

20 December 2022

FIARC Meeting Minutes – 10 December 2022

Attendees:

N7NW – Hal Goodell	KI7CQM – Jim Braden	KJ7RVR – Jane Tollett
KI6QXV – Paul Petach	KK7JEE – Keith Barnes	K7CRZ – Jeff Ferguson
KK7IVT – John Merryman	N7BRR – Brian Hevly	WA7BRI – Robin Carter
K1GCF – Gail Ferguson	W7BBO – Mark Yordy	N7JAK – Dave Jackson
KI6AWR – David Haycock		

The December 10 combined November/December FIARC meeting was convened at 9:00am. The meeting ran until about 9:50am when we took a break, programmed radios, and then ran the Get On The Air (GOTA) class from 10:30am-12:30pm. Thank you to **Gail Ferguson** for providing the delicious cookies both for the meeting and for the GOTA class.

We would also like to thank the GOTA class instructors – **David Haycock, Mark Yordy and Dave Jackson** for their help which was very well-received. Also well-received (and very critical) was the radio programming by **Jeff Ferguson, Brian Hevly, Hal Goodell, Larry Purdum, and cords supplied by Paul Thorpe.**

1. Minutes from the October 29th meeting were unanimously approved.

2. Updates from Hal Goodell, President

- We will cancel the Nets on 12/25/2022 and 1/1/2023. Jane Tollett will take the 12/18/2022 Net and will check to see if there is any interest in having a New Year's Day Net (there was none).
- Our next FIARC meeting will be 1/28/2023, from 10-11am. Possibly training afterwards.
- Hal is in discussions with the Fox Island Mutual Water Association to place the repeater at their water tower location on Dungeness. Currently the repeater is on Hal's property and is not working as well as it should which provides difficulties for those who are limited with simplex signals due to terrain. This location looked best for Island coverage, especially as there is a repeater to the north with the same frequency and by doing Dungeness we would be far enough away not to interfere. Mike & Key have leases on Gold and Tiger Mountains, but those locations might cause interference with that northern repeater.

3. Updates from Jim Braden, Vice-President

- The connection between Fox Island Emergency Preparedness (FIEP) and FIARC continues to be very important, and having new Hams, especially some who are also Block Coordinators, strengthens that connection.
- Communication is a critical function in emergency response. We believe building our reserve of Hams will be a very valuable asset in preparing for emergency response.

4. Updates from Jane Tollett, Secretary

- No new updates beyond what Hal and Jim have stated.

5. New Laptops for Digital Communications – Jeff Ferguson

- As a reminder, the District 5 ARES(Amateur Radio emergency Services) GoKit stored in the EOC(Emergency Operations Center) does have digital capability, along with the laptop, but ARES owns the kit and, in an emergency, could command it for other uses. We should have our own digital capability.
- When Jeff is finished configuring everything, Fox Island will have both packet and VARA FM mode capability. We can use a free version of VARA FM to get up and running but to enjoy full speed (very fast and efficient) and full features, including digipeating, a one-time VARA FM license purchase is required (\$70). The lifetime license can be used on any system employing the licensed call sign plus those with extensions (e.g., WA7FI, WA7FI-01, WA7FI-02, etc.). Hence each computer can operate independently employing a call sign with extension. Plus, we can employ any number of tactical call signs within Winlink Express in conjunction with the VARA FM call sign (e.g. FoxIsland, NCC, FIEOC, FIEP...you name it). This detail might be important for those who want to load it on their computer, as all EMCOMM volunteers should.
- In an emergency, it is very inefficient to have voice traffic, as every message must be listened to and transcribed and possibly checked. With digital, it's much more efficient and can result in our messages being ahead of many others.
- This would also allow us to support our own Welfare Traffic.
- To do all this, the laptops need the Windows operating system, and Office installed and then Jeff will take them and install WinLink Express, VARA FM (a license will replace Packet), and BeeBeep (LAN messenger software). As of this date Jim has already had Windows and Office installed (thanks to Jerry Knight), and Jeff will work on the laptops over the next month.
- Finally, we will need at some point to discuss laptop maintenance, having battery backup for the laptops, and possibly a few other housekeeping items involved in keeping laptops fully functioning.

6. More Training – Jane Tollett, Jeff Ferguson

- We will be training to employ the Winlink system, which includes radio stations and Internet servers around the world, by using Winlink Express (the software). If anyone wants to load the software, they should search for the Winlink Express download (or [go here](#)). Note, anyone can practice using Winlink Express at home without a radio by employing the Telnet protocol built into the software. We will begin training in the NCC classroom doing just that using the wireless router at NCC, followed by the next step employing radios. All Hams are encouraged to install Winlink Express on their computers and then set up a Winlink account for their call sign (the account is created using Winlink Express).
- We were running out of time due to the upcoming GOTA class, but a POSSIBLE schedule for training to take advantage of Jeff's limited time would be:
 - January – WinLink
 - February – VARA FM
 - March – BeeBeep and GoKit
- Once we know when the laptops will be programmed, we can look at scheduling training possibly for after the monthly meetings. Just an idea!
- Finally, we have discussed having a Fox/Bunny hunt – Chuck Kemmer was not able to attend but perhaps we can discuss this at the January meeting and see if this is an activity we would like to sponsor. It could be a very fun training for newer Hams.

7. GOTA Class – 10am-12noon

- The class was very successful – 15 Hams (and one currently studying) attended. Radios were programmed, checked, and even though the class ran until 1230pm (Thank you instructors) feedback was very positive.
- Key learnings from Jane who scheduled everything:
 - David Haycock had much more material than he used, next time have two GOTA classes (this was really what he had recommended).
 - Should we run another Ham class, schedule the GOTA class at the same time as a package.
 - People came from all over for the class, even folks who got licenses several years ago, so there appears to be quite a need for this type of class so we should continue with it.
 - Although the programming part was rather a fun mayhem, next time let's schedule it separately.

7. Next meetings

Saturday 28 January 2023, 10-11am.

Respectfully Submitted,

JANE

EJ Tollett KJ7RVR

Attachment – FIARC/FI Hams Address List