

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



FIRST CLASS MAIL



THE COMMUNICATOR
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November 2020

Upcoming Events

- Nov 9 Mon 6:00 pm E-Board
- Nov 9 Mon 7:15 pm Membership Meeting

Silas, KC1BTV, will conduct these meetings via Zoom. Zoom access info is on page 2

November 2020

Calendar

E-Board Meeting – Monday November 9 6:00 pm

General Meeting – Monday November 9 7:15 pm

Silas wrote: *“I think we should go back to having one Zoom meeting URL. I suggest this because it'll create (essentially) a two or so hour block where the Zoom meeting will be open - and we won't have a situation where folks are waiting in the meeting for the eboard when the meeting starts.”*

Zoom access information for both the e-board meeting and the general meeting is the same as for the general meeting last month:

E-Board meeting starts at 6:00 p.m.

General meeting starts at 7:15 p.m.

Zoom access info:

Silas Cutler is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting.

Topic: FCARC Monthly Meeting

Time: This is a recurring meeting Meet anytime

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85632093816?pwd=dnYxRmVlY09yK1pWczV4Nk9lbFpYQT09>

Meeting ID: 856 3209 3816

Passcode: 034257

One tap mobile

+13017158592,,85632093816#,,,,,0#,,034257# US (Germantown)

+13126266799,,85632093816#,,,,,0#,,034257# US (Chicago)

Dial by your location

+1 301 715 8592 US (Germantown)

+1 312 626 6799 US (Chicago)

+1 646 558 8656 US (New York)

+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

+1 346 248 7799 US (Houston)

+1 669 900 9128 US (San Jose)

Meeting ID: 856 3209 3816

Passcode: 034257

Find your local number: <https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kcGdWxPN9U>

Secretary's Report

E-Board Meeting Monday October 12:

There was no quorum, no official meeting.

News, Activities & Articles

How Can Our Club Function During the Pandemic?

AI N1AW

The first two meetings of our 2020-2021 Club year, conducted via Zoom, have been disappointing. We have had no quorum for the E-Board meetings and the following general meetings were not very well attended. Some members have had difficulties with the timing of the Zoom-based meetings, others have had difficulty connecting. I had difficulties the first time I tried to attend a Zoom meeting; Zoom did not work well with Firefox, my usual browser. Google's Chrome browser was suggested, and that worked OK. But when I tried Firefox again it worked – apparently an update or an add-on for Firefox was installed automatically in response to my unsuccessful first attempt.

So – I can't explain why I now have no problems with Zoom. But I suggest if you have had difficulties don't give up, try again.

Another thing which may help – you can use the access codes for the meetings Silas is hosting even when Silas has not started a meeting. His server is apparently active at all times, and it will send you a message saying "Please wait for the host to start this meeting." So this is a way you can test at any time – if you get this message you probably will have no problem when the real meeting occurs.

A proposal from Silas:

In an e-mail sent to the e-board and others, Silas wrote: I would like to propose the ability to raise/debate and vote on issues via email - however, this will require a board vote

Silas has created two other online possibilities: mailing lists

I've setup two mailing lists to hopefully help improve communication for the club. After being subscribed to HCRA's mailing list, it seemed worthwhile to follow their setup.

The first list is fcarcma-eboard@mailman.qth.net . This list is for eboard related discussions. Moderators of this list are myself, AI and Chris (AI & Chris as Website Managers).

The second list is fcarcma@mailman.qth.net . At the moment, this list only includes the eboard, however, pending no objection, I will mass subscribe the current member list (from the website)

More from Silas about the mailing lists

A couple of cool things about the mailing lists:

For both lists, an archive of sent messages is retained at:

<http://mailman.qth.net/mailman/private/fcarcma-eboard/>

<http://mailman.qth.net/mailman/private/fcarcma/>

As the backing software for these lists is GNU Mailman, which has been around for over 20 years, and it's

possible to build out some custom automation tools to handle some of these administrative tasks (even if the software does not natively support it).

Right now, in order to join the eboard list, it requires both email validation & admin approval. I've setup the general list to require only email validation (so you need to click a confirm button when you sign up).

In terms of allowing folks to view the list of those subscribed, the possible settings for this are:

- public
- list members
- admins only.

For the eboard list, this is set to list members (so, if you are subscribed to the list, you can see everyone else who is subscribed). For the general list, I've kept this to list admins.

In general, I think the general list should be widely accessible, regardless of membership status. In the longer run, it may be worth evaluating a membership management system to better track the member list / owed dues / etc.

Change of meeting time?

AI N1AW

There is nothing sacred about meeting times. In the past E-board and membership meetings were often on different days. One of our most popular events before the pandemic was our monthly Saturday breakfast at Denny's. Sometimes attendance at a Saturday breakfast was higher than at the meeting on the following Monday. We also frequently scheduled special events such as fox hunts and kit-building sessions on Saturdays following the breakfast.

It doesn't look like we will be resuming club breakfasts at Denny's for a while, but maybe we should consider having Zoom meetings on Saturday mornings? Maybe e-board and regular meetings on different days?

Snail Net and CW Practice

In the September newsletter we published information about the K1USN Slow Speed CW (con)Test (SST) on Sundays, starting on September 13th. The time, 8 p.m., conflicted with the Sunday session of our local Snail Net CW practice event. Suggested frequencies for the SST conflicted with our net as well. Since several of us wanted to play in the SST, since September we have not been conducting a Sunday Snail Net.

But the organizers of the SST, being real hams, did not schedule their event for 8 p.m. Eastern Time; they scheduled it for 0000Z. So last week with the end of Daylight Savings Time the conflict ended, and 0000Z is now 7 p.m. EST. And the Snail Net will again be meeting on both Sunday and Wednesday at 8 p.m. Those who want to do so can participate in both the SST and the Snail Net on Sundays now.

There's more... it has been pointed out that the ARRL Headquarters station W1AW has slow speed CW code practice sessions from 7 to 8 p.m. on Wednesdays, preceding the Wednesday Snail Net session. So on both Snail Net nights there is a possibility for additional code practice before our net time.

The Ionosphere and Snail Net

Our Snail Net is a local event, although occasionally we are joined by someone from further away – KB6NU has joined us from Michigan a few times. But even though we think of ourselves as a local group, on the 80 meter band a station in Greenfield such as N1YL and a station as local as W1SRB in Northampton are probably communicating using NVIS – Near Vertical Incidence Skywave – with signals reflected from the ionosphere.

Shortwave radio users are aware that levels of ionospheric ionization are relatively low these days, since we are at the low point in the 11 year cycle of sunspot activity. And with sunsets coming earlier as winter comes closer, our 8 p.m. Snail Net is affected by the lower level of ionospheric ionization at net time, so much so that signals from a relatively close station may be unexpectedly weak. The "critical frequency", the highest frequency at which a radio wave directed vertically will be reflected, can be below 3.5 Mhz, the low end of the 80 meter band. There have been a couple of Sundays where this has been quite noticeable. One way this can be observed is by comparing the code practice signals from W1AW on the 160 and the 80 meter bands. The W1AW signal on 160 meters is often very strong compared to the signal on 80 meters.

FCC Proposes to Reinstate Amateur Radio Service Fees ARRL News Updated 2020-10-27

ARRL will file comments in firm opposition to an FCC proposal to impose a \$50 fee on amateur radio license and application fees. The FCC *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM)* MD Docket 20-270 appeared in the October 15 edition of *The Federal Register* and sets deadlines of November 16 to comment and November 30 to post reply comments, which are comments on comments already filed. ARRL has prepared a [Guide to Filing Comments with the FCC](#) which includes tips for preparing comments and step-by-step filing instructions. Visit www.arrl.org/fcc-fees-proposal. An updated ARRL New story can be found at: <http://www.arrl.org/news/arrl-urges-members-to-join-in-strongly-opposing-fcc-s-application-fees-proposal>

HCRA ZeroBeat Newsletter

FCARC is not the only group struggling to find ways to keep in touch in these days of social distancing. The Hampden County Radio Association, like our group, does not have a venue for holding meetings. Like FCARC they are conducting meetings online.

FCARC members are welcome to access the HCRA's **ZeroBeat** newsletter to find out what is happening south of Franklin County. The November issue is now available at <http://www.hcra.org/zb/download.php?file=Nov2020.pdf>.

Random Notes from various places:

Brad W1BCC wrote: Free Icom IC-3220H dual band mobile - If someone would like it. Otherwise, it's recycle time. Appears to work OK on UHF. Will not transmit on 2m. Includes power cable, mobile bracket and manual. No microphone.

Scott MacDonald, son of Carter WA1TVS, is interested in becoming a ham and is preparing for the Technician test.

Space Weather news reported on Oct 6: Radio Signals from Mars

This week an amateur radio operator in British Columbia picked up a radio signal ... from Mars. It came from NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter flying just 274 km above the Red Planet's surface. Such a detection is possible because, right now, Mars is unusually close to earth.

The article included a picture of the homebrew antenna with a parabolic reflector that looks like it is about 5 feet in diameter.

Want to see Mars? Currently it is a very bright object in the eastern sky early in the evening.

THE COMMUNICATOR is an informational publication for members of the Franklin County Amateur Radio Club. Officers: President: Silas Cutler, KC1BTV (silascutler@gmail.com), Vice President: Richard Merriott, KC1JQJ (rcmpilot@comcast.net), Treasurer: Howard Field, N1LUP (howfield@comcast.net), Secretary: Erika LaForme, KC1IJJ (etlaforme@yahoo.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>*

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