

Static



The Starved Rock Radio Club newsletter for February 2009
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FALLEN ANTENNA REPAIRABLE

Officers admit dropping the ball on insurance

Metal fatigue is the verdict for what caused SRRC's 2-meter dipole antenna to fall during the ice storm the weekend of December 21st. Club president Frank Carraro KF9NZ explained at the January meeting how the metal wore out and became unable to bear the load of wind and ice.

Bill KA9FER estimated a \$1200 cost to replace it with a new antenna. He explained a much more affordable alternative--replacing some of the metal parts. He described how and said that he himself could do the welding with three ten foot long pieces of aluminum. That would still leave the club in need of hiring an antenna crew--something Bill doesn't feel the club can afford.

Not only would the club be in a bind to buy a new antenna, it's

really out of luck with insurance coverage. President Frank says the equipment policy through the ARRL hasn't been updated in years. The antenna the club bought coverage for is not the antenna that fell.

"It specifies a Sinclair SD214 antenna, which it was not," he says. "There's a lot of stuff on here that we either don't have or we're not using."

SRRC pays \$315 a year for the coverage. Frank, who served as treasurer for two years before becoming president, said he takes full responsibility for the failure to update the policy. Also, however, former president Cecil Atwell KB9LNL pointed to himself silently in the front row when the question of who's responsible came up.

There is some time to decide exactly what to do about the

antenna. No one is likely to be available to put one atop the tower until spring. Bill says, "It's too cold and I don't know anybody, a professional climber, that would go up and do anything right now."

Some members started talking about who could put one up, but President Frank said such discussion is moot until an antenna's ready.

For now, SRRC is on 147.12 MHz using a four-bay antenna that's not as high as the dipole was. The club repeater's range has been reduced.

Kurt KB9RKH would like the four-bay reoriented for an omnidirectional pattern. He believes it's now pointed toward Chicago.

BYLAW CHANGE VOTE IN FEBRUARY

Four people are taking on the task of helping settle the discontent over the club's constitution and bylaws. At the January 5th meeting, President Frank Carraro KF9NZ named Treasurer Mark Gebhard K9ZQ to chair of the Constitution and Bylaws Committee. Vice President Eldon Akers KB9PZA, Kurt Clausen KB9RKH, and Secretary Tom Chromzack K9ML will serve on it.

Frank says the committee can consider changes to any part of the constitution. And he'd like some specific bylaws repealed.

Frank says bylaw 17 regarding the secretary's Hamfest duties isn't being followed and the Workers Subcommittee Chairperson in number 19 isn't used. Number 21 concerning the Field Day picnic isn't wanted, Frank says. And number 22 calling for a scholarship to be considered every year is another example of something the club hasn't been doing.

The president is also asking the committee to consider reducing the annual associate membership to \$10. And Frank says bylaw 16 should be stripped of references to a General Chairperson and subcommittees for Hamfest.

Mark feels the committee should consider each bylaw item separately rather than coming up with one package of changes to vote on. Either way, current bylaws require a membership vote in February.

New posts created

SRRC president Frank KF9NZ has created two new posts. Rick KO5HKO will serve as club librarian and Gene N9MRG will serve as club photographer. The librarian's job will be to organize and keep track of the club's books. The photographer will organize the club's photographs and take new pictures to document what the club does.

Committee chairs named

President Frank KF9NZ named the following people committee chairs January 5th:

Tom K9ML – *Activities*

Joe KB9EZZ – *Field Day & Training*

Bill KA9FER – *Repeater*

Kurt KB9RKU – *Equipment*

There are still vacancies in these spots:

Building & Grounds

Repeater Monitor

Food

Training

Publicity

Net Control

Frank says he wants people to say they're interested in these committees and to say what they're going to do. He doesn't want someone who takes the job "just to hold the title". That's the same message he had in December when he asked for committee chair volunteers shortly after his election.

Membership Committee

At the January meeting, President Frank KF9NZ named a new Membership Committee to

be chaired by Joe Tokarz KB9EZZ who isn't an SRRC member. Then on January 17th, Frank announced on The Reflector that the committee had "lost one member already" and he would need to appoint a replacement. The departing committee member was Joe.

Frank did not have anything more to say about the change at press time. Joe says both decisions, putting him on the committee and taking him off, were Frank's. Joe says he didn't talk to Frank about either ahead of time.

Joe dislikes a provision in the club constitution allowing for SRRC members to be charged a special assessment if the club were to face huge monetary needs. He has refused to pay membership dues since the present constitution's adoption.

Not being a dues paying member hasn't prevented Joe from serving the club in other capacities. He's been the Field Day & Training Committee Chair and is again for 2009.

Joel Bertram KC9NXZ and J.J. Bertram KC9ODJ were also tapped for the Membership Committee. Rick KO5HKO volunteered.

Wednesday night net

Past president Cecil KB9LNK wishes to turn over net control responsibilities for the Wednesday night net to someone else. But no one expressed an interest in being net control at the January meeting.

The idea of moving the net from 7pm to 9pm came up. No one wanted to discuss it further

and the issue remained unresolved.

The Wednesday night net is one of two weekly nets held on 147.12 MHz. The other is the ARES net held on Sundays at 7pm.

Hamfest prep begins

Jim Clapp KC9FGU, the SRRC 2009 Hamfest Chairman, expected to send about 150 letters to potential vendors in late January. Jim says he's sending the vendor letters to kite shops, hobby shops, and radio control shops.

"A lot of people think kites aren't involved, but kites can put an aerial up pretty good," he says.

The hamfest is scheduled for June 7th at the Bureau County Fairgrounds in Princeton.

CW class

Five people attended a CW class led by Jim Clapp KC9FGU at the clubhouse Wednesday, January 21st. Club President Frank KF9NZ was among them. He says all attending are already licensed amateurs. Jim hadn't responded by press time to a query about when the next class will be.

Active club members

An approximately 15 minute break in the January meeting was unusual—and not just because club meetings don't usually have breaks. President Frank KF9NZ put the club to work cleaning up the clubhouse. There were a few looks of mild consternation, but not much grumbling about the chores.

Law & Order at Club Meetings

People attending SRRRC meetings will now sign in, wear nametags, say the Pledge of Allegiance when the meeting starts, and engage in less free-for-all conversation. Those are the new rules new president Frank Carraro KF9NZ is trying out. He says meetings have never been very orderly while he's been a member of the club and that needs to change.

The first sign of these changes was the meeting agenda written on the dry erase board in the meeting room before the January meeting. Frank called the meeting to order, directed

everyone's attention to an inconspicuously placed flag in the corner, and started the Pledge.

Frank says we have guests from time to time. Wearing nametags will help them know who's who. Not everyone put on a nametag at the January meeting. But there was a box of them on the counter.

When club business is discussed formally, each person who wants to speak will be recognized a maximum of two times. He or she will stand up and everyone else will be expected to stay quiet. Instead of

blurting out a comment or question, anyone who wants to talk will have to wait his or her turn.

And if the members wish not to be so formal, they can vote to recess to a committee of the whole during which they can have freestyle conversations more like what have been characteristic of club meetings.

This kind of law and order is a change from what SRRRC members are used to. Just in case the rules don't work, Frank indicates they can be adapted. He called them a "trial version".

Use of EOC Grant Still Being Decided

Four months after getting a \$956,250 Homeland Security grant to build a new emergency operations center, LaSalle County officials are still figuring out what kind of building they want. The County Board's Courthouse and Jail, Building, Grounds, and Utilities Committee reviewed three architects' proposals January 23rd. With a three-to-one vote, the committee recommended R. Johnson Architects of LaSalle to design it.

The building will go up on land the county owns south of the courthouse on Etna Road in Ottawa. Committee Chairman Bob Jakupcak (D-Streator) says the county may add its own money to the project for a better, longer lasting building. "If we have a million dollars to start this, we don't want to just say

that's all we're gonna spend and then the building's gonna be inadequate very shortly."

LaSalle County's emergency operations center is currently in the Etna Road courthouse basement. In it are various maps and emergency handling plans, several telephones, and radio equipment. The radio equipment includes an amateur radio in case hams are pressed into service during the next disaster.

LaSalle County Emergency Management Agency Director Mike Jobst told the committee January 9th about the possible need for a radio tower at the building site. Joe Tokarz (KB9EZZ), the LaSalle County ARRL Emergency Coordinator, is intrigued by the possibility of having an amateur radio repeater on such a tower. He told the ARES net on 147.12 MHz

January 11th, it would be nice to have one high up in the air in Ottawa, the center of the county.

Such has been done before, about a decade ago, but it didn't work out. The Starved Rock Radio Club put its 2-meter repeater on a county tower only a few hundred feet from where the new tower would be.

Club members had trouble during maintenance times because the county limited access to it for security reasons. And county officials were concerned about having a non-county organization using their space.

Plus, Joe says there was a mutual concern about intermod, the phenomenon when two transmitters in close proximity blend outputs to create an interfering signal on a critical frequency.

Lawsuit Filed After Deadly Helicopter Crash

The parents of a Leland girl killed when a helicopter struck a radio tower guy wire are suing the medical transport company that flew the helicopter. One year old Kirstin Blockinger was going from Valley West Hospital in Sandwich to Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago when the helicopter crashed October 15th. She and the three adults on board died.

Brooke and Robert Blockinger claim in their lawsuit that Air Angels, its operator, and the pilot should have taken better precautions. The Blockingers claim the company should have had better equipment and two pilots on the aircraft. The lawsuit filed in Cook County January 6th doesn't list a specific damage amount. Air Angels Inc., Reach Medical Holdings Inc., and the estate of pilot Del Waugh are the defendants.

A January 15th report from the National Transportation Safety Board reiterated earlier

findings that the helicopter was flying too low. The preliminary report said the helicopter's altitude was 700 feet. The radio tower, owned by WBIG Radio of Aurora, is 734 feet tall. The later report said the helicopter was about 100 feet lower than it should have been. The preliminary reports had also indicated that the tower lights were on.

Chicago attorneys Don Nolan and Jim Hall represent the Blockingers. Hall chaired the NTSB from 1993 to 2001. According to the Chicago Tribune, Nolan says the accident was totally preventable because Air Angels could have installed TAWS, Terrain Awareness Warning System, on the aircraft. The Tribune also reports Nolan believes Waugh had "personal stress issues" from a pending divorce and those issues played a role in the accident.

The NTSB's January 15th report went into whether Waugh

could have been fatigued. The report said Air Angels pilots normally work seven 12-hour shifts with the following week off. Waugh was three nights into what would have been a week off. He had volunteered to help the company make up for an employee shortage. The report said Waugh's coworkers believed he acted sufficiently well rested to perform his job duties.

The NTSB says there were seven medical helicopter crashes in 2008 involving a total of 28 deaths. In 2007, there were two fatal crashes and a total of seven deaths. The NTSB has recommended that medical helicopters have TAWS. But many companies are waiting for the Federal Aviation Administration to require it before making the investment.

WLS-TV reports the Blockingers intend to file a written statement with the NTSB during a hearing in February.

Amateur radio operators wanted for ARES—three per township

The Amateur Radio Emergency Service would like 111 hams who can put their technical and communications skills to use in emergencies in LaSalle County. ARES has a way to go.

"Right now, we have 43 members in ARES but only about seven of them have completed these courses," says ARRL LaSalle County Emergency Coordinator Joe Tokarz (KB9EZZ). He's referring to three courses offered under a Federal Emergency Management Agency program and another offered through the ARRL. They teach the basics of responding to disasters. Joe says having local volunteers who've taken the FEMA courses helps local emergency management authorities become eligible for federal funding.

The FEMA courses are available online, are free, and have continuous enrollment. Joe would like at least 20 more ARES members to complete the courses this year.

Joe says you should start with IS-100, which covers the basics of incident command. He says, "One of the problems of 9-11 was who's in charge, how many bosses do I have. It was very confusing. And the purpose of incident command is to teach—to show hams where would we fit during a disaster." The next course is IS-700 covering the National Incident Management System. Then it's IS-800 on the National Response Framework.

Joe says anyone with questions or a wish to apply should contact him at kb9ezz@arrl.net.

Starved Rock Radio Club January 5, 2009 Meeting Minutes as prepared by Secretary Tom Chromzack K9ML

Meeting starts at 7:14pm with 21 members present.

Frank, KF9NZ as 2009 club president outlines his plan to conduct meetings this year with a formal session where members have to ask for the floor to speak and an informal "Committee of the Whole" for group discussion where everyone can make their opinions known.

Tom, K9ML mentions pre-meeting VE session with only candidate passing the Tech license test.

Frank asks if everyone has seen the December minutes and the annual Treasurer's Report. No comments or corrections voiced so Frank gavel the reports approved.

Frank comments on the clutter in the meeting area and recesses the meeting so the group can do some straightening up.

Meeting resumes at 7:33pm with committee reports.

Activities: Tom mentions Affiliated Club Competition and upcoming hamfests. Mark, K9ZQ has tickets for Wheaton Hamfest.

Cecil, KB9LNK gets out can and stubs for members to enter the drawing. Rich, N9OUW wins.

Buildings and Grounds: Cecil says not much happening because of the weather.

Equipment: Kurt, KB9RKU says beside repeater antenna, VHF antenna and tower will need some TLC.

Repeater Maintenance: Frank says not much happening.

Repeater Monitor: Rich says present situation aside, not much to say.

Hamfest: Jim, KC9FGU will mail info to vendors at end of month. Eldon, KB9PZA will open hamfest layout file so Jim can send vendors info on table placement.

Field Day: Joe, KB9EZZ says FD will remain at Shabbona Park.

Training: Joe mentions everyone should take all four FEMA communication courses plus ARECC EC-001 course. Jim will have CW class at clubhouse 7pm on January 21.

Frank asks Cecil if he wants to remain Net Control. Cecil declines. Mark asks if net time could be moved to 9pm from 7pm Wednesday night. Group will need to discuss this.

Frank appoints Gene, N9MRG as club photographer, Rick, KO5HKO as librarian, Joe, Rick and himself to membership committee, Tom for activities, Joe for FD and training, Bill, KA9FER for repeater maintenance, Kurt for equipment, Rich for repeater monitor for now, and Jim remains as hamfest chairman. Club needs people for B&G and food committees. Mark (chair), Kurt, Eldon and Tom are the constitution committee.

Old Business: Kurt asks about Eldon's constitution changes submitted last meeting and if we need to vote on it. Frank and Eldon agree that there were too many changes to constitution and by-laws so proposal tabled to future meeting. Constitution committee will have to sort it out.

New Business: Frank submits a list of changes to by-laws. Repeal By-laws 17 Secretary's Hamfest Duties, 19 Prize Drawing, 21 Field Day Picnic, and 22 Scholarship Award

Delete the wording from By-law 16 "The General Chairperson shall appoint chairpersons for the following subcommittees: A. Vendors B. Tickets C. Gate and parking D. Workers E. Refreshments"

Change By-law 25 D. Associate membership dues are \$24 dollars per year to Associate membership dues are \$10 per year Mark says there are too many items submitted for a single vote. Tom says we can simply vote it down at next meeting and Frank can resubmit them individually. Frank motions to put his by-law changes to a vote and Tom seconds the motion.

Members will vote on it next meeting.

Bill and Frank outline plan of action for damaged repeater antenna. Frank says two elements need repair, but mast is toast. Bill will get three 10-foot sections of mast to make reinforced mast to hang antenna elements on. Kurt asks if we could adjust four-bay antenna to be omni-directional. Frank and Eldon mention insurance for antenna. Tom gets copy of policy from Frank and will investigate.

Rich motions to adjourn meeting with Bill seconding the motion. Ayes carry.

Meeting ends at 8:30pm.

Recorded by Tom Chromzack, K9ML

PRESIDENT'S LETTER – FEBRUARY 2009

Well, Brother and Sister Members, we made it through one meeting without bloodshed. Take heart! Only 11 more to go and you can vote me out. Well, 11 more regular meetings. Maybe we'll have a few more things like Field Day and a Hamfest.

I was recently told that the SRRC was like a ship. An aircraft carrier was the specific kind used, but I think a battleship would be a better example – old and hard to change course. But eventually I think the USS SRRC will answer her rudder. Unfortunately this ship does not have a happy crew – one willing and eager to work together to make her shipshape and Bristol fashion. That's an old British Navy standard.

What are we here for? What is the purpose of the SRRC? We are supposed to share our enjoyment, knowledge and experience of amateur radio with each other. Regardless of what it says at the beginning of our Constitution, that is our main purpose here. Unfortunately there are certain rules about how we do that, how we handle the money, property and time we have. That is what we do in the monthly business meetings. We can't get away from it. We can only minimize it. I am trying to make it as enjoyable as possible. Didn't everybody enjoy getting up and getting a little exercise lifting, climbing stairs, bending, stretching and deep breathing in the middle of the meeting? If you went to a gym you'd have to pay to get that much exercise.

I have been talking to Dick Isely W9GIG, the Central Division ARRL Director, and Tom Ciciora KA9QPN, Illinois Section Manager, recently about my mission to consolidate hamfests. I intend to attend the WCRA Hamfest the 25th of January mostly to talk to Tom and Dick some more. (Too bad my name isn't Harry huh?). I have set my sights on three hamfests – BARS, Kishwaukee (Sandwich) and Fox River. I will be attending meetings of these clubs in the next couple of months.

73 and 88's where applicable

Frankf9nz