

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



FIRST CLASS MAIL



THE COMMUNICATOR THE COMMUNICATOR

May 2020

Upcoming Events

Breakfast, E-board, General Meeting, Picnic all cancelled this month due to Covid19 Pandemic

- Monday May 11, 7 p.m. Online Meeting via Zoom, Aaron KF1G on JS8Call – details inside
- Monday May 25, 7 p.m. VE Session at GCC – *tentative, check for updates*

May 2020

Calendar

Online Meeting via Zoom: Monday May 11, 7:00 p.m.

Join the meeting to learn about JS8Call, a new weak signal keyboard-to-keyboard communications mode.

Aaron's description: We will start from 'zero' and talk about digital interfaces, and move through installing the software, getting setup, and making our first contact with the software.

Parts of this training will be used to make an online resource for teaching JS8Call for ARES, and emergency response in New England.

If you want to follow along as we do the meeting I would suggest having a Signalink or other radio interface sound card and a laptop that is connected to your radio via its CAT control. If you don't know what those things are, that's OK we will cover them all during the meeting.

So please join me, at 7pm on May 11th, using Zoom:

<https://umass-amherst.zoom.us/j/94979495039>

Meeting ID: 949 7949 5039

Password: 226283

This information will be on the club website, and on my personal site kf1g.net.

Secretary's Report

No Secretary's notes are available, these are informal notes made by AI, N1AW, acting newsletter editor

There were no E-board or Program meetings in April 2020 because of Covid 19 social distancing efforts

E board meeting Notes: Aaron conferred with E-board members via e-mail and received a concensus on cancelling the April meetings. There was no concensus reached on Field Day, although general feeling seems to be that we probably will not be able to plan on a Field Day anything like those we have done in past years.

General Membership meeting (via Zoom) started at 7:00 p.m.

Aaron described some of the forms Arduino microcontrollers can take and some of the applications for which hams have used them. At least 20 people logged in, including some from other clubs and some FCARC members who do not often make it to our regular meetings.

Aaron wrote this follow-up in an e-mail:

Last month we did a 45 minute introduction to the Arduino platform. If you missed it you can check the poor quality recording of it at <https://youtu.be/DDLxwgB4K3Q>. I am sorry for the quality it was the first time I had recorded a zoom meeting, hopefully they will be better in the future.

I talked about a few online resources so I wanted to include links here:

Learning Arduino

<https://learn.adafruit.com/category/learn-arduino>
<https://learn.adafruit.com/ladyadas-learn-arduino-lesson-number-0>

Tindie

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

uBitx

<https://www.hfsignals.com/index.php/ubitx/>

In the meeting I and a few others offered to help people who want some help. Please reach out to us if you want to. Learning and teaching are important parts of both the ham radio hobby and for electronics.

News, Activities & Articles

May VE Session Status

The FCARC has for many years conducted regular Amateur Radio License Exams (VE sessions) on the fourth Monday of February, May, August, and November. Recently we have switched from doing these under the auspices of the ARRL VEC to doing them with the Pioneer Valley VE Team, under the Laurel VEC. With PVVET exams are free and new callsigns are known very quickly.

If this article has not been deleted by the publication date of this issue of the Communicator it means we don't know yet whether our scheduled May 25, 2020 session will take place. We don't know yet whether we will have access to a meeting room at GCC or whether the Laurel VEC will allow necessary changes due to social distancing conditions.

June FCARC Elections

Aaron KF1G

We normally announce at the May meeting that elections will be in June, but we will not be having a May meeting, due to Covid.

The following positions are open for election this year:

President: currently Aaron Addison, KF1G

Secretary: currently Chris Myers, KB1NEK

Director: currently Belle Dyer, KB1NOG

If you know of someone who would be interested in holding a position please send their information to Anne Kring via email (amk320@comcast.net). She is the nominating committee this year, and as such is not available to be nominated.

Any member can be nominated for any position, and if you like you can nominate yourself. But we need these nominations before the June meeting. Once someone is nominated they will be contacted to see if they are willing to serve.

Elections will be held at the June 8th meeting or as best we can by other means should we not have a June meeting.

Note added by AI, N1AW: Our rules also allow for nominations to be made at the June business meeting, but only if the nominee is present to agree to being nominated. But at this point we don't know if we will be able to meet as a group in person, and it might not be possible to deal with a nomination that had not been accepted in advance. So the best thing to do is to make nominations and obtain the OK of nominees in advance.

WordPress Website Trial

Silas Cutler, KC1BTV

As part of our discussion to expand our online presence, we've started building a demo of our possible future website on Wordpress at <https://fcarc.wordpress.com>. For those who were unable to attend the recent meeting in which Fred Remmerer from Nashua presented on their new site, we've started experimenting with Wordpress, which is software that allows for relatively easy creation of remarkably flexible and dynamic websites. The objective of our demo site is to help the e-board evaluate if expanding the club's online footprint, in a similar way to Nashua, will help unify the clubs activities and recruiting efforts. For those interested in checking out the demo site, the content should be fairly familiar, as most has been copied from our current website.

While we are all practicing social distancing and expanded radio time, stay tuned to the demo site for updates on meetings and other club events.

Emergency Responses by Local Hams

Aaron Addison, KF1G: As the Ham Radio Operator on the Shutesbury Emergency Management Team, I am trying to keep all my batteries charged, and making sure I have my 'go-bag' ready for a moments notice. And keeping a full tank of gas - remarkably easy given I drive once a week now.

Chris Myers, KB1NEK: Since the start of the covid-19 threat, I have been busy as the task force leader for the town of Shelburne. My job requires setting up and moderating bi-weekly conference calls needed for the task force members to coordinate their activity. It is a little bit like taking the job of net control on a radio net, except we are using the Zoom application, which I don't really like.

Zoom and similar internet based applications make me wonder what we will do if some other disaster disrupts ordinary telephone and internet service. I hope the Section Emergency Coordinator, Bob Meneguzzo will pull together another SET exercise to stimulate us to try again to set up useful radio communication from Greenfield Community College.

Many local hams have also volunteered through the Western Massachusetts Medical Reserve Corps, successor to the Franklin County Citizen Corps. You can find more information at <https://wmmrc.org/>.

NEQP

from ARRL WMA Section: <https://wma.arrl.org/>:

The New England QSO Party will be held on May 2nd and 3rd.

The QSO Party is 20 hours long overall, in two sections with a civilized break for sleep Saturday night. It

goes from 4 pm Saturday until 1 am Sunday, then 9am Sunday until 8 pm Sunday. Operate on CW, SSB and digital modes on 80-40-20-15-10 meters. For each QSO you'll give your callsign, a signal report and your county/state. Top scorers can earn a plaque and everyone who makes 25 QSOs and sends in a log will get a certificate. The full NEQP rules are at <http://www.neqp.org/rules.html>.

Field Day

AI, N1AW

We have not had an opportunity to discuss Field Day. In any case we don't know what the situation will be by the end of June. Trying to make plans seems to be aiming at a moving target. The ARRL has a page at <http://www.arrl.org/news/arrl-suggests-taking-a-creative-approach-to-field-day-2020> with suggestions for creative approaches to Field Day. Suggestions include:

An intra-club competition between club members,

A Field Day challenge with a neighboring club,

Operating multiple stations spaced widely in the allowed 1000 ft circle, using remote connections for operating a GOTA station,

A Field Day station at the usual site, operated remotely by members from their homes.

None of these seem realistic for our club, especially the last two, I don't know of any hams in our area who have experience in operating a station remotely.

I read on the Internet a suggestion to ask the ARRL to create a new class of operation that would allow individuals using a club callsign to operate from multiple locations on a scheduled basis (only one on the air at any time) and combine the logs from all for a club entry.

Some suggest we forget about the rules. Matt Wilhelm W1PY, who many of us know, wrote this to the YCCC mailing list:

> I would never say this if it were an actual contest, but...

>

> Do whatever works best for your club whether it fits within the rules or

> not. Try something new! As long as one is operating within the confines of

> the law, the absolute worst thing that could happen by not sticking to the

> Field Day rules is that your club isn't listed in the QST results. To me,

> learning from trying new things, making lots of contacts, memories from a

> fun event, camaraderie (remote or in person), and of course setting the

> hook in the cheek of potential contesters are the important parts of Field

> Day. Looking at your club call in a list of thousands and a ridiculous

> number of categories for 2 seconds is 'meh' at best. A detailed write up of

> what you did on a club webpage or social media with lots of photos of YOUR

> club is much more interesting to others both in and outside the club than a

> line score that few outside your category will ever see.

>

> And yes...Have fun!

HamXposition (formerly Boxboro)

Bob K1IW, Chairman, Northeast HamXposition 2020

The convention committee has decided to postpone the 2020 convention to the week of November 6 through 8. There are several reasons for this, the first and foremost is the health and well-being of our attendees. In addition, there are many logistical problems with holding the convention in July, even under the most favorable conditions of the pandemic emergency being over by then.

We believe it is unlikely that the state's ban on large gatherings will be completely lifted by the end of July.

Even if it were, we believe attendance will be severely impacted due to lingering (and quite appropriate caution).

Almost all of our exhibitors are unwilling to commit to anything prior to June. The convention is subject to penalties for cancellation. The penalties increase as we get closer to the convention date. By moving to November, we move out the schedule on these penalties. This will allow us to reassess the viability of the convention in early August. By then we will have further insight into prevailing conditions.

The November weekend was the only one available to us - and could be lost to another group if we did not act on it.

Covid vs Flu

Doug Houston, W1DMH, passed this on from an ER Doctor

Let me introduce myself: I am a practicing ER doctor with a Bachelors degree in cell and molecular biology/genetics and a Masters degree in public health in addition to my doctorate.

COVID is not a flu. Not even a little. Here are reasons why:

1. It is a separate species. It is no more like influenza than you are like a hippo. DIFFERENT SPECIES.
2. It is an airborne virus. This means the tiny droplets can stay in the air for a full 2 hours. So if a person coughed in aisle 4 of Target 1.5 hours ago, they may be home now but their covid cloud is still hanging there just waiting for you to walk by and take a breath. Influenza is not an airborne virus. It is droplet spread- meaning someone has to directly crop dust you with their sneeze to get you sick. Covid is much more contagious.
3. Covid is more virulent. Virulence factor is a measure of how catchy something is. For example, the flu is like beer. It takes a bunch to get you drunk. Covid is more like tequila - A little goes a long way. You need to suck up a lot of flu particles to actually catch the flu; with covid, even a few particles is enough to infect you.
4. Covid has a longer incubation than the flu. When you catch the flu, you typically get sick in the next 1-2 days. This is awesome because it means you stay at home while contagious because you feel like a heap of fried garbage. Covid has a blissful 5-9 days of symptom free time during which you are well enough to head to the movies, gym or mar-a-lago while also being contagious enough to infect everyone you encounter.
5. Covid has a longer duration of illness than flu. With covid, you have a 5-9 days of blissful asymptomatic contagiousness. This then turns into about 1 week of cough and overall feeling like hell but still surviving. Week 2 is when things hit the fan and people end up unable to breathe and on a ventilator. Many stay on the vent for up to 15 days. 5 days incubating+7 kinda sick days + 15 days on a ventilator makes for 27 days of virus spreading illness, (assuming your don't just die of massive asphyxiation and body-wide collapse from overwhelming infection somewhere in that last week).The flu has an average incubation of 1-

2 days and sick time of 7 days for a total of 9 infectious days. In the world of deadly viruses, that 18 extra days might as well be a millennia.

6. Covid is more deadly. A LOT more deadly. The flu has about a 0.2% mortality rate, meaning 2 of every thousand people who get sick with flu will die. On the contrary, the death rate from covid is reportedly 2%, so 10 times more deadly than flu. Ten times more death seems like a lot more death to me. Whats more worrisome is that 2% is actually incorrect because it doesn't kill kids so that skews the average. With covid, age is a major factor in survival. If we don't include people under 30, the death rate for adults is on average 4.5%. 9 out of every 200 adults that get this will die from it. Do you know 200 adults? Do you think losing 9 of them is no big deal? Since mortality increases with age in covid, the risk gets worse as you get older so if we put 100 grannies in a room with covid, only 85 would make it out alive to make pies and tell great stories of the old days... and that just sucks.

I hope that helps to clarify is why covid is in no way a flu, why you are in no way a hippo, and why staying home is the only way for non-essential people to do their part while I spend my days at work covered in a plastic poncho, sucking air through a stuffy respirator mask, leaving my scrubs in my driveway, showering the covid off at 4am when I get in, and thinking to myself "now do u still think it was just a flu?" as I risk my own life with my face 2 inches from their highly contagious, gasping mouth while I slide the plastic tube down their throat and start up the ventilator.

A Modest Proposal (for the next Extra Class question pool)

Dan Romanchik, KB6NU

(These are excerpts from an article on Dan's blog at <https://www.kb6nu.com/>)

The Extra Class License Exam is difficult.

It's true that some questions you can only get right by memorizing the answer. Almost all of the rules questions are that way, for example.

But there is no way to study the rest of the material in any depth and still have time to actually be an amateur radio operator. The amount of material that the Extra Class question pool covers takes an electrical engineering student four years or more to study thoroughly. And even then, some topics are bound to get short shrift.

I would say that even an "engaged" person will memorize about half the answers. I'd go even further and say that those that "study" the technical topics, don't study it as thoroughly as a college student would.

A modest proposal

The end result of this approach to testing is that we have many Extra Class licensees who know about a lot of things, but not in very much depth. Perhaps that's OK. Perhaps that's just what the question pool committee of the National Council of Volunteer Examiner Coordinators (NCVEC) was shooting for. If, however, we want an Extra Class license to denote that the licensee has some real technical expertise, I have a modest proposal.

Basically, my idea is that instead of testing on an incredibly wide range of topics, we test applicants on a set of basics, plus one or two particular topics. These would be topics that the person has expertise in already or enough of an interest in to study the topic in some depth. Below are the topics that I would consider to be basic and some that I consider to be more specialized. This is, of course, not an extensive list.

- Basic questions (20 questions, everyone takes this part of the exam)
 - Safety
 - Rules and regulations
 - Electrical principles/basic circuits
- Technical Interests (Choose two, 20 questions each)
 - Antennas and transmission lines
 - Radio wave propagation
 - EMI/RFI
 - Analog and digital design
 - Digital communications and networking
 - Software/software-defined radio
 - Operating: contests, DXing, direction finding, etc.
 - VHF/UHF

The questions in each of the technical interest question pools would be designed to really test the knowledge of the person taking the test. We'd have to figure out a way to make them difficult enough so that one couldn't just simply memorize the answer. Questions could appear in one or more technical interest tests. For example, a question on VHF/UHF propagation could appear in both the Radio Wave Propagation and VHF/UHF question pools.

Having said all this, I realize that this would not be easy to implement. You'd have to first decide on the topics and then enlist experts for each of the topics and get them to come up with a list of 80 – 100 questions each.

I realize that this has very little chance of being adopted, but it's interesting to think about, no? And, we have four years to do this, so it could be possible.

Dan Romanchik, KB6NU, is the author of the KB6NU amateur radio blog (KB6NU.Com), the "No Nonsense" amateur radio license study guides (KB6NU.Com/study-guides/), and often appears on the ICQPodcast (icqpodcast.com). When he's not thinking up ways to make the lives of the NCVETC question pool committee more difficult, he likes to build stuff and operate CW on the HF bands.

Dan also can sometimes be heard on 80m CW in the evenings, and he has joined our slow speed CW net on a few occasions.

If you are thinking of hosting a Zoom meeting, be aware that with the recent explosion of use of the program ways it can be abused have been identified.

[yccc] Zoom security practices

From:N2WQ via groups.io (r_bakalov@yahoo.com@groups.io)

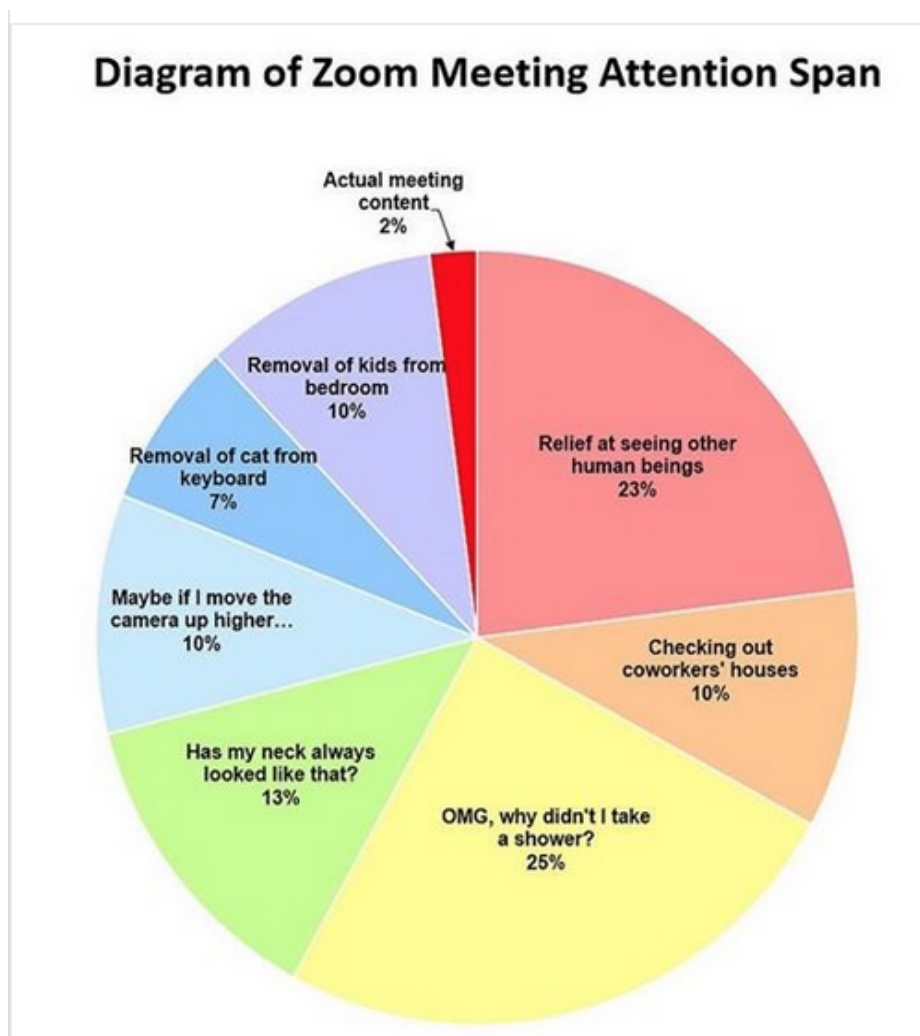
Date:Friday, April 3, 2020, 11:37 AM EDT

Here are some good practices to follow. Login to your account and change your settings:

1) Enable "Require a password when scheduling new meetings". Also enable "Embed password in meeting link for one-click join" 2) Disable "Use Personal Meeting ID (PMI) when scheduling a meeting". This will randomize every meeting ID 3) Disable "Join before host" 4) Disable "Allow removed participants to rejoin" 5) Enable "Waiting room" 6) To make it easier for users to join meetings without downloading an app, enable "Show a 'Join from your browser' link"

Rudy N2WQ

And, since we are all getting used to using Zoom....



THE COMMUNICATOR is an informational publication for members of the Franklin County Amateur Radio Club. Officers: President: Aaron Addison, KF1G (rangerfriday@gmail.com), Vice President: Richard Merriott, KC1JQJ (rcmpilot@comcast.net), Treasurer: Howard Field, N1LUP (howfield@comcast.net), Secretary: Chris Myers, KB1NEK (camyers@protonmail.com), Director: Belle Dyer, KB1NOG (bdyer582@juno.com), Director: Jeanne Dodge, KC1DCQ (j.anndodge@gmail.com), Clerk: Erika LaForme, KC1IJJ (etlaforme@yahoo.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).

*Change of address or missing an issue? Please contact Al Woodhull, N1AW, aswoodhull@yahoo.com
This issue and back issues of the **Communicator** are online at <http://www.fcarc.org/commun.htm>*