



Di-Dah-Dit

Official Newsletter of the Parkersburg Radio Klub
P. O. Box 2112, Parkersburg, WV 26101

LEAGUE PROPOSES SIMPLIFIED LICENSE STRUCTURE

The ARRL has proposed a simplified Amateur Radio license structure featuring four license classes and reduced Morse code requirements for full HF access. In approving the plan July 18, the ARRL Board of Directors said the hobby no longer needed six license classes. In their discussions, Board members emphasized that the objective was to rationalize and simplify the amateur licensing structure without reducing the requirements for any class of license.

Among its recommendations, the plan would eliminate the current Novice and Tech Plus class licenses and merge those operating privileges into a new license class equivalent to the current General ticket. The plan would replace the present named license classes with Class A, B, C, and D tickets, revise written examination requirement and content, and set 12 WPM as the highest Morse code test requirement. Most of the spectrum freed up by the elimination of the current Novice CW bands would be "refarmed" into expanded HF phone segments. Some would remain available for digital and CW, however.

Announcement of the Board's plan generated a tumult of opinions pro and con within the Amateur Radio community.

Comments received at League Headquarters have ranged from angry opposition to enthusiastic support, but by the end of the week in which the plan was announced, most Board members reported receiving somewhat more comments in favor than opposed.

The League has forwarded details of the plan in a letter to the FCC but will not petition for a rulemaking as it awaits public release of the Commission's own ham radio restructuring plans (see related story below). In its letter, the ARRL asked the FCC to "consider this restructuring plan as a means of modernizing and simplifying amateur radio licensing, and a means of making Amateur Radio available to more people."

Before the July meeting, the ARRL Board had twice voted down motions to consider changing the licensing structure. This time, the impending FCC rulemaking provided the impetus for the Board to issue its own plan, in time to stimulate debate on the topic and possibly serve as a counterpoint to the anticipated FCC proposals.

ARRL Board approval of the plan followed extensive discussion and debate during its recent three-day meeting. "The

debate was, at times, contentious, and the result was not unanimous," said ARRL President Rod Stafford, W6ROD. The vote to approve the plan was 9 to 6. Most of those in the minority were not opposed to simplifying the licensing structure, however, and there was sentiment for even fewer license classes.

"Some Board members preferred greater simplification; others were uncomfortable with some of the changes being proposed," Stafford observed. "However, every Board member, without exception, left the meeting knowing that each of his or her colleagues did what they believe is best for the future of Amateur Radio." In developing its plan, the Board tied proposed reductions in Morse code requirements to corresponding increases in written examination standards. On the other hand, Board members were adamant that simplifying the structure should not come at the expense of privileges amateurs already have earned. This was the rationale to recommend granting the new entry-level Class C HF license to present Novice and Technician Plus licensees, who already have earned entry-level HF operating privileges.

Charts depicting the proposed operating privileges and licensing structure and the text of the League's letter to the FCC are available on the ARRL Web site at <http://www.arrl.org/news/restructuring/>. Members may comment on the ARRL plan via the Web or via e-mail to restrux@arrl.org.

Here are the highlights of the ARRL Board's restructuring plan:

The Class D license, equivalent to the current Technician class, would be the entry level ticket to Amateur Radio. Operating privileges and the written examination would remain at the same level at Technician, but the exam would be more consistent with Class D operating privileges.

The Class C would supplant the Novice as the entry level to HF. Under the League plan, all General, Tech Plus, and Novice licensees would become Class C licensees. The Class C ticket would convey current General privileges, but would offer bigger HF phone bands. Class C licensees would have access to another 50 kHz on 75 and 15 meters and another 25 kHz on 40 meters. To upgrade from Class D to Class C, an amateur would pass a written examination on the operational and technical qualifications required for HF operation plus a 5 WPM Morse code test. All amateurs now licensed as Advanced would become Class B.

The Class B would convey the privileges of the present Advanced license, but with additional phone privileges. The

Class B ticket would offer an additional 50 kHz on 75 and 15 meters and another 25 kHz on 40 meters. To upgrade from Class C to Class B, an amateur must pass a more advanced written examination--similar in difficulty to the present Element 4A--and a 12 WPM Morse code exam. All amateurs presently licensed as Amateur Extra Class would become Class A.

The Class A ticket would convey the full privileges of the present Amateur Extra Class but, once again, with expanded phone subbands. Class A licensees would get an additional 50 kHz on 75 and 15 meters and another 25 kHz on 40 meters. To upgrade from Class B to Class A, an amateur would be required to pass the most difficult written examination in the sequence. The Advanced written test is considered the most difficult in the current exam sequence. Consistent with the practice in many other countries, no Morse code examination beyond 12 words per minute would be required for a Class A ticket.

Adoption of the simplification plan culminated some 30 months of work by the Board and embraced input from thousands of ARRL members, non-members, and prospective hams. The Board debated a wide variety of options including more and fewer license classes, higher and lower qualification levels, and different privileges.

STRUCTURING THE RESTRUCTURING DEBATE

Love it or hate it, the ARRL's recent license restructuring plan certainly has generated considerable debate and controversy within the Amateur Radio community and gotten licensees thinking about what's good and what's not so good about the current system. ARRL Directors report they're getting lots of e-mail on both sides, and the overall trend appears to be in favor of the plan the Board released earlier this month.

Midwest Director Lew Gordon, K4VX, reports that his mail has been running better than two-to-one in favor. New England Director Tom Frenaye, K1KI, said he's having trouble keeping up with the avalanche of comments. "I've received 166 messages from New England hams, and the count is 105-61 in favor of the proposal," he said, adding that he still has about 50 messages to answer. Some hams have suggested the current system is just fine, and to change it will diminish the status of current licensees.

ARRL Executive Vice President David Sumner, K1ZZ, has an answer for the don't-change-anything camp, however. "If you're flatly opposed to any change at all, I don't think that you've taken into consideration the changes that have occurred over the past seven years," he said. For example, Sumner points out that the Novice license--instituted in 1951--no longer is the route of entry to

Amateur Radio for more than about 5% of the amateur population. Other than 10 meters, the Novice bands "are significantly underutilized," he observed. Sumner says amateurs can't make a case for additional bands if the present allocations aren't being used to capacity.

In recent years, most of those coming into the hobby have come in as Technicians. Nevertheless, they still must pass the Novice element, which includes questions on HF that are irrelevant to Technician ops. "This pretty much forces you to accept the fact that there must be some change," he said. "The real issue is how far should that change go, and on that, reasonable people can and will differ, and we'll be discussing that over the coming months as the process goes forward."

Sumner said nothing is cast in stone at this point, and if better ideas surface as a result of the current debate, "there will be every chance for those to be reflected in the ultimate FCC action."

The ARRL has sent a copy of its restructuring proposals to the FCC in a letter, but the League has not petitioned for a rulemaking as it awaits the Commission's own ham radio restructuring proposal, still in the draft stages. There's still no definite word on when the FCC's proposal will be made public. "Things are moving along," said an FCC spokesman, who added that the Commission has begun getting comments on the ARRL's

proposal. The FCC is expected to issue a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking that also will seek input from amateurs on various alternatives. The FCC spokesman suggested that hams wait until the Commission's proposal goes public before commenting on the issue.

MINUTES
June 8, 1998

The Parkersburg Amateur Radio Klub met at the Bonanza Restaurant. The meeting was called to order at 7pm by the president, Paul KB8QPY. There was no 50/50 drawing. The minutes of the last meeting were read and approved. There was no treasurer's report given.

OLD BUSINESS - Club inventory report. Carl K8OWL reported researching the checkbook for club equipment but was not able to match any checks with specific equipment.

Paul KB8QPY emphasized the youth workers detail starting July 12. A signup sheet was passed around.

Field day report. The supply barrel was inventoried for needed supplies. John N8NBL has reserved a tent and will supply tables and chairs also. Paul KB8QPY has arranged for a Porti-john and has received from the ARRL a packet of field day forms and publicity aids. Curt K8UC will move one antenna trailer and Carl K8OWL will move the other

one. Anyone desiring to use the club's crank up towers, will have to pick them up at Tim's WA8CRW. John N8NBL will supply a generator.

Food committee report. Georgia reported the picnic will be 6pm Saturday with the club furnishing meat and drinks and will be covered dish.

Paul KB8QPY called for a volunteer to handle the publicity and had no response. It is undecided what call we will use during the contest. Curt K8UC volunteered his call.

NEW BUSINESS - Since Leo WA8BMA has left the area, Kenny WA8LLM is updating his information on those willing to help with communications during the various races and parades, etc. He passed out information cards to collect the information. He will be contacting by mail those not present at the meeting. He also announced there will be W5YI testing at Eastwood Fire Department at 6pm Saturday 13.

Gene W2INO moved for adjournment at 7:40pm. The motion was seconded by Carl K8OWL.

Ray Bodie N8TWV, secretary



MINUTES
July 13, 1998

The Parkersburg Amateur Radio Klub met at the Bonanza Restaurant. The meeting was called to order by the president, Paul KB8QPY at 7:10 pm. Introductions were made by 34 members and guests. The 50/50 drawing of \$13.00 was won by Irene N8KYP.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and approved. The treasurer's report was given. The balance on hand is \$1942.71.

OLD BUSINESS: Curt K8UC made a field day report. The total score was 1440 points, down this year maybe due to the storm. The storm hit around 8 or 8:30 Saturday evening at Ohio Valley College North Campus. The large picnic tent and a smaller operating tent were blown over. All the masts and antennas survived. Wind and lightning were both severe. N8NMA operated at Blue Rock State Park and said the worst of the storm missed him. He was shut

down only about an hour because of lightning.

Thanks were extended to the picnic committee for the great job, of starting promptly at 6 pm and for the abundance of good food.

Blaine WA8IOE submitted an inventory of club equipment. It was reviewed and a few extra items were added to it.

Some area hamfest dates were announced, the next one to be in Huntington on August 8.

NEW BUSINESS: Robert Patterson WD5EXD submitted an application for membership. John N8NBL moved and Curt K8UC seconded that he be accepted. After some discussion, John N8NBL withdrew his motion and Curt K8UC withdrew his second. John WD8LKT moved and Dave WD8CYV seconded that the application be tabled. Motion carried.

Paul KB8QPY called for volunteers for the nominating committee and hearing none, will make appointments later.

Paul KB8QPY reported on the youth house repairs group that started working today. They are not wanting radio communications support.

Dave WD8CYV gave a report on the 147.39 repeater. The phone patch went down during the storm and he repaired it. Then the controller lost it's voice and he programmed it in CW. Two days later it was necessary to shut it down as it was beeping constantly and could not be controlled. The controller cards are all bad. Curt K8UC moved and John WD8LKT seconded to let Dave WD8CYV and Tim WA8CRW do whatever is necessary to get them repaired. Motion carried.

Jep K8BOT moved and John N8NBL seconded for adjournment at 8:00 pm.

Ray N8TWV, secretary

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