

Meeting Minutes for the August PARC Board Meeting

August 23rd – 4pm EST

Attending: Jim Schwantes (Treasurer), David Pomerantz (President), Ricky Eaton (Secretary) and Mike Sam (Repeater Trustee)

Quick recap

The Palmetto Amateur Radio Club board meeting covered bylaw updates for 501(c)3 status, focusing on Articles 2 and 16, and discussed the process for member voting. The group reviewed the status of the club's repeaters, noting ongoing receiver issues, the VHF Yaesu repeater being sent for warranty repair, and the BridgeComm unit being out of service, with a broader discussion about lightning protection, grounding, and insurance coverage. Members shared experiences with low repeater usage and the challenges of attracting activity, comparing their situation to other clubs and considering alternative approaches like youth outreach and workshops. The meeting also discussed potential park locations for future club gatherings, the handling of food donations at events, and Jim's feedback from the Huntsville Hamfest event.

Next steps

David

- Update the invitation template for PARC events to include a note about expected donations for food and drinks.
- Update the club website with the new bylaws if the vote passes on Wednesday.

Mike

- Reinstall the VHF Yaesu repeater once it is repaired and returned from warranty service.
- Get a quote for repairing the Mirage amplifier under ARRL insurance.

Jim

- Use Zoom's online voting tool during the Wednesday members meeting to vote on proposed bylaw changes (Article 2 and Article 16).
- Contact Lightning Protection Services for a quote or product suggestion for a VHF lightning arrester system.
- Contact ARRL insurance to inquire about the process for repairing the BridgeComm repeater (not under warranty).

- Negotiate with Brown and Brown (new ARRL insurance provider) during September for the upcoming insurance renewal.
- Get details on potential new park locations (e.g., the city park near Tree Tops, Coral Springs Park) and post them to the board group for discussion.
- Write a summary/write-up of the Melbourne Hamfest experience.

Collaboration

- All Board Members: Discuss and decide on a new park location for the next PARC meetup at the Wednesday members' meeting.

Summary

Bylaw Changes and Voting Process

The group discussed upcoming bylaw changes that need member approval, specifically focusing on updates to Article 2 and Article 16 regarding 501(c)3 status. The team plans to vote on these changes during Wednesday's members meeting, with Jim investigating Zoom's online voting tool to facilitate the process.

Repeater Repair Issues Discussion

Mike reported issues with both VHF and UHF repeaters, noting poor receiver sensitivity that affected coverage within a 5-mile radius. He decided to send the VHF repeater to Yaesu for warranty repair, which will cost approximately \$150 including shipping and packing. The group discussed that the BridgeComm repeater would not be repaired due to budget constraints.

Repeater Site Lightning Protection

The team discussed lightning protection for their repeater site after experiencing damage from a recent strike. Mike explained that while no product can fully protect against direct lightning strikes, they have implemented several safety measures including quality lightning arresters, proper grounding systems both inside and outside the building, and dedicated electrical panels. The group agreed that while they can't completely prevent future strikes, their current setup with both building and lightning ground connections provides the best protection available.

Antenna Equipment Corrosion Solutions

Mike reported that the polyphasers were oxidizing due to corrosion from using copper and aluminum in a saltwater environment, so he moved them to an enclosed box with an aluminum ground plate and stainless-steel bolts. Ricky suggested using aluminum paste between metal pieces to prevent oxidation and recommended liquid tape for coaxial connections. Jim suggested two action items: contacting Lightning Protection Services for a VHF lightning arrester system and checking with ARRL insurance about covering the damaged VHF Mirage amp, though the BridgeComm repeater is not covered under their current insurance plan.

Repeater System and Engagement Challenges

The group discussed challenges with their repeater system and low user engagement. Ricky noted that the 146.10 repeater sits idle most of the time, only used for occasional nets, and questioned whether it's worth repairing the Henry amplifier. The discussion revealed that current repeater usage is limited compared to 15-20 years ago when there were more active ham radio nets and greater participation. The group agreed to continue with plans to reinstall their VHF repeater and link it to the All-Star system, but acknowledged that this approach hasn't been successful in growing membership.

Membership Growth

The group discussed challenges with their repeater system, noting that it's not attracting new users beyond existing members with radio equipment. Jim suggested focusing on membership growth and youth education rather than relying on repeaters to expand the club. They discussed potential opportunities to engage with Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, and high schools to introduce young people to the hobby through workshops and merit badge programs.

PARC Meetup Location Planning

The group discussed planning their next PARC meetup location, reviewing various parks in the area including Holiday, Treetops, VistaView, and Snyder Park. They decided to focus on finding a location with shade, picnic tables, and restrooms that would be accessible to everyone in the group. Jim agreed to research and provide details about a specific park near Tree Tops with a pavilion that would accommodate their needs.

They addressed concerns about food costs at recent events, particularly an incident where non-club members consumed multiple hot dogs and sodas without making donations. The group decided to implement better food monitoring and add donation requirements to their event invitations.

Meeting was concluded by David Pomerantz at 5:33pm EST