

24 April 2022

FIARC Meeting Minutes – 23 April 2022

Attendees:

N7NW – Hal Goodell	K7NP - Jim Christianson
KJ7RVR – Jane Tollett	KJ7JCB – Paul Thorpe
W7JC – Jerry Cerny	AC7QN – Chuck Kemmer
KE7PGD – A.P. Templet	N7BRR – Brian Hevly
WA7KCK – Ken Rowling	KI7CQM – Jim Braden
K7RUT – Brian Ramey	KB1OKM – John Gaythorpe
WA7BRI – Robin Carter	K7CRZ – Jeff Ferguson

The April 23 FIARC meeting was convened at 10am - thanks to all for attending and to Gail Ferguson for the cookies. We welcomed the folks from Anderson Island – Brian Ramey and John Gaythorpe.

1. Minutes from the last meeting, March 26, were unanimously approved.

2. Updates from President Hal Goodell

- The cabinet was picked up by Jim, Paul and Doug and installed downstairs outside of the radio room by Hal and Doug. Doug installed an outlet in the cabinet; there will be more in the future. The three spare handhelds are being kept and charged in the cabinet plus the three marine radios will be installed as well. There is a combination lockbox on the wall containing cabinet and radio room keys.

- Finalizing an equipment order to arrive in mid-May with antennas and coax cable for the J-poles.

- Reminder of our purpose (from the Bylaws): “It shall be our purpose to further the exchange of information and cooperation between members, to promote radio knowledge, fraternalization and individual operating efficiency. The main objective of FIARC is to support and be part of the Fox Island Community and Recreational Association (FICRA) Building Trust in its Emergency Preparedness Program on Fox Island, WA.” We are trying to get new members to the club and to emergency response activities. At the August FICRA Fair, we would like to have a booth with working antennas and club members. Dan Stevens, the VE at Mike & Key, would like to hold a certification class here on FI. Zoom certifications are working but are not the same as in-person classes. A new license now costs \$35.

3. Updates from Vice-President Jim Braden

- These are exciting times with the upcoming April 30 ARES drill, and the opportunities for new technology (alternate communication systems). For emergency management, the key is looking for what works and what doesn't in an emergency so there should be some good learning from the drill.

- Jim stressed our signing up for StarLink as another alternate communication bypassing the cell phone and other tower-vulnerable systems. He and Hal will pursue funding this under FICRA Building Trust.

- A reminder of the importance of the Sunday nets and using these and other opportunities for training and getting comfortable with broadcasting and with the phonetic alphabet (Hal's point).

- Password for the NCC router is NCC@2022

- The Nichols Community Center (NCC) generator is kept in the garage, handles the entire building electrical load, so the generator is available in an emergency but is being set up to operate from the garage for simple and immediate commissioning.

3. Welfare Message System - Jeff Ferguson

- A.P. showed his emergency router system (very inexpensive) using power connectors to transform a Ryobi tool rechargeable battery down to 12V. For an update on how well this worked and more information on ARES and communications please see **Attachment A** from Jeff.

- A Welfare Message is one sent from inside the Emergency Zone to those outside, e.g. one-way. It is intended for psychological support. For the drill on April 30, we would like to get more traffic. As a reminder we won't be able to email in a true emergency.

- * Use Android tablet or computer able to generate a simple text message.
- * Word documents can be saved as xxxx.txt (instead of xxxx.docx) which will work.
- * Type in Recipient's name and email and the message
- * FOR THE DRILL ONLY we can email them to Jeff Ferguson (cruiser55n@gmail.com)
- * In an emergency, messages would need to be brought to the NCC on a flash drive (best)
- * 500-character limits, not a big load difference between, say, 100 and 500 characters
- * REMINDER this is one-way only, hitting "Reply" clogs up the system
- * However, after a few days in an actual emergency, might be able to reply.
- * Still many questions about how we will set communication priorities.

- Question from Robin Carter about communicating with hospitals in an emergency, for example St. Anthony's. This has been difficult in the past as the hospitals just do not check in. We do have a school contact, Adam Zimmerman(KI7SSD), but sense that the District is just not interested. ARES would love to be able to support the schools.

- Starlink may be a help in the future as more satellites are put into orbit.

4. Miscellaneous

- Hal brought some very nice lightweight rechargeable flashlights. Pack of 4 for \$32.99 from Amazon. Search for NENRENT Rechargeable Flashlights Handheld LED. Here is a direct link:

https://www.amazon.com/Rechargeable-Flashlight-Searchlight-Flashlights-Accessories/dp/B08V4QZG5F/ref=sr_1_5?crd=185LKEOM06JTC&keywords=nenrent%2Brechargeable%2Bflashlight%2B4-pack&qid=1650895648&prefix=nenrent%2Brechargeable%2Bflashlight%2B4-pack%2Caps%2C237&sr=8-5&th=1

- Jeff Ferguson mentioned the Anderson Island radio club website: WA7AI.org Very nice website with a great description of Winlink and how it works. Jane Tollett did a domain search and found that WA7FI.net, WA7FI.org are available. Perhaps we should investigate this?

5. Next Meeting 5/28/2022 at 10am at the NCC.

Respectfully recorded, Jane Tollett – FIARC Secretary

Attachment A – valuable information from Jeff Ferguson

- After the meeting AP, Brian, Paul and I energized AP's 12V router on the tool battery assembly he built and by connecting it to the radio room battery power supply. We tested chat and file transfer, employing BeeBEEP, with a computer in the radio room and two in the north classroom. We also tested NCC's wireless router. Everything worked beautifully, establishing a wonderfully powerful, robust, autonomous digital net for NCC emergency operations. Note, BeeBEEP can be installed externally on USB thumb drives then function on any computer, but it must be installed before disaster.
- ARES radio operators are trained to handle welfare message traffic as routine, lowest priority, passing the traffic when available EMCOMM resources allow. Welfare messages will not inhibit transmission of the emergency or priority messages your emergency teams wish to send off island.
- I would like to insure one point regarding ARES support of our communities is clear to all. The District 5 ARES Peninsula Team is prepared to support communities in Pierce County west of the Narrows to the greatest extent possible. However, the reality is we may be lucky to have enough trained ARES radio operators to staff even a few high priority stations during a real-world calamity, such as Fox Island's EOC. Organizations like hospitals and schools must act to be prepared to contact the Peninsula Team through our primary net at the Peninsula Multi Agency Communications center ([PMAACC - operated by the ARES Peninsula Team](#)) during the aftermath of a disaster. If they can do so they will be provided with a very well-organized connection to Peninsula resources (medical, fire, police, logistic, utility, etc.), to whatever extent such assets are actually available, as well as resources at the Pierce County, WA State and even Federal level. But they must be prepared. At a bare minimum this could be accomplished by purchasing, and then programming, an amateur radio handheld transceiver (ARES members could help with selection and programming). Note, during an emergency when lives are at risk and no other means of communication is available even an unlicensed person can legally use an amateur radio to call for help; although they would likely need at least a little training to be effective (or a detailed instruction sheet). Better yet organizations could spend just a little more to equip an organization vehicle with a mobile VHF/UHF amateur radio. Then, when buildings may be collapsing on indoor stations and stored HT's, the vehicle will bounce around on its suspension during an earthquake and be ready, with an autonomous power supply, to act as a mobile EMCOMM communications resource. Frankly this strikes me as a no-brainer for any organization which is actually concerned about the well-being of their staff during the aftermath of a calamity (or children in school); but as a concerned EMCOMM volunteer I may be biased.

Finally you all may find [this video](#) interesting as it offers current, real world insight into the great desire victims in a disaster zone, in this case a war zone, have to contact loved ones to let them know they are OK; and the appreciation of those outside the disaster zone when they receive the news. One can certainly understand the importance of being prepared to provide a large volume of welfare message traffic, albeit prioritized as routine, during the aftermath of a disaster.