

Alachua ARES/NFARC/NF4AC Clubs

MINUTES

October 13, 2021

Meeting held via ZOOM

Attendance: 18 (participant count on ZOOM)

Gordon Gibby
Susan Halbert
Leland Gallup
Dean Covey
Craig Fugate
Mike Ridlon
Reid Tillery
Mike WB2FKO
Jeff Capehart
Mike KD4INH
Brad Swartz
Jim Bledsoe
David Huckstep
Rosemary Jones
Earl McDow
Dave Huckstep
Joseph McKenzie
Vann Chesney

Introductions. From 1830 until 1859 when the meeting commenced. Although the July 2021 meeting was held in person at the Alachua County EOC (and via Zoom), the return of COVID made an in-person meeting inadvisable. Consequently, the October 2021 meeting was solely by ZOOM.

- 1. UPDATES ON BADGING NEW VOLUNTEERS; RESULTS OF EOC PLANNING.** No updates on new badging; waiting on EMD to say what she wants to do. Badging requirements on our website. Unchanged since 2020. Different ARES levels? ICS courses are items on the task book; may get you a badge but not a level in the ARES program, as such. Getting the task books signed off is a paperwork drill. ARES Connect system not yet “killed,” and so the skill sets are all paper. Rather confusing description of who is at which level in the task books; for example, Level One: Wendell. [If the EC hasn't signed off, Level One is not complete... Certificates can be sent to the EC]. Earl McDow is Level Two and has been signed off. EC has to be copied in order for him to know who has been signed off on levels. Level Two? Six people: however Ridlon says he's completed all but EC doesn't know if he's been signed off. Susan, Mike Ridlon, and Earl and Level Two, Gibby, Gallup, Bledsoe are Level Three. Reid asked if SERTRAC was still used: EC said yes and told Reid what had to be done to get on to the SERTRAC, which is very good for storing/having a transcript/database. Screen print of SERTRAC transcript can be sent to EC as proof of what has been done. Task book described by the EC...hand write, get proof of certificates and actual operations, and get the Level One signed

by EC and Levels Two and Three signed off by Gibby, Gallup, or Bledsoe. EC said that “other” in SERTRAC must be used to upload a certificate that isn't on the list. KX4Z has uploaded his ARES Task Book and that's been approved and uploaded. Technical issues with respect to uploading certificates, transcripts, etc., discussed.

2. **APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER 2021 MINUTES.** September 2021 minutes approved.
3. **NOVEMBER EXTRA CLASS COURSE.** Friday evening, Nov 19, Saturday Nov 20, Sunday afternoon Nov 21. Typically we teach at the EOC. Elements are numbered somewhat weirdly. Volunteers sought for instructing the various elements:
 - Element 0, Safety: Earl McDow/Bledsoe backup
 - Element 1, Rules: AA3YB
 - Element 2, Operating Procedures: AA3YB
 - Element 3, Propagation: Jim Bledsoe KI4KEA
 - Element 4, Practices/Test equipment: TBD
 - Element 5, Electrical Principles: Mike Hasselbeck WB2FKO
 - Element 6, Circuit Components: Mike Hasselbeck
 - Element 7, Practical Circuits: KX4Z
 - Element 8, Signals & Emissions: KX4Z
 - Element 9, Antennas/Transmission lines: AA3YBKX4Z showed how to find the ARRL questions and answer for the Extra Class test; we take the slides and modify them.
4. **ALACHUA COUNTY SET OCT 2021 AAR AND DISCUSSION.** ARES group came up with its own COMPLAN; considerable improvement demonstrated by the group's performance. Much traffic moved, power supply solutions devised; ad hoc systems for handling and relaying traffic. Next month we can discuss and decide on amending the AAR draft, etc. Injects not used; instead there was a preplanned “inject” for information determined by a participant's home address house number. Survivor health and welfares were used. Folks not told how to accomplish the goal, with the EOC only acting as an aggregator to the State. Jeff took the role of NCS for the basic VHF net. The Comm Planning section of the Draft illustrated problems, with issues of EOC limitations prominent. EOC too easily overloaded. 15 participants; 2 net controls, one on VHF and one on HF. Inverters used for ad hoc power. Three solar panels set up and used. Polarity protections installed at EOC on batteries, as well as RFI inverters so that computers could be run. KX4Z tallied the number of messages handled by digital and voice means. KX4Z showed a page from the draft that illustrated the message path architecture for the exercise. 31 messages total sent in about 2 hours. 17 messages made it to the State, either directly or by cc. Aggregate reports made to the state, and EOC managed some outbound H&W. EOC could not monitor HF voice because single HF transceiver/antenna had to be left operational only in digital mode. Lists of what happened shown to the group. Reid Tillery suggested method for connecting the VHF and HF net operations. Only two counties in the Section did anything. Alachua and Columbia. KK4INZ pointed out that the EOC cannot be the radio hub. There is a node there, but ARES members need to figure out with Net Control Stations how to handle and pass messages. Capacity is an issue at EOC. KK4INZ described how messages were handled there. Need inventory of networks so that the EOC can be a node and nets can be external to the EOC. NCS handles all the networking direction. KX4Z thought we made a “massive improvement” over last year.

5. **POLARITY PROTECTORS UPDATE.** All the main radios at the EOC now have polarity protectors...nothing will “blow up” now! Go boxes still need them to be installed

6. **EOC ACTIVATIONS AND TRAINING.** AA3YB described the Wednesday EOC activations he conducts. The week prior to the ARES meeting he trained Brett NH2KW and Emily on VHF Packet Winlink operations. Also talked about the regular activation of the SARNET from the EOC on Wednesdays at 1:00pm. Part of the reason AA3YB attempts regular Wednesday activations is to show the EMD staff that ARES is professional and reliable in providing comms support that is responsive to served agency needs and that simply “shows up,”

7. **FLDIGI WINLINK AND DIGITAL TRAINING UPDATE.** AA3YB talked about training on Thursday nights before the ARES nets, also showed a number of other sources of training so that folks can get a lot of operational experience useful for EMCOMMS. Reid talked about how Winlink and JS8 Call can be used. They leave the radios on the standard JS8Call frequency. Send out heartbeat and take it from there.

8. **TECH NIGHT DIGITAL TECHNIQUES OVERVIEW AND NEW NIGHT PLANS.**

There were 13 participants. Slide deck now on the NFRC website. Difference between the ARQ and broadcast nodes. An EXCELLENT presentation, as all agreed. Cleared up much misunderstanding about broadcast and handshake (ARQ) modes of digital operation.

9. **ARDUINO/HIGH SCHOOL HAM CLUB.** KX4Z showed an “amazing” simple receiver on a printed circuit board that he has 6th graders soldering. Showed images of the PCB based receiver. The detector is 4 diodes! A simple oscillator managed by an Arduino.

10. **KG4VWI** asked by a friend to look at some electronic gear at the house of person getting out of the business, with respect to whether hams would find any use. The UF digipeater is out. Contact Susan Halbert about going there to repair the repeater station. KX4Z suggested that photos be taken of the gear, and an idea of prices sought. The gentleman worked for Qualcomm. Spectrum analyzers and signal generators are among items.

11. **ANYTHING ELSE?** Before adjourning, questions posed. KG4VWI asked about links to hospitals in the event all normal comms are down. EC suggested going to the local fire station. Brad Swartz said that his EMD asked them to inject precisely this issue in their SET. W4UFL described how he figured out a voltage draw on his vehicle that prevented him from operating from vehicle's battery during the SET.

12. **ADJOURN** at 8:38 EDT. Link stayed active for a couple of minutes for folks to chat.