ACARA May 19, 2026 MINUTES (Amended)

The meeting was called to order at 7:11 PM by President Eric McFadden, WD8RIF.

Program

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, gave a short presentation on the LARCSet HF transceiver kit (https://www.hfsignals.com/index.php/larcset/) by Ashhar Farhan, VU2ESE. The LARCSet is an easy to build, SSB/CW superhet 40m transceiver that is available singly for $39 and $30 each in quantities of five. Eric brought two kits home from Hamvention, and Drew McDaniel, W8MHV, is in the process of building one. Eric asked if there was interest within the club for a LARCSet group-build.

Attendance

Ben Brewster, KF8DES
Gabriel Campbell, KF8GLJ
Bob Curtis, KD8FRQ
Carl Denbow, N8VZ
Shelby Elzinga, KF8GLP
Kirk Groeneveld, KC8JRV
Chris Koon, KF8GCZ
John McCutcheon, N8XWO
Drew McDaniel, W8MHV
Eric McFadden, WD8RIF
Paul Schulz, WD8SCV
Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ (via Zoom)

Corrections/additions of Minutes

The April meeting minutes were distributed.

A motion to accept the April minutes as distributed was made by Ben Brewster, KF8DES. The motion was seconded by Carl Denbow, N8VZ. The motion to accept the minutes as distributed passed without dissent.

Treasurer's Report

Drew McDaniel, W8MHV, presented the Hamfest Report and Treasurer's report.

Athens Hamfest saw 169 paid attendees and brought in $1,723.00 for net earnings of $752.50.

The club treasury holds $5,062.17 in unencumbered funds at Hocking Valley Bank after receiving $203.41 in membership dues. The club holds $2,787.29 in regular savings at Atomic Credit Union. The Jim Crouse Memorial Radio Station Fund at Hocking Valley Bank holds $537.11. The two Certificates of Deposit at Atomic Credit Union together hold $22,800.10.

Carl Denbow, N8VZ, moved to accept the Treasurer's Report. The motion was seconded by John McCutcheon, N8XWO. The motion passed without dissent. The Hamfest Report, Treasurer's Report, and a notes document can be viewed online at https://www.ac-ara.org/?page_id=37.

Old Business

Repeater Reports

VHF Repeater

Ben Brewster, KF8DES, reported he has been noticing performance issues that might be heat related. VHF Repeater Trustee Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, will visit the repeater site to see if there are environmental issues.

UHF Repeater

UHF Repeater Trustee Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ, reported that he heard performance issues during the May 18 net; he thinks these issues might be heat related and will visit the site to check.

GMRS Repeater

Ben Brewster, KF8DES, reported that the GMRS repeater continues to function well, and no issues have been noted. He and Paul Schulz, WD8SCV, are working to gain permission to move the antenna to the top of the smaller tower and to install a Meshtastic node at the site.

Old Business (continued)

Jim Crouse Memorial Radio Station

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reminded members that at the February meeting the Executive Committee had been given permission to purchase antennas, feedlines, and other items so these can be available when the club gains access to the Red Cross building's roof. Executive Committee met virtually on April 10. At this meeting, since the Cushcraft R-series of ground-independent halfwave verticals had become unavailable following the demise of MFJ, the Committee decided to replace the station's existing Hustler 5-BTV with a new Hustler 5-BTV and add a ground-plate and tilt-base and 12m, 17m, and 60m band add-ons. The Committee decided to replace the existing 40m end-fed halfwave antenna with a Chameleon EMCOMM III Base end-fed wire antenna. The Committee chose to purchase an OM Power OM6BPF Automatic Bandpass filter for use with the station's IC-7610 transceiver and chose an LDG AT-200 Pro II automatic antenna tuner for the IC-7610. Eric added that after the decision to purchase the Hustler 5-BTV was made, news broke that ITU Corporation of Indiana has purchased Cushcraft and Hy-Gain from MFJ and the hope is the Cushcraft R-series antennas will soon be available again.

Paul Schulz, WD8SCV, reported that the station's weatherproof cable feed-through box has been installed, and that conduit and a set of mast-mount rails have been mounted on the exterior wall. The members went outside to see the box, conduit, and rails. Paul is working with Tony Stoncel on properly connecting the station and lightning arrestors to the building ground system.

Paul reported that during the work session with Tony Stoncel, he discovered what looks to be damage to the roof under the Hustler 5-BTV. A photo was shared and Eric reported that Executive Committee decided that no work on the roof-mounted antenna will take place until the matter can be investigated and resolved.

Ben Brewster, KF8DES, asked the Treasurer to order everything except the Hustler 5-BTV so that there's time to install and test everything prior to Field Day. He will send Eric a list of required coax and connectors. Eric will send a complete list of items to order to the Treasurer.

Old Business (continued)

ACARA Nets

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reported that ACARA's weekly and monthly nets continue to do well except for the weekly System Fusion nets, participation in which has dropped significantly. Eric reminded members of the current net schedule:

- Weekly 6m AM Net, Sunday, 5pm, 50.4 MHz AM – since 2003
- 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
- Weekly GMRS Net, Thursday, 7:30pm, GMRS channel 20 repeater / 462.675 MHz, tone 91.5 Hz
- 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.

Old Business (continued)

Public Service Event: Athens Race for a Reason

Event Date: Saturday, April 25, 2026
Event URL: https://www.ohioraceforareason.org/

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reported that the club provided communications support to the Athens Race for a Reason on Saturday, April 26, 2026. Six operators participated, with five operators being stationed along the bicycle course for the duathlon and triathlon, supporting 158 riders.

Participants:

- Mike Baxla, KE8ICP
- Jeff Finlay, KD4CKX
- Ashe Groeneveld, KD8KMZ
- Kirk Groeneveld, KC8JRV
- Paul Schulz, WD8SCV
- Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ (net-control)

Athens Hamfest

Date: Sunday, April 26, 2026
URL: https://www.ac-ara.org/?page_id=25

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reported that the Athens Hamfest took place on Sunday, April 26, 2026, and thanked all the members who worked the event. Since the Treasurer had earlier given the Hamfest financial report, no further discussion took place.

Old Business (continued)

Group Build: Meshtastic Nodes

Build Session Date: Sunday, May 3, 2026
Event details: https://www.ac-ara.org/?p=2809

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reported that Ben Brewster, KF8DES, led a group-build of solar-powered Meshtastic nodes on Sunday, May 3 at Athens Red Cross.

Ben reported that a total of eighteen kits were purchased and seventeen of these were built during the build-session. Ben added that many of these nodes have already been deployed and are visible on the mesh network.

Eric thanked Ben for leading the successful build session.

Upcoming Public Service Event: ORCA Emergency Drill

Event Date: Saturday, June 13
Event Sponsor: Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia
Sponsor URL: https://www.orcaohio.com/

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reminded members that Outdoor Recreation Council of Appalachia (ORCA) has asked the club to provide communications support at an emergency drill to be held within Baileys Trail System on Saturday, June 13. The drill will involve a simulated bicycle race in which two riders fall off course and need medical attention and extraction. The drill is scheduled to start at 7am, with the simulated accident to occur at about 9am. Paul Schulz, WD8SCV, and Ben Brewster, KF8DES, will coordinate with ORCA for support of this drill.

Paul said that he will be the simulated victim who will be extracted from the accident scene, and Ben Brewster, KF8DES, will be a responder. Two additional operators and a net control station will be needed to support the event.

Watch for emails about this drill as the date of the event approaches.

Old Business (continued)

Upcoming Social Event: June Picnic

Event Date: Tuesday, June 16, 2026
Event Location: Dairy Lane Picnic Shelter

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reminded members that the club traditionally holds a potluck picnic in place of the regular business meeting on the third Tuesday in June. This year, the picnic falls on Tuesday, June 16.

Drew McDaniel, W8MHV, has reserved the use of Dairy Lane Picnic Shelter for the picnic.

Members and guests will gather at 5:30pm and are asked to bring a dish to share, their own beverage, and their own table service.

Upcoming Operating Event: ARRL Field Day

Event Date: Saturday-Sunday, June 27-28, 2026
Event website: https://field-day.arrl.org/

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reminded the membership that ARRL Field Day is to be held on the weekend of June 27-28, 2026, and that Paul Schulz, WD8SCV, will serve as Field Day Chairman.

Paul reported that the club's operation will take place in the Jim Crouse Memorial Radio Station, in Class 2F, with a free VHF station and a Get on the Air (GOTA) station.

Paul has coordinated with Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ, for permission for the club to use the Athens County 911 facility's ICOM IC-7300, and that Jeff will be providing his own IC-7300. Jeff will pick up the 911 facility's IC-7300 and update the firmware. Jeff will also arrange to get his own IC-7300 to Ben Brewster, KF8DES, so that Ben can design the networked logging infrastructure.

Eric reported that he has asked Andy, K8FO, to reserve use of the callsign "K8V" for the club's use during Field Day. The GOTA station will use the club's callsign, W8UKE.

Old Business (continued)

Upcoming Public Service Event Athens Gravel Challenge

Event Date: Saturday, July 25, 2026
Event Sponsor: Team Athens Cycling
Event URL: https://www.ohiogravelgrinders.com/ohio-gravel-race-series

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reported that the club has been asked to support the Athens Gravel Challenge bicycle race on Saturday, July 25, 2026.

Watch for emails as the date of this event nears.

Upcoming Public Service Event: Run Baileys Half Marathon

Event Sponsor: https://www.seotrevents.com/
Event URL: https://www.seotrevents.com/runbaileys

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reported that the Run Baileys Half Marathon has been tentatively scheduled to take place on Saturday, August 8.

Upcoming Public Service Event: Run for the Blue Blazes

Event Date: Saturday, September 26, 2026
Event Sponsor: Buckeye Trail Association
Event URL: https://www.buckeyetrail.org/events/blue-blaze-festival

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reported that the club will be supporting Run for the Blue Blazes on Saturday, September 26, 2026.

Watch for emails as the date of this event nears.

Upcoming Public Service Event: Race to the Hills

Event Date: Saturday, October 17, 2026
Event Organizer: Ryan O'Dell

Ben Brewster, KF8DES, reported that the club might be asked to support Race to the Hills 100k bicycle race in the Baileys on Saturday, October 17, 2026.

Old Business (continued)

Upcoming Public Service Event: Baileys Dirt Fondo / Funduro

Event Date: Saturday, October 24, 2026
Event Organizer: Ben Brewster, KF8DES
Event URL: https://baileystrailsystem.org/baileys-dirt-fondo/

Ben Brewster, KF8DES, is race director for the Baileys Dirt Fondo and he has asked the club to support the event on Saturday, October 24, 2026.

Watch for emails as the date of this event nears.

Upcoming Public Service Event: Bobcat Trail Marathon and Half Marathon

Event Date: Saturday, November 7, 2026
Event Sponsor: Western Reserve Racing
Event URL: https://www.westernreserveracing.com/races/bobcat-trail-marathon-half-marathon/

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reported that the club will be supporting Bobcat Trail Marathon and Half Marathon on Saturday, November 7, 2026.

Watch for emails as the date of this event nears.

VHF Repeater Upgrade: Yaesu WIRES-X

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reminded the membership that at the March meeting, members voted to upgrade the VHF repeater with Yaesu's WIRES-X system. Because April is such a busy month for the club, any work on this upgrade won't start until sometime after the first of May.

Carl Denbow, N8VZ, will lead the upgrade and probably won't start until sometime in June.

New Business

Athens Trunkfest

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, asked if there's interest in holding a free trunkfest this summer and, if so, on what date. The members present expressed interest in a free trunkfest.

Eric had asked Jeff Slattery, N8SUZ, via email about availability of the Masonic Lodge. Jeff had replied that Saturdays are better than Sundays since Central Avenue Church uses the parking lot on Sundays. Jeff suggested Saturday, August 15 and Saturday, September 5, the latter being the Saturday prior to Labor Day. The assembled members prefer September 5. Jeff will check for availability of the venue on that date.

Upcoming Operating Event: Ohio State Parks on the Air

Event Date: Saturday, September 12, 2026
Event URL: https://ospota.org/

Eric McFadden, WD8RIF, reminded members of the annual operating event Ohio State Parks on the Air (OSPOTA) and asked if there's again interest in activating Strouds Run State Park for the event. The assembled members indicated there is interest in participating.

Eric asked where at Strouds Run State Park the club would like to operate, suggesting Bulldog Shelter and Bobcat Shelter. Bulldog Shelter has a vault toilet and no commercial power. Bobcat Shelter, located near the swim-beach, has nearby flush toilets and running water, the shelter itself has commercial power, and exposure of Amateur Radio to the public is greater than at Bulldog Shelter. Interest leaned towards doing OSPOTA at Bobcat Shelter.

Eric will reserve Bobcat Shelter for September 12 if it's available. If it's not available, he'll reserve Bulldog Shelter.

Following a motion by Carl Denbow, N8VZ, and a second by John McCutcheon, N8XWO, the meeting was adjourned at 8:45 PM.

Respectfully submitted by President Eric McFadden, WD8RIF