had sponsored a regular series of fox-hunts about two decades ago and that there is interest in starting another series.

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, suggested that the club should try to do a first fox-hunt sometime in the early Fall and asked Kirk to email the club members information about fox-hunting and plans for easy-to-build antennas.

Following a motion by Carl Denbow, N8VZ, and a second by Drew McDaniel, W8MHV, the meeting was adjourned at 9:09 pm.

Respectfully submitted by President and Secretary Eric McFadden, WD8RIF.