

Palmetto Amateur Radio Club - March Member Meeting

Wednesday, March 25th 8:00pm

Quick recap

The club held their regular Wednesday meeting at 8pm to discuss various ham radio activities and updates. The group reviewed the treasurer's report showing current financial status, discussed recent testing results where two members successfully upgraded their licenses, and explored the implementation of Meshtastic devices for digital communication. The team decided to move their April park event from Quiet Waters Park to Holiday Park due to scheduling conflicts with the Florida State Parks on the Air event and the Florida QSO contest. They also discussed the status of their repeater system, with the VHF repeater functioning well but the UHF monopole requiring secure mounting, and decided against pursuing a custom battery box project due to cost considerations. The conversation ended with plans for members to bring their radios to the upcoming park event on April 18th at Holiday Park.

Next steps

- David: Update website and group communications to reflect the April 18th Park Hopper event will be at Holiday Park (not Quiet Waters).
- David: Upload information about the Florida QSO Party event to the website and groups.I/O for members.
- Mike and Nemury: At the April 18th Park Hopper event, assist Willie (TCL) with testing and configuring his radio/hotspot and demonstrate digital/DMR features.
- All members (especially those with HTs): Bring radios (especially HTs) to the April 18th Park Hopper event for demonstration and to assist Florin and others.
- Mike: Fabricate metal sheathing for the donated repeater cabinet and coordinate transport/transfer of equipment to the repeater site when ready.
- Nemury: Help with Meshtastic/mesh network setup and be available to assist club members interested in building or programming these devices.
- David: Send out email and update groups.I/O about the new Park Hopper location and details for April 18th.

Summary

Board Members attending: David P., Nemury V., Mike S. and Jim S.

Ham Radio Activities and Tools

The group discussed ham radio activities and tools. Nemury shared that he runs FT8 at 35 watts using a 6 VTV vertical antenna and uses the Hermes light radio exclusively for digital communication to conserve his main radio's finals. The participants discussed the ham clock service, noting that it went silent early but Bruce is working on it, with options to redirect to Bruce's IP or use alternative services like the Open Hand Club which works well as a

web-based alternative. The discussion included details about radio equipment, with Florin looking for a multicolor HT radio, and Mike explaining that analog radios can work with All-Star nodes as an alternative to more expensive digital radios.

Winterfest Boat Parade Planning Updates

Carol provided an update on Winterfest Boat Parade planning, mentioning they conduct year-round planning and recently completed a post-event review with law enforcement and committee members.

Board Updates, Website and Member Survey

The meeting covered several updates and decisions. David announced that Board of Director minutes and member surveys are now available on the website, and the member meetings have been moved to Wednesdays at 8pm to accommodate more participants. Jim presented the treasury report, noting that membership dues and donations are tracking well, though testing fees from the previous month are still pending ARRL approval. The group also discussed results from a member survey regarding meeting times, which showed 36% of respondents had scheduling conflicts, and reviewed plans for upcoming Park Hopper events. The group also noted plans to transition away from using Groups.io for messaging and move toward a message board on their website.

Repeater Updates

Mike provided an update on repeater work, reporting that the VHF repeater (DR2X) is functioning well, though the UHF monopole remains secured but non-operational due to high SWR and electrical damage to the BridgeCom repeater. The team is working on installing a new cabinet to house equipment more securely at the repeater site.

Battery Box and Meshtastic Projects

The team discussed two main projects: a battery box and Meshtastic devices. Mike reported that building a custom battery box would be too expensive compared to purchasing ready-made ones on Amazon, as the cost would be around \$75 for basic features versus \$70 for a pre-built solution. Nemury presented test results showing Meshtastic devices could achieve approximately 100-mile range in RF-only mode, suggesting they could be useful as repeaters with solar equipment, which would cost around \$198. The group agreed that Meshtastic technology appears to be gaining popularity, with multiple vendors offering the devices and significant coverage in the local area.

Nemury explained the Meshtastic device, a digital communication tool that costs between \$15-200 depending on the model, with the recommended version being the \$15-20 mesh model. He demonstrated how the device uses a mesh network to enable long-distance communication, showing a map of global network coverage including connections to Europe, Asia, and Australia. The group discussed technical details including the 915MHz frequency, line-of-sight requirements, and power limitations using milliwatts.

ARRL Testing update

The group discussed upcoming testing scheduled for April 11th at a church in Davie, with plans to switch between the library and this location. David announced there were two people testing at the March Testing event, including one technician and one extra class license.

Park Event Date Change Discussion

The group confirmed that the park event will be held on the 18th at Quiet Waters Park, moving it from the 25th due to the Florida QSO event. The group also discussed upcoming solar storms affecting radio propagation and the need for higher power equipment (QRO) rather than QRP moving forward.

Park Event Planning Discussion

The group discussed plans for an upcoming park event on April 18th, deciding to hold it at Holiday Park instead of Quiet Waters or other locations. David explained that the Florida QSO is a state-wide contest where operators make contacts across different counties, with participants using various bands depending on their license level. Willie agreed to attend and bring his Yaesu VX6 radio to test digital modes. The group also briefly discussed the upcoming ARRL Field Day event in June, which they will attend at different clubs rather than hosting their own event. Jim was reminded to contact someone about 501c3 status.

The meeting concluded at 20:22 EST