

Static



The Starved Rock Radio Club newsletter for March 2009

Prepared February 25, 2009

Editor Rick Wiegmann Koshko, KO5HKO

In this issue:

Change of presidents

Bylaw changes rejected

Constitution committee hashing things out

Weather spotter course time

Communications mural ready

EOC building grant limits

Telegraph building demolished

Medical transport company closes

ARRL Section Emergency Coordinator steps down

Club mentioned in newspaper

Obituaries: Tidd, Kmetz

Apologies to Jim KC9FGU. Jim says he did answer a query last month about the CW class he's holding. Regrettably, his email didn't arrive. He's teaching the class Wednesday nights at 7pm at the Starved Rock Radio Club building in Leonore. Anyone interested in learning or brushing up on Morse code skills is welcome.

President Frank KF9NZ Quits

A flap over a web site compelled President Frank Carraro KF9NZ to resign in the middle of his second meeting as president. His other choice was to come back in March for a vote that could have removed him from office.

Vice president Eldon Akers KB9PZA moved for a vote in March to remove Frank from office. Eldon took objection to Frank registering the domain name w9mks.org and having a web site started for it. Eldon also complained about Frank taking various actions without the membership's blessing. Much of Eldon's complaint had to do with threats he alleges Frank made. Eldon claimed Frank wanted him to delete prior issues of Static from the www.qsl.net/w9mks web site or he would have the site taken down. Eldon says the qsl.net move in January prevented him from uploading new material or updates. And Eldon said Frank should have brought up the "financial obligation to the club" first.

Frank said that Eldon refused to make web site updates. He also said it would be up to the club whether to keep the web site and take on any financial obligation. No club funds were spent on the web site. Others had contributed their own money to buy the domain name and hosting.

Eldon declared, "He had no right to start that site without the membership vote!" Eldon explained that he and former club president Helly Brown started the qsl.net site. Under a club member's questioning, however, Eldon couldn't say that the club had authorized the qsl.net site either. Eldon has since stated that he didn't speak correctly because he was angry. He says the club did authorize the qsl.net site's creation in the late 1990s. In those days, it wasn't on qsl.net yet.

The discussion suddenly took another direction when Clint KC9IZR moved to take down the new web site, calling it "kind of a kick in the ass toward Eldon." Eldon seconded. Ten of the 21 members present voted for the motion. Secretary Tom K9ML abstained. Instead of counting the no votes, Frank got up from the officers' table, started putting away an oscilloscope and other equipment

he used for an earlier demonstration, and announced that he quit.

Eldon assumed the duties of the president until the end of the meeting, after which he convened a directors' meeting to name a replacement. The directors chose Eldon for president and Rich N9OUW as the new vice president.

What was it really about?

Signs abound that this flap had little to do with the web site and much to do with tensions between Frank and other club members for various other reasons. More than one person spoke in defense of Frank's actions but only Frank drew fire.

Clint KC9IZR moved to get rid of the new web site at w9mks.org on the grounds that it was done without the club's authorization. No such move was taken against Eldon's site even though Eldon said it was also created without club authorization. He simply had been maintaining it for about a decade after another member created it. As noted earlier in this article, Eldon has since corrected himself.

Treasurer Mark K9ZQ spoke about the good intentions Frank had and some shortfalls of Eldon's site. Mark feels the shortfalls mostly pertain to the site host, but also said Eldon's site needs updating. Mark said the site was slow until its recent move to a new facility.

"You got on there, you waited a half an hour for the pages to come up. You know, I have been on there three or four times in my life to get stuff that I absolutely needed to get because it was so darn slow."

Mark described having envy for other club web sites. "You go look at other clubs' web sites and they have stuff on there that's very professional looking. Ours is okay. It's okay for this club. But...I looked at the Field Day pictures. You know, my son Neil, who's about ready to graduate from college, is about ten years old....It's not maintained as a club web site."

Mark indicated he knew of some people who had contributed money to buy the domain and

hosting, but did not say who. He suggested club members compromise.

“I think this is actually a good idea in that it’s more professional. It’s W9MKS which is really nice. Everybody can have their own email address. [QSL.net doesn’t] provide any of that. So, this is definitely a step up. And the only downside to it is that Eldon’s not involved.”

Pat KC6VVT and Gary WK9G interrupted Mark to reassert that w9mks.org hadn’t been presented to club members. Mark responded, “The president should have some say about what goes on in the club. You elected him to be the guy that presides over the meetings and does all the other background work. So, that should be worth something. The other side is, it didn’t cost the club anything at this point.”

Secretary Tom K9ML praised Eldon for running his web site, but asked whether qsl.net will be around in a year. He also wished for a better web site. “I would hope that Eldon would be willing to help out with this....I would like to have a really kick ass web site. We’re never gonna have that on qsl.net.” Tom also commented that the w9mks.org web site hadn’t been handled tactfully.

Some people who had voted to dismantle w9mks.org were friendly to Static editor Rick KO5HKO after the meeting, despite his involvement in designing the site at Frank’s request.

Frank has been rather a horse driver during his short term. The grumbling started during the work session in January when he had everyone pitch in and clean up the clubhouse. One member said that Frank would probably find out that people don’t like having to do such things.

Who actually owns w9mks.org?

President Frank said he registered it in the name of Starved Rock Radio Club. He paid for it with money contributed to him, but he did not say who contributed it. The club paid nothing for it.

A check of Whois, the Internet registry of who owns domain names and where those web sites are hosted, shows that it’s registered to Brooke Bryan. Bryan is an employee of JustHost.com, the British

company contracted to host the site for \$4.95 a month.

By appearances, the club doesn’t actually own w9mks.org. However, the registration to Brooke Bryan could be a privacy cover offered by the registrar. The domain is registered until January 13, 2010.

The web site that Rick put up was removed February 3, although not by Rick.

What about Frank?

Frank says he wants nothing more to do with Starved Rock Radio Club. In a message posted on The Reflector after the February 2 meeting, he said, “It is obvious the SRRC does not want a President. They want a figurehead who will sit in front of the members and let them do as they please.”

Frank’s message predicted Eldon’s selection as president. Then it said, “That a President cannot decide what kind of internet site they have at no cost to the Club is incredible. That a President can’t do anything on his own authority is stupid and not founded in equity or custom.”

Frank took more pokes at Eldon and Eldon’s web site. He ended with, “Tonight’s action was a sorry commentary on the state of the club. There is so much potential there, and it’s all going to waste.”

After the meeting, new president Eldon said Rick KO5HKO would continue to be the club librarian and Gene N9MRG would continue as club photographer, at least for now. Both were positions Frank created during his first meeting. The membership committee, which has never met, is to continue also. It’s currently without a chair because President Frank changed his mind about non-member Joe Tokarz KB9EZZ heading it.

Price not really a mystery

Frank appeared unable to answer questions about the web site’s price. JustHost.com charged \$4.95 per month for it payable a year in advance. But when questioned about it, he said there’s no guarantee what anything would cost a year from now.

Bylaw changes trounced. Constitution work pending.

Bylaw changes proposed in January by then president Frank KF9NZ were rejected by a nearly unanimous vote in February. Two members abstained. The vote was taken after Frank's resignation. He was no longer present.

Frank proposed eliminating rules regarding hamfest duties, the Field Day picnic, and the annual club scholarship. He said they weren't being followed anyway. He also asked to lower the associate member dues to \$10 per year.

Constitution work is still pending. Constitution Committee chairman Mark K9ZQ has identified three areas of change he will focus on. These were presented at the February meeting. If membership comments at that meeting are a fair representation, all three could be argued over further before a membership vote.

The Joe Provision.

"I'm flattered. I like that."

That's how Joe Tokarz KB9EZZ reacted when told of one possible change and the name given it for the sake of discussion. He has refused to pay membership dues because he feels a few club members could vote to bind him and all other club members to paying big sums if the club needs a financial rescue.

Mark explained two ideas: take out the whole concept of assessments or eliminate them

for associate members. The associate membership would come with reduced dues and no voting privileges.

At the February meeting, several members spoke in defense of Joe's position or offered a compromise of letting Joe be a member for free.

But club officers pointed out that Joe is not refusing to pay dues. Rather, he's refusing to sign an agreement that he'll abide by club rules because of the one rule he dislikes. So, if Joe's dues were covered or waived, he'd still object to the possibility of a special assessment.

Joe has been the club's Field Day Chair and the ARRL LaSalle County Emergency Coordinator. He's eager to continue helping the club and several members said they've appreciated his help.

"Let 'em bicker all they want," Joe says. "Just get it over with by severe weather season."

Absentee voting

Some club members want to allow members who can't be present at the December meeting to vote absentee. Then vice president Eldon KB9PZA said he wants this provision for the benefit of members who can't attend for certain reasons, like sickness.

Pat KC6VVT objects to it. He says, "I don't think the club as a whole should be victim to excuses. You either come,

participate, or get out of the way."

Eldon says he would have the Board of Directors set up the absentee voting provisions. Mark, who's chairing the Constitution and Bylaws Committee, feels it should be set up first in the constitution and not later by a committee.

Secretary Tom K9ML says absentee voting was kept out of the 2006 constitution because of the workload it would have created for him. The secretary would have to mail out ballots and register them in an "unbelievably complex" system. "I already do 40 or 50 jobs around this place," he says.

Static editor post

Several club members feel the Static editor's position should be appointed rather than elected. That way, if someone with the title doesn't do the job well, he or she can be replaced more quickly than under current rules. Eldon, leading the meeting as vice president, explained this at the February meeting after Frank's resignation.

Currently, someone must move to have the officer removed during a regular club meeting. Then a removal vote would follow at the next club meeting. If the membership votes to remove the officer, the club directors name a new editor. If the membership vote fails, the other method of naming a new officer is the December election.

Architect choice not official

Instead of approving the Robert Johnson architecture firm for the upcoming Emergency Operations Center project, the LaSalle County Board in February sent the recommendation back to committee. Courthouse and Jail Committee Chairman Bob Jacupcak (D-Streator) says that was to have a county attorney look over the contract to make sure everything was in order. Jacupcak said there was nothing he knew of that would likely be a problem and that the attorney's review is standard.

Jacupcak said at the committee's February 13 meeting, the attorney hadn't completed the task yet. But Johnson presented his assessment of the project so far.

Johnson estimates the county's grant money, about \$965,000, is about \$350,000 too little to pay for a basement in the EOC. Jacupcak believes the money can be found. Committee members discussed the options and seemed to favor having a basement because of storage needs.

The county was awarded the grant from Homeland Security on September 11, 2008.

Weather spotter training

The National Weather Service is offering two Weather Spotter training courses in LaSalle County during March. The program will be held at Ottawa High School on the 9th at 7pm. Another program will be held at

Illinois Valley Community College on the 12th at 7pm. Call LaSalle County Emergency Management Agency Coordinator Mike Jobst at 815-433-5622 for more information.

There will also be one in Pontiac on the 19th at 7pm at the Pontiac Public Safety Building. Call the Livingston County Sheriff's Department at 815-844-7171 for more.

New mural to be dedicated

A date wasn't determined by press time, but a new mural depicting the history of communications in Ottawa is to be dedicated in the spring. The Brush With History mural committee is paying for the mural to be put on the front of the WCMY-WRKK radio building at 216 W. Lafayette St.

Artist Tim Trumbo of Ottawa researched telegraphy, newspaper publishing, and broadcasting businesses that have existed in the city. In late 2008, he painted the mural in several pieces at his home. He says he was ready to put it up in mid-December. The mural committee prefers to wait until warmer weather that may favor a big public turnout.

Old telegraph building demolished

A 160-year old Ottawa building that first housed a telegraph equipment factory was demolished February 17th. The Times newspaper reported that the building at 1512 LaSalle Street was home to the Caton

Telegraph Instrument Shop from 1849 to 1872.

The newspaper reported that Illinois Supreme Court Justice John D. Caton had the factory built and sold it to Western Union in 1867. Western Union was sold to Western Electric in 1872 and the factory operations were moved to Chicago at that time. In the years since, the building housed a horse collar factory and several automotive businesses. It had been expanded also. Part of it had become like a building within a building.

The Times quoted a telegraph historian, John Casale, describing the Caton business as one of the country's biggest telegraph factories and the equipment made there as very widely used in telegraph offices throughout the Midwest.

The current property owner, Chris Duffy, owns the neighboring Duffy Auto Sales and tore the building down to make room for parking and an auto detailing business.

ARRL SEC steps down

SRRC member Pat Ryan KC6VVT of Tonica has stepped down as ARRL Illinois Section Emergency Coordinator, a post he held since 2002. An ARRL statement says Pat stepped down because of personal issues. Brad Pioveson W9FX of Benton, Illinois has taken over the job.

ARRL Illinois Section Manager Tom Ciciora KA9QPN issued a statement asking league members to give Pat a hearty thanks for a job well done.

Air Angels closes down

The company whose medical transport helicopter was involved in a fatal crash after snagging a radio tower guy wire in Aurora is going out of business. Air Angels made the announcement February 19. The statement said, "Recent and ongoing events lead us to believe that our venture in Illinois is no longer viable."

One year old Kirstin Blockinger of Leland was being flown from Valley West Hospital in Sandwich to Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago on October 15 when the crash happened. She and three adults on board died. Federal investigators have said the helicopter was flying lower than it should have been.

Kirstin Blockinger's parents, Brooke and Robert Blockinger, filed suit in January seeking unspecified damages. They claim the Bolingbrook company should have had a second pilot and a low altitude warning system on board.

The Air Angels announcement didn't mention the lawsuit or anything else that may have factored into the decision to shut down. It did say, however, "A great deal of effort, exploration and research has gone into making the difficult decision to close Air Angels. It is especially painful to make a business decision that requires not only the loss of employment of many people, but a reduction

in valuable life-saving services to their community, as well."

The company says 33 people, working on both ground and air ambulances, were being put out of work. Most area hospitals use the Peoria based Life Flight for urgent air transports. Company manager Afife Halabi says the Air Angels decision won't affect Life Flight's normal operations. Life Flight likely will help fill the void though.

At Valley West Hospital, Marketing and Public Relations coordinator Allison Bryan says her hospital uses several transport services and can still arrange emergency air transports without Air Angels.

Obit: Emerson Tidd

Emerson Tidd died at Mendota Community Hospital February 9. He was 89. Tidd served for many years as the LaSalle County Emergency Services Disaster Agency coordinator. Services were held the following week at Schwarz Funeral Home in Mendota. LaSalle County ESDA is now known as LaSalle County Emergency Management Agency.

Obit: Francis Kmetz

Francis Kmetz died February 13 at his Streator home. A service was held at St. Stephen's Church in Streator with Solon, Baker, and Telford Funeral Home handling arrangements. Kmetz, WB9VLW, was an SRRC member. He was 84.

Club mentioned in newspaper article

Starved Rock Radio Club is mentioned in one sentence of an article in The Times newspaper published February 21. The club is described as making "for some occasional activity in Leonore-its clubhouse is there."

The article is about the history of Leonore. It was published with a picture of Randy Schmitt, owner of Smitty's Tap where several club members like to have supper before monthly club meetings.

Starved Rock Radio Club February 2, 2009 Meeting Minutes

Meeting starts at 7:40pm because pre-meeting electronic demonstration ran long. 21 members are present.

Minutes of January meeting passed to group. Mark, K9ZQ reads Treasurer's Report to group.

Frank, KF9NZ asks if anyone has a comment or correction on minutes. No comment so he gavels approval of minutes. He asks if anyone has a comment or correction to the Treasurer's Report. No comment so he gavels approval of report.

Activities: Tom, K9ML reads list of hamfests, contests and other items of interest. He will post on bulletin board. He mentions plan for a special event station to commemorate SRRC's 75th anniversary as ARRL club. Mark volunteers to work with Tom to plan event. John, AA9VT mentions school club roundup. Gary, WK9G says he could bring projector to show ARRL videos.

Building & Grounds: Cecil, KB9LNK is not present to give report.

Equipment: Kurt, KB9RKU is not present to give report. Insurance on equipment discussed under old business.

Repeater: Bill, KA9FER is not present. Frank says repeater is doing okay.

Repeater Monitor: Rich, N9OUW says it is hard to hear because of antenna, but it is doing okay.

Hamfest: Jim, KC9FGU mailed vendor invitations. He got over a dozen returned no forwarding address. Not much activity so far

Frank thanks Kim, KC9EMO for donuts. We need someone to head Food committee.

Librarian: Rick, KO5HKO has sorted out the books. He is in the process of making them available for sign out.

Photographer: Gene, N9MRG took photos of clubhouse and equipment last week. He gave CD copies of his photos to club. Tom has a copy.

Old Business: Mark did not have constitution meeting because Kurt was ill and Tom was unavailable. There was no formal membership committee meeting.

Frank brings up Joe's status. Tom says Joe dropped as member last year. Frank brings up matter of improving W9MKS website. A lively discussion followed with many opinions. Frank has set up a domain name out of his own pocket. Clint, KC9IZR asks how much it will cost in long haul. Frank cannot say. Clint makes motion to keep old website, take down new one. Eldon seconds motion. Vote 50/50 split. Frank is upset and resigns as president and member of club. He leaves. Eldon continues meeting.

Proposal to amend by-laws submitted by Frank discussed. Pat, KC6VVT to drop by-law change. Gary seconds motions Ayes carry. Tom mentions equipment insurance. He did not get to clubhouse to generate list to send to insurance company. Mark says he will take care of it. Tom hands him paperwork.

New Business: Quick discussion of Spring-cleaning when weather improves.

Gary motions to adjourn meeting with Pat seconding the motion. Ayes carry! Meeting ends at 9:10pm.

Immediately after the meeting, the board of directors met to name a successor to Frank Carraro, KF9NZ. Present at the meeting were the three directors, Dennis Bowen, KC9EXG, Jim Clapp, KC9FGU and Gary Corless, WK9G. Also present were Treasurer Mark Gebhardt, K9ZQ, Secretary Tom Chromzack, K9ML and Vice-president Eldon Akers, KB9PZA. The directors agreed to appoint Eldon Akers as President and Rich Grimshaw as Vice-president. The directors meeting ended at 9:25pm.

Recorded by Tom Chromzack, K9ML
Club Secretary/ Trustee