

F.C.A.R.C. Inc.
P.O. Box 773
Greenfield, MA 01302

FIRST CLASS MAIL



THE COMMUNICATOR THE COMMUNICATOR

December 2017

Upcoming Events

Dec 4 Mon 6:00 pm Holiday Potluck Shelburne Senior Center

Dec 16 Sat 8:00 am Breakfast, Denny's Pantry; 10 am

Dec 16 Sat 10:00 am Franklin County Amateur Radio Emergency
Communications group, GCC Hammond Studio

Dec 18 Mon 7:00 pm E-Board, GCC Hammond Studio

Dec 31 Sun 11:50 pm New Year's Eve net on KB1BSS 2m repeater

*** 2018 ***

Jan 1 Mon New Year's Day; Sawmill River 10K Radio Ops report at 9:00 am.

Jan 13 Sat 8:00 am Breakfast, Denny's

Jan 13 Sat 10:00 am Franklin County Amateur Radio Emergency
Communications group, GCC Hammond Studio
Jan 22 Mon 6:00 pm E-Board; 7:15 pm General Meeting, GCC
Hammond Studio – Tracy Rogers on Puerto Rico

Secretary's Report

E-board meeting Monday, November 20, 2017 – Chris Myers KB1NEK

1. Joe will coordinate race course communications on New Year's Day for the Saw Mill River Race. Joe has already been in touch with the race director, Jon Dobosz.
2. Tracy Rogers will be featured speaker at the club meeting in January. She will talk about the experience as a member of an EMAC team that went to Puerto Rico to assist in recovery from Hurricane Maria. EMAC is a nation-wide Emergency Management Assistance Compact that allows trained volunteers to assist out of state, with reimbursements for time and expenses to come from the state, or territory, where the assistance is needed. Tracy works for the Franklin Regional Council of Governments as a planner for the Health and Medical Care Coalition, and is also chair of the selectboard in Northfield. Her two sons, Alex and Andrew are licensed hams, and members of the club.
3. We are exploring the possibility of conducting another class for entry level licenses in the spring. Al would like to do more than the four sessions we did this fall.
4. Anne will make video clips from U-Tube to show aspects of the YL League, which often uses Echo Link for nets. This could be used at class to show some of the activities of ham radio not ordinarily thought about.
5. Howard announced that the club took in approximately \$1,500 in the last month. The bulk of this was from the sale of an Elecraft K3 from the estate of John Ragle. The balance in the bank is approximately \$4,400, which should be enough to cover the cost of buying a storage trailer if we have to.

There has been no more word from FRCOG telling us to hurry and get our equipment out of the storage container next to the jail.

News, Activities & Articles

January 22 General Meeting: Puerto Rico Experiences - Tracy Rogers

Al, N1AW

Tracy Rogers will be the speaker at the January 22nd FCARC meeting. Tracy is known to many FCARC members. She is the Regional Preparedness Program Manager of FRCOG.

Tracy is also the Deputy Team Leader of the Northwest MA Incident Management Team, and she went with this group of local emergency managers to Puerto Rico after Hurricane Maria. The team provided administrative support for the Central Island Coordination Task Force and the Puerto Rico Urban Search and Rescue Team, coordinating commodities, food, and water to isolated towns. The team worked 12-hour shifts daily for two weeks. Tracy will tell us about some of her experiences on this trip.

Sawmill 10K January 1st Join Us in Montague on January 1, 2018

Joe, KB1WVO

New Year's Day provides the first public service opportunity of the year for the FCARC – the 10K Sawmill River road race. It is just the right kind of event to start the year – relatively short and relatively comfortable (at least for Net Control, the lead car and the sag wagon.)

The Sawmill race began in 1988 has a long and venerable tradition. According to Race Director Jon Dobosz, the race averages 170 runners annually who tackle the rolling and hilly course, and winter weather can make it a more dangerous course. Radio operators here are safety and information providers, and get good practice in supporting a public event in a net control environment.

The Old Grange in Montague Center is the race center, and the FCARC net control station is once again in the attic – a good J-Pole location. There are plenty of hot drinks and baked potatoes. A sign-up sheet will be available at the December breakfast at Denny's on Saturday December 16th, and at the eBoard meeting on the 18th. You can also contact Joe Henefeld or Jeanne Dodge to sign up. We look forward to seeing or hearing all of you there!

VE Session results November 2017

Al, N1AW

For many years the FCARC Volunteer Examiner Team has conducted Amateur Radio License Exams at the Northfield Unitarian Church on the fourth Monday of February, May, August, and November. About a week before our scheduled session on November 27th I called the person who normally unlocks the church for us to confirm we would be there. Her response came late on Saturday afternoon, and it was startling: we could not use the church as planned, all events at the church were to be cancelled for the week because of preparations for the annual Christmas Fair, the first weekend in December.

Finding another location was easy; Jeanne offered to let us use the space outside her office at GCC. But the location had been advertised as Northfield in the last Communicator, on the FCARC website and Facebook page, and on the ARRL's website. There could very well be people planning to attend that I didn't know about; very that matter some of our own VEs could be planning to go to Northfield. So emergency e-mails went out to everyone I could think of, and emergency notices were posted on the website and Facebook. On Monday afternoon I also taped a notice of the change on the church door.

I had no feedback from anyone who mistakenly went to Northfield, and t all of our VEs and all of the people I expected to take an exam got the message and showed up at GCC. And all were successful: Chris who was in our license class last month, passed his Technician test. His new call sign is KC1IRA. Rebecca KC1IJG, also from the October class, upgraded to General license. Aaron KC1CXX upgraded to Extra license. VEs were Belle KB1NOG, Anne KC1CRS, Keith KU1N, Chris KB1NEK, Ron K8HSF, and Al.

Annual Fox Hunt 11/18/2017

AI, N1AW

The foxbox was sitting at my house for quite a while - I'm not sure I took charge of it immediately after last year's hunt, but in any case I should have checked its battery soon after the last use. But I did not do that, and I discovered that the battery was dead only a week before the November 18th hunt. A day was wasted while I determined that the old battery was really unable to hold a full charge. Fortunately I had a battery of the right type on hand, but another day was wasted while I made sure it was fully charged and that it would hold the charge.

So I delivered the foxbox to Jeanne, our volunteer fox-master, early in the week before the event; not really enough time for her to fully check out that the foxbox signal would be audible at our designated starting point.

Other problems came up as we started the hunt. Although it was initially set for the proper frequency (146.985 MHz, the output frequency of our Leyden repeater), it is hard to see the LCD screen on the HT when it is in place inside the foxbox. So when first activated the signal was not on the announced frequency. Also the connection from the control circuit to the HT was loose.

Eventually the fox was operating properly and some of the hunters heard it – but probably not until they took advantage of a hint that the signal might not be audible from the Greenfield side of the Rocky Mountain - Pocumtuck ridge. The fox was hidden near the parking lot for the Book Mill in Montague.

Richard AB1RS was the first hunter to finish. Others were Chris KB1NEK, Erika, KC1IJJ, Richard KB1NOX and Ted, KC1IJL.

Some lessons were learned: Test the foxbox early, including charging and testing the battery. Make sure every memory slot is programmed to the same frequency with PL tone so accidental frequency change won't happen. A day or more before the hunt bring it to the chosen fox den site, activate it and do a test to see whether it can be heard at the planned starting point. On hunt day monitor with a handheld to be sure all is working once foxbox is activated.

Greenfield Winter Carnival Annual Sleigh Bell Race Saturday, February 3rd, 2018

Richard, KB1NOX stwricha@aol.com

Yikes a new year soon. Sat Feb 3rd the Greenfield Winter Carnival Annual Sleigh Bell Race. Meet at the Hope and Olive Restaurant. Because of last year's UHF frequency disaster, and the new Court house, This year I am going to test for use of simplex. I think it would be best if we used the FCARC club simplex frequency of 147.435. Please have your handhelds and mobiles set up with a channel for 147.435 Simplex.

I will begin setup and taking in people for radio positions, at 8:00 AM. The Race Start time has traditionally been at 10:00 AM. The race traditionally takes about 90 minutes for the last runner/walker to make it back to the Hope and Olive Restaurant Start/Finish line.

Christie Moore the Director of Greenfield Parks and Recreation Department said this year may be different. I will advise and update as I get further information from Christie as I will be speaking with Christie a couple of times in the near future.

I know August is still a long way off, but the Greenfield Annual Triathlon Race will be the first Sunday of August. This year there will be a major change in the race route for everyone and that also including Radio Operators. I will need extra operators this year because the route will be much more spread out

VLF Contest and Experiments

AI, N1AW

The FCC recently approved amateur radio use of the VLF (Very Low Frequency) bands starting September 15th, 2017. These bands are 135.7 to 135.8 kHz (2,200 meters) and 472 to 479 kHz (630 meters). More information can be found about the [authorization](#) and [bands](#) by clicking the links.

Two local groups, the Hampden County Radio Association and the SOTA Jerks, have announced a contest to encourage amateurs to experiment with the new bands. The contest is now on, and runs until March 15th. The goal is not to make the most contacts, the winner will be the operator who makes the longest distance contact.

For more information go to the HCRA website, <http://www.hcra.org/>

Despite the low power authorized and the inefficient antennas at these very low frequencies, long distance communication is possible. N1AW recently tried tuning his IC-706 down to 474 Khz, and heard a low-power automatic beacon from AA1A in eastern Massachusetts, at a distance of 105 miles.

THE COMMUNICATOR is an informational publication for members of the Franklin County Amateur Radio Club. Officers: President: Al Woodhull, N1AW (n1aw@arrl.net), Vice President: Joe Henefield, KB1WVO (joehenefield@comcast.net), Treasurer: Howard Field, N1LUP (howfield@comcast.net), Secretary: Chris Myers, KB1NEK (camyers1@verizon.net), Director: Belle Dyer, KB1NOG (bdyer58@mtdata.com), Director: Ron Niswander, K8HSF (reniswander@gmail.com).

This is your newsletter! Amateur radio information of general interest, club member project descriptions and doings, radio applications to other activities, corrections, or suggestions are all welcome. Individual submissions make for variety! We need more writers! Send submissions to: Jeanne A. Dodge, KC1DCQ (j.anndodge@gmail.com).