

# Alachua ARES/NFARC/NF4AC Clubs

## MINUTES

**February 8, 2023**

Attendance: 16. Meeting held in person at the Queen of Peace Catholic Community and also held via ZOOM.

Gordon Gibby  
Leland Gallup  
Mike Schaffer  
Susan Halbert  
Steve Panaghi  
Wendell Wright  
Brett Wallace  
Reid Tillery  
Lorilyn Roberts  
Jon Simonds  
Mike Hasselbeck  
Vann Chesney  
Dean Covey  
Earl McDow  
Rosemary Jones  
Glen Johnson

**Introductions.** From 1830 until 1859 when the meeting commenced. The NFARC/NF4AC radio club met for this month in person at Queen or Peace Catholic Community and via Zoom.

- 1. INTRODUCTION/APPROVAL OF JANUARY 2023 MINUTES.** Approved.
- 2. NVIS WINLINK AND VOICE PROGRESS.** Reid Tillery led off the meeting with a talk on his NVIS work on both phone and digital (HF). The twice monthly HF phone net started by K9RFT has grown to include areas considerably outside the local area; again, this shows the utility of NVIS for local HF comms. Having seen how well the phone side was working, Reid has now extended the concept to include P2P Winlink (Vara) to demonstrate how well P2P emails via can go by HF in a local/regional area. Reid thinks an additional HF radio (meaning an antenna that can be devoted to a second HF transceiver) would be an excellent addition to the EOC's capability. Winlink is one of our best tools for maintaining local data transfers – by HF as opposed to VHF. HF extends our reach without requiring in-between infrastructure such as a digipeater. Gordon has suggested a triplexer that might be usable for allowing multiple HF transceivers to use the one EOC coax that we have. The issue is that we only have one coax for HF, and this is hundreds of feet long from the exterior of the EOC building as it routes finally to a terminus in the EOC's radio room. Jon Simonds asked whether this P2P initiative was using Vara HF - yes. Brett mentioned that ARRL has cautioned that PSK31 and Pactor are the only acceptable data modes on 60m. Gordon says its because (probably) because our status is secondary on that band. AA3YB and others discussed the precise legality to amateur use (as a secondary) of digital on 60m. It appears that while it may be legal, since there are only five

QSOs permitted for the entire 60m channelized band at the same time, saturation and interference with the primary services is an issue.

- 3. W4DFU DIGIPEATER – Moving to RMS?** Jon Simonds reports that a couple of weeks ago there was an “antenna party” on top of the dental tower at UF Shands. The digipeater is back up. The call sign on it is now W4DFU-7 for Vara FM is W4DFU-7. This is for the digipeater. But there is also now an RMS (!) with the call-sign W4DFU-12. This is on 144.990. Jon and Susan Halbert think the packet side is still up and running. Vara FM’s digipeater is set up on “wide,” and we’ll have to see what it can do. Jon Simonds is asking us to see if we can hit it to see how it is working. NF4RC website is now updated to show this. The Dental tower is on the University’s internet/network, and it is probably pretty reliable for power and network. This is great news and a fabulous addition to our County’s digital VHF data transfer and RMS architecture.
- 4. FOLLOW-UP OF JANUARY TRAINING EXERCISE.** The January drill called for us to send a specified PDF by VARA-FM to NF4AC (the Alachua County EOC radio club callsign). The file was a fake ICS with a fake signature. Using VARA FM the data transfer can be done in perhaps three minutes. We used this call sign because that’s what we would use in a disaster. 16 people succeeded with this drill, including some whom we don’t even know. What didn’t work well...the account for NF4AC was too low in capacity – that has now been changed. Also, folks didn’t know what “send by radio” meant. “Radio Only”? No...it just meant use a radio. Even a Baofeng would have enough TX out that with a good antenna it will work. Turns out that the directions were somewhat ambiguous – according to those who had some difficulty. Several on our list had troubles. KX4Z set out a brief explanation of what the drill was intended to accomplish. The idea was that if we could get a Winlink message out to an RMS outside the disaster area, it could go onto a CMS and then back to FL for delivery to, e.g., the State EOC. Gordon then described what “Radio Only” Winlink is all about. Packet can’t do Radio Only but Vara FM can do Radio Only. Gordon showed onscreen how to set up your MPS selection for radio only message pickup.
- 5. JANUARY HOTWASH DRILL GROUP DESIRED TRAINING DIRECTION.** KX4Z now polls the attendees: what do people in the group want to do? Our Alachua ARES group is way ahead of lots of other people – we mentor Flagler, Volusia, Columbia. KX4Z is particularly concerned about our badged volunteers who have not succeeded at this exercise. Halbert raised EasyTerm as a redundant VHF Packet-ish tools that merits further training and familiarization. Suggestion: train and teach on Yapp and EasyTerm so that we can use/be familiar with its BBS and data transfer capabilities. Suggestion: use/explore JS8 Call and our 24/7 station. Note: it is possible to use JS8 on VHF (Secretary note: did not know that). KX4Z talked about the issue of badged volunteers not participating in the exercise/drills, because that raises issues of reliability and whether such people can be deployed. Lorilyn suggests CW training. Question from zoom attendee...is the EOC looking to reduce the number of badged volunteers? Answer: no. Brett feels as if in the coming years it comes to rebadging, we are “shooting ourselves in the foot” by taking away badges. Some capability is more than none. KX4Z’s concern is that people who do not participate in exercises are not the ones we will call to deploy. Rosemary suggests that even the non-technically proficient can still go to shelters and will be fine. Rosemary’s concern is that she cannot use digital modes, so less-skilled can be used. AA3YB offered to those who may actually go to the EOC to train EOC radio room equipment and procedures...weekends? Generally, people seemed to be ok with the training direction of our group.

- 6. TOWER TRAILER PLANNING/PROGRESS AND SMALL MAST TRLR/GENNY.**  
Stuart Reisner has an idea how to do a tower trailer for our group. KX4Z showed images of the trailer, and how the trailer could mount a tower. Stuart recommended a hinge at the base on the trailer, and attache the tower to the trailer, with superstructure, and outriggers to stabilize. Walking up the tower with 3 people. Tower extended is 35'. Aluminum, not steel, so it weighs somewhat over a hundred pounds. Hexbeam would be ok, as well as 2m antenna on top. KX4Z showed another image with a "small mast trailer." KN4TWS said extending 4' beyond the bed of a trailer means there has to be a flag; but battery powered lights do the same thing. The aluminum tower for the "tower trailer" is on a worm drive, will not freewheel, and has no ratchet – the risk to digits from a freewheeling tower is reduced. The tower as such thus can be raised with a screwdriver motor. The "small tower" trailer has a PVC mast that can be used just with a light wire/vertical antenna. The small tower trailer also has the diesel generator that KX4Z rebuilt.
- 7. LAB N'LUNCH FEBRUARY 18<sup>th</sup>...TOPIC(S) TO BE DECIDED.** Cancelled for Feb.
- 8. ALACHUA EM REUNIFICATION EXERCISE MAR 1 2023 - UPDATE.** AA3YB gave short update.
- 9. FIELD DAY PLANNING UPDATE.** KG4VWI told how she was able to track down the insurance people who handle our Certificate of Insurance needs for our Field Day event. Dean Covey said they did the same thing at Ft Walton beach in terms of adding an additional insured. The Certificate of Insurance is now with County Risk Management for review. We don't have a logistics chief or an operations chief for the Field Day Event. So KX4Z is asking for people to step forward. But WAIT!...Wendell got voluntold to be the Logistics Chief. It seems AA3YB was voluntold in the past that he is the Operations Chief (prior to event). Two key FD planning positions now filled. KN4TWS and AA3YB agreed after the meeting to do a site survey of the Kanapaha building in about a week.
- 10. Sbitx SDR PROGRESS.** KX4Z showed images of earlier version of the sBitx and its many spurs issues (illegal signal). New version has MUCH superior output. Linear regulator installed has taken care of much of the issues.
- 11. ADJOURN** at 2041, 8 February 2023