

This was the first in-person monthly meeting of the ACARA since March 17, 2020. A Zoom option was available for those who could not, or chose not to, attend in-person.

The meeting was called to order at 7:15 pm by President Eric McFadden, WD8RIF.

Program

Paul Schulz, WD8SCV, introduced the ICOM IC-705 low-power field transceiver. Paul's IC-705, as pictured, is equipped with a 3rd-party protective frame.



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Attendance

Nick Arnold, KD8FKB
Shawn Barr, KE8UHD
Michael Baxla, KE8ICP
Bob Curtis, KD8FRQ
Carl Denbow, N8VZ
Kirk Groeneveld, KC8JRV, via Zoom
John McCutcheon, N8XWO
Drew McDaniel, W8MHV
Eric McFadden, WD8RIF
Paul Schulz, WD8SCV
Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ
Deb Summer, KE8TSA
Mark Summer, KD8SM
Joe Weber, KE8LRZ

Corrections/Additions to Minutes of Last Meeting

Copies of the March minutes were distributed.

A motion to accept the March Minutes as published was made by Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ. The motion was seconded by John McCutcheon, N8XWO. The motion passed without dissent.

Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's Report was presented by Treasurer Drew McDaniel, W8MHV.

Copies of the Treasurer's Report were distributed. The Treasurer's Report in PDF format is available online at

http://www.ac-ara.org/minutes/2022/Treasurers_Report_April_2022.pdf

The club treasury holds \$503.44 in unencumbered funds. The *Jim Crouse Memorial Fund* holds \$407.57.

Drew pointed out that for the upcoming Athens Hamfest, we're paying significantly more for the Community Center's Multipurpose Room and kitchen than we are for the gymnasium. He suggested we might choose to not rent the Multipurpose Room next year.

Drew stated that all reports he has seen of other hamfests since January indicate hamfest participation overall has dropped, perhaps due to COVID-hesitancy, or perhaps the world has changed, and hams now prefer to go online for purchases instead of attending hamfests. His analysis of ACARA costs associated with the Athens Hamfest indicates we need to have 120 paid-attendees to break even this year.

Carl Denbow, N8VZ, reported that he has calculated we are down \$144 in table sales at this point as compared to 2019. Drew reported that, on average, since 2012 we've had \$200 to \$300 in table sales at each hamfest. Drew forecasts we will see less than \$200 in table sales this year. He thinks we need to aggressively cut costs for the Athens Hamfest to remain viable. He stated that he has records going back to 1989 and that there has been a general decline in income since 1989.

Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ, pointed out that we've not raised the gate-fee in years. Discussion occurred about raising the gate-fee. Carl stated that he has heard from attendees that they are happy with the current \$5 gate-fee. No decision was made about raising the gate-fee for subsequent hamfests but the general consensus seemed to be that raising the price would be counterproductive.

Nick Arnold, KD8FKB, made a motion that the Treasurer's Report be accepted as presented. The motion was seconded by John McCutcheon, N8XWO. The motion passed without dissent.

Old Business

Repeaters

145.15 MHz Repeater

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reported that repeater sensitivity seemed low during the Athens Marathon as compared to previous years in which ACARA supported the event. Ted Jacobson, W8KVK, suggested via email that we perform a repeater-sensitivity check, tune the cavities, clean the RF connectors, and verify SWR. This was accepted as a good idea and Eric stated that one of the cavities is physically dented and he has been concerned about the proper operation of the cavities for quite a while.

Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ, had suggested during the Athens Marathon, and again via email, that some of the loss of sensitivity along the marathon course could be due to the new location of the repeater antenna on the Athens County 9-1-1 tower and he added that this is the first time we've supported the Athens Marathon with the antenna in its new location.

Jeff reported that he has spoken with Lisa Simons of the Athens Marathon Committee, and she told him that the Marathon Committee is prepared to cover costs associated with improving repeater coverage along the marathon course.

Carl Denbow, N8VZ, asked if the Marathon Committee would cover the costs of new repeater cavities. Based on Jeff's report, it was deemed likely that the Marathon Committee would pay for new cavities. Eric said he would investigate the cost of new repeater cavities.

Jeff said he has been thinking about the possibility of a second receiver-site. He thinks the new tower between old US33 and the US33 bypass would be a good location for a second receiver-site except the tower is owned by American Tower, a company that has proven to be unfriendly to amateur radio. Jeff suggested that the WAIS tower owned by Tom Williams, a Red Cross board member, might work. He said he will contact Tom and will begin investigating what would be involved in deploying a second receiver-site.

Old Business (continued)

Repeaters (continued)

145.15 MHz repeater (continued)

Michael Baxla, KE8ICP, thinks the idea of a receiver-site near Nelsonville is good because of the improved repeater coverage this would provide along the Hockhocking-Adena Bikeway and because of the other events ACARA supports in the Nelsonville area.

Jeff reminded the members that the ACARA still has a coordinated 2m repeater frequency pair for the as-yet unbuilt DMR repeater which could be used if the club were to decide to build an entire second repeater that could be linked to the existing 145.15 repeater.

Jeff suggested that an APRS node near Nelsonville would be beneficial, too.

Jeff reported that following the Athens Marathon, when he was at the repeater site to return the APRS node to the national APRS frequency, he was not able to hear any signals that might be desensitizing the repeater. Eric said that additional testing needs to be done, perhaps with a wide-band receiver with band-scope during a 2m net, to identify any strong local signals that might be desensitizing the repeater.

442.100 MHz Repeater

Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ, reported that the UHF repeater continues to work well.

Jeff reported that while he was at the repeater site, the MARCS technician who was also there complained about the UHF repeater cooling fans being plugged into wall outlets. Jeff subsequently purchased a rack-mount suppressor-style AC-distribution units for both the UHF and VHF repeaters.

Old Business (continued)

ACARA Nets

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reported that the ACARA's weekly and monthly nets continue to do well. He reminded members of the current net schedule:

- Weekly 6m AM Net, Sunday, 5pm, 50.4 MHz
- Weekly 2m FM Net, Monday, 7pm, 145.15 MHz
- Weekly 70cm FM Net, Monday, immediately following the 2m net, 442.100 MHz
- Weekly 10m SSB Ragchew Net, Tuesday, 5pm, 28.375 MHz
- Weekly 2m System Fusion Net, Thursday, 5pm, 145.15 MHz
- Weekly 70cm System Fusion Net, Thursday, immediately following the 2m System Fusion net, 442.100 MHz
- Monthly 2m FM Simplex Net, first Thursday of the month, 7pm, 146.400 MHz

Eric extended thanks to all those serving as net-control and to all those participating in the club nets.

Club Building Projects

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reminded the members that the survey to gauge interest in the proposed club-build projects closed on Friday, February 25 with eighteen responses. The build-leaders will contact those who expressed interest in their projects with specific details on the builds and to schedule the build sessions.

Some members present at this meeting who weren't aware of the survey indicated interest in one or more of the builds.

Public Service Event: Iron Furnace Trail Run – Saturday, April 2, 2022

Event Sponsor: SE Ohio Trail Runners

<https://www.ironfurnacetrailrun.com/>

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reported that the Iron Furnace Trail Run held on April 2, 2022, was supported by the ACARA.

Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ, reported that SE Ohio Trail Runners very much appreciated the support given their event by the ACARA and based on questions from the organizer, that the ACARA might expect a donation from SE Ohio Trail Runners soon.

Public Service Event: Athens Marathon – Sunday, April 10, 2022

Event Sponsor: Athens Marathon Committee / Lisa Simons

Event Website: <https://www.athensohiomarathon.com/>

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reported that despite some “unforced errors” and other issues, ACARA successfully supported the Athens Marathon on April 10, the first time the Athens Marathon has been held since 2019.

Eric provided examples of the difficulties encountered:

- The full-marathon male-lead APRS unit failed somewhere after the full-marathon turn-around, probably due to a failure of the old 9.6v NiCD battery being used to power the transmitter.
- The full-marathon female-lead APRS tracker was forgotten at home and, thus, wasn’t deployed at all.
- The voice-net suffered from poor repeater coverage; whether this was due to operators using HTs where HT-coverage shouldn’t be expected, antenna-shadowing from the repeater antenna’s new location on the 9-1-1 tower, or repeater-sensitivity issues remain to be determined.

Eric followed that by saying that our radio operators came through despite the difficulties. He reported that when Rob Rose, KE8JDA, and Robin Rose, KE8JDB, were unable to be heard by the repeater at the Monk Run aid station, they were able to fall back to an alternative system, the cell-phone network, to pass traffic to net-control. He also reported that the “taillight” APRS tracker performed beautifully and that several operators new to the marathon (Deb Summers, KE8TSA, Mark Summers, then-KE8OFV but now KD8SM, and Joe Weber, KE8LRZ, for example) performed very well during their first marathon experience.

Eric thanked Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ, for organizing the ACARA’s support of the event; Ted Jacobson, W8KVK, Rob Jacobson, KB9AFT, Robin Kinney, KG6DI, and Brian Taylor, KZ8U, for building out and operating the APRS network; all the operators at the start, the finish, all the aid stations; and the bicycle-mobile stations.

Old Business (continued)

Athens Hamfest – Sunday, April 24, 2022

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reminded the membership that Athens Hamfest will happen next Sunday, April 24, 2022.

Eric reported that Drew McDaniel, W8MHV, has printed postcards and that Eric labeled, stamped, and mailed 241 postcards on April 13. He further reported that Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ, sent the large email-blast announcing the hamfest on April 12.

Eric reported that the Athens County Convention and Visitors Bureau (ACCVB) Tourism Grant application-window has closed. The ACCVB grant-committee will meet this week or next so that announcements can be made by the end of April.

Eric reported that Athens City will deliver highway cones to the Community Center on Friday before the hamfest and will pick them up Monday following the hamfest. Our new point-of-contact is Andrew Chiki, Deputy Service-Safety Director.

Eric reported that ARRL Ohio Section Manager Tom Sly, WB8LCD has confirmed he will attend the Athens Hamfest.

Eric reported that door prizes have arrived from ARRL, R&L, MFJ, and EasyWayHamBooks.com. Door prizes are coming from Quicksilver Radio and Gigaparts. Drew McDaniel, W8MHV, was never able to reach anyone at DX Engineering, despite several attempts by telephone and email. Similarly, Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ, was never able to reach anyone at Newark Electronics.

Drew confirmed he will get the \$100 and \$50 cash prizes as well as dollar coins for the mobile check-in net.

Eric reported that Jeff has ordered new hamfest banners from Performance Signs and that the club was given about a 50% discount on these.

Eric reported that he has confirmed with Ron Chapman, Jr., KA8YMG, that the PA system of his late father, Ron Chapman, Sr., N8HEK, is available and he will arrange pick-up in time for the hamfest.

Eric reported that the Community Center walk-through prior to the hamfest is scheduled for 1pm Thursday, April 21. Any interested member may attend the walk-through.

Old Business (continued)

Athens Hamfest (continued)

Eric stressed that members are needed to work the event. Several members in attendance committed to work. Watch for emails from Eric this week.

ACARA Potluck – Saturday, May 14, 2022

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reminded members that at the March meeting it was decided to hold the ACARA potluck on Saturday, May 14. Members and their guests are to gather at 5pm at the Red Cross of Southeastern Ohio, 100 South May Avenue, Athens, with a dish to share, and their own beverage and table service.

Eric reported that Carl Denbow, N8VZ, will bring a especially-selected episode of “Father Knows Best” to screen. Eric will bring an episode of “Twilight Zone” to screen.

Upcoming Public Service Event: Thunderbase 2022 – April 29 – May 1

<https://skcscouts.org/event/thunderbase-2022/>

Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ, has confirmed that this event, sponsored by the Simon Kenton Council of the Boy Scouts of America, is still on and the dates are April 29 through May 1, 2022.

Jeff reported that he is attending a virtual meeting with the committee on the 20th. He also reported that radio operators will be participating as “vendors” and, thus, will not need to have had taken the youth-protection coursework. He reported that the event will feature two HF stations, one SSB and one digital.

Jeff said he plans to attend on Friday, April 29, and that anyone who would like to go with him is welcome.

Old Business (continued)

Upcoming Public Service Event: Athens Gravel Challenge – Sunday, June 5

Event Sponsor: Team Athens Cycling / Todd Acheson

Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ, had previously reported that this event has been rescheduled to take place on Sunday, June 5, 2022, and that the event will be a single race this year, instead of two races as in previous years. The organizers are trying to include a portion of the Bailey's Trail system in the route.

Jeff expects the race to run from noon until about 6pm, with the race-start to be at Athens High School.

Jeff said he will begin recruiting operators the week of April 25. Members are asked to watch for emails.

ACARA June Picnic – Tuesday, June 21, 2022

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reported that the ACARA June Picnic will be held on the evening of Tuesday, June 21, the date the club would otherwise gather for a business meeting. The June Picnic will be held at the Dairy Lane picnic shelter; this is the picnic shelter adjacent to the mini-golf course behind The Ridges in Athens.

The club will provide burgers and brats. Members and their guests are to arrive at 5:30pm and to bring a dish to share, their own beverage, and their own tableware.

Old Business (continued)

Operating Event: ARRL Field Day – June 25-26, 2022

<http://www.arrl.org/field-day>

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reminded the membership that he has reserved the use of the brick building and associated greenspace at the Athens Fairground for Field Day weekend and that Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ, has arranged for the use of the Athens County 9-1-1 Center's 50' mobile crank-up tower.

Eric mentioned that several Field Day rules have changed:

- Max power for everyone is 100-watts
- Class D stations will continue to be able to contact other Class D stations for points.
- Clubs choosing to not participate in-person can submit a club-aggregate score
- Media Publicity Bonus now requires that publicity be obtained; previously, an attempt to get publicity was sufficient. Any combination of bona-fide media hits qualify; e.g., "posting the details of your upcoming or ongoing Field Day activity, or your Field Day results, on a club or news media site, on Facebook, or via Twitter and Instagram would meet the bonus criteria".

Eric is unsure how to interpret the rule-change about the Media Publicity Bonus. Will a post on the ACARA website or the ACARA Facebook page qualify? Or does the new rule mean a post to the Athens News or Athens Messenger Facebook pages be sufficient? He will ask the ARRL how to interpret this rule.

Drew McDaniel, W8MHV, suggested that the reporter from the Athens News / Athens Messenger who had contacted himself, Eric, and Carl Denbow, N8VZ, and who has plans to attend the Athens Hamfest, should be encouraged to write an article about the ACARA Field Day to earn us the Media Publicity Bonus.

Jeff will contact this coming week the Mayor of Athens and Athens County Board of Trustees in April for the annual proclamations.

Old Business (continued)

ARDC Grants

As background, Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reminded the members of the grants available from Amateur Radio Digital Communications (ARDC) (<https://www.ampr.org/>) to amateur radio clubs.

Eric reported he has not yet scheduled a meeting of the ACARA Executive Committee to discuss possible projects for which the club might consider asking for grant-money.

ARRL Foundation Grants

As background, Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reminded members that the ARRL Foundation (<http://arrl.org/news/arrl-foundation-to-create-club-grants-program>), funded by a grant from the ARDC, will be making available \$500,000 to radio clubs. The program will provide up to \$25,000 for worthy club projects.

Eric reported he has not yet scheduled a meeting of the ACARA Executive Committee to discuss possible projects for which the club might consider asking for grant-money.

New Business

(No New Business was discussed.)

Following a motion by John McCutcheon, N8XWO, and a second by Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ, the meeting was adjourned at 9:19 pm.

Respectfully submitted by President and Secretary Eric McFadden, WD8RIF.