

# Alachua ARES/NFARC/NF4AC Clubs

## MINUTES

**November 13, 2024**

Attendance: 21. The meeting was held in person at the Queen of Peace Catholic Community (after a summer at the EOC) and via ZOOM. Meeting attendees are not specifically noted as attending live and in person or via ZOOM.

Gordon Gibby  
Leland Gallup  
Larry Whitehead, AB4NX  
Dean Covey  
David Huckstep  
Eric Pleace  
Brett Wallace  
Emily Wallace  
Brett Wallace, Jr.  
Susan Halbert  
Mark McDow  
Earl McDow  
Lorilyn Roberts  
Manish Sahni KZ4KC  
Hugh KN4IIM  
Rosemary Jones  
Karen Shander  
Jeff Capehart  
Reid Tillery  
Mike Hasselbeck  
Brian Joy

**Introductions.** From 1830 until 1900 when the meeting commenced.

### **1. INTRODUCTION/APPROVAL/DISCUSSION OF OCTOBER MINUTES/ARES**

**HOURS.** October minutes missing. Motion to use tentative agenda from October as substitute minutes. Motion carried, so the October agenda is approved as fill for the full minutes. Discussion of Alachua ARES October accomplishments. These include “earning” 60\$K for the county as a result of reported hours during declared emergency activations. We will get November hours credit (not creditable as disaster relief ops) with our support to the County November Veteran’s Day activation. Tower trailer construction mentioned as a 2024 accomplishment: KX4Z showed a slide with all of these. Jeff Capehart led introductions by meeting attendees. Gordon showed a slide with a variety of introductory data points for our group: these included a description of ARES levels group members are urged to achieve; in return, those so certified are eligible for deployment/activation in accordance with the Group’s approved comms plan. KX4Z showed URL’s for our “two” clubs, which we simultaneously operate and support depending on the ARES group’s particular mission, in support of the EOC

and apart from EOC-direct support. All of these items are discussed in our ARES growth plan. Badging requirements for our ARES volunteers was shown. Moreover, we discussed our Groups.io forum, which now has >80 members. KX4Z went over the structure of our three basic local VHF repeaters (for phone ops). Finally, W4UFL itemized ARES hours for the past month: OCT hours included Hurricane Helene, while November numbers will touch on our support for Hurricane Milton. Finally, the discussion turned to our operation of local simplex rural nets, ARES repeater nets, and regular meetings. Total: 222 hours.

- 2. HURRICANE HELENE VOLUNTEERING.** Brett Wallace, NH2KW, delivered a presentation on how he deployed to eastern TN in support of operations helping communities impacted by hurricane Milton. He did this by volunteering with the Grindstone Ministries in eastern TN. From a location there, Grindstone delivered disaster relief to western NC. This “forward operating base” (FOB) was at Cherry Grove, TN. Brett would have deployed earlier, except for Milton’s passing over his own house in FL, and causing damage and issues there! Volunteers arrived in TN with their own equipment. Over some three weeks, more than a million pounds of donated goods were transported to the distribution center and then passed to folks in need. The disaster response teams were four in number, mostly coming from Oklahoma, and as a consequence they were well set for tornadoes. This was a logistics issue for the teams from OK, but the way that medical teams, equipment teams, etc., were used was very similar in both tornado aftermaths and in NC after Milton. Team functions included power hook ups, tree trimming, and even homes built in less than 48 hours that people could move into (!). Grindstone also sent out recce teams and coordinated help with other non-profits. Security was an issue because of the widespread drug usage; there was some looting and sketchy operators. Items donated for needy would appear on eBay – generators showing up on eBay, or repeat customers. Brett perceived a mismatch in government offered services – flu shots before food and supplies. Brett shared the techniques that GSM (Grindstone) used to keep up morale (music, sharing “wins,” etc.). Brett noted a “Homesteader Hollywood” phenomenon -- many people with YouTube channels sharing and leveraging each other’s YouTube audiences to provide help where it was needed. Brett described an unfortunate scenario-- a great deal of hazardous materials released from illegal dumping sites because of the hurricane. But he also talked about remediation of these hazardous materials: and how “permaculture” was used to address the hazards. GSM teams used a standardized personal medical kit. GSM’s operational method was straightforward. Each morning had a safety and medical briefing for the teams. Purpose of the team’s operations was to get people back on their feet, but not enable welfare recipients. Brett himself provided comms support (what they termed SF6) at the tactical operations center (TOC); Brett was the TOC comms directors. There was a radio telephone operator at the TOC, which went under the name “Camp Miller.” Radio operators were also as available attached to each team. Non-amateur communications such as GMRS showed considerable utility in real world private disaster relief. There were many GMRS networks, which were set up on the fly, even linked (which is not legal but done). GMRS more used than amateur radio. Satphones also used. Helicopters actually in support of GSM were civilian (!). What GSM called upon “RTOs” (radio telephone operators) to carry out the comms mission. RTO’s were responsible for updating the TOC regarding team locations and needs (such as medical requirements, broken equipment). Brett showed a photo of the S6 comms area at the TOC. Had 4 VHF radios, GMRS, and HF radios connected to computers for digital modes. Showed photos of tasking assignment boards, and how teams were dispatched, with their PACE plans. Musk donated 4 Starlinks just for their TOC. These were useful! Images shown of actual roads built by private “contractors” to get access to towns such as New Germany NC that were completely cut off. Win: the “Little Germany HAM radio hero,” who used the amateur

repeater that was still operating. With a Baofeng, the Ham radio hero established access for 43 cutoff people, and perhaps saved lives. It was all about comms – if a Baofeng gets the message out, don't look down on the equipment! Another instance of amateur generosity was when equipment was donated to amateur whose own equipment “fried” because of constant use. Helping neighbors as opposed to helping self – learning point for many! Finally, Brett showed his experience here in FL with Hurricane Milton. He used his own Starlink gear at Easton Newberry during the Hurricane Milton response (Secy's not: not sure I recorded this correctly – was it Brett's or the State's Starlink?). Support during disasters means support and help for everyone regardless of political persuasion, religion, etc. It appeared to NH2KW in NC that immigrants were used to deal with hazmat sites. Takeaway? Also talked national contingency plans for redeployments to US to support needs here. We here have our own comms plan, with a hub and spoke approach. We need to be ready to communicate in whatever means, mode, or tech that gets the job done. We need our own PACE plan and be ready to execute it. Sheriffs seem to be the emerging link for drawing together communities and as liaison with so many other agencies in providing support. Brett's view is that we are not as prepared as we could be for future events, especially in terms of medical support We are as prepared here as many that Brett has seen, so he is proud to be associated with this ARES group. Larry AB4NX asked how Brett avoided the self-deployment issue (that is, being part of the problem instead of the solution). How? By working with GSM, through a YouTube channel. The VOAD is supposed to be the link between county and private organizations coming in to help. VOAD should help deconflict and organize the support. The VOAD was unprepared in the event to help. What happened then was that GSM saw a need, and the GSM helped. GSM had its own system for vetting. Brett couldn't describe what the local governmental organizations such as EOCs were doing, and how they were doing it. Brett observed organizations that were ill-prepared and/or didn't have systems to help – only their own red tape. Saw amateur repeater owners denying use of repeater for emergency operators -- during the emergency (!). Brett said that his group at GSM had 10 hams. Cell phones being restored and the need for amateur/GMRS comms is now much reduced.

3. **HURRICANE MILTON AARIP DISCUSSION.** Gordon showed a link to the draft AARIP; he specifically noted the people from our group who actually deployed/supported. All comments in hotwash recorded in the IAP. After this ARES meeting, two more items were added, so the list of improvements is up to 26 items to be addressed. We “made” over 22\$K in this declared disaster as a consequence of our volunteers' professionalism and service. Among other improvements needed: we need to do Everbridge update and training. Brett and AA3YB will have to get together. Possible future county wide non-repeater radio system could be 6m SSB. Disbanding the local 3970 HF net is a major item that prompted considerable group discussion. Milton's aftermath showed our group still has confusion on filling out 214's. Jeff Capehart talked about how folks should send/notify him of their training so they can support us locally and perhaps be deployed outside the County. Opened discussion of the now 26 items on the list. Discussion and motion approved: we should be looking for something other than T shirts. Huckstep's suggestion is an identifying vest. It's a standard ARRL item. Item 13 changed to vests, not shirt. List of improvements as amended is accepted by the group.
4. **AFTER ACTION OF NOVEMBER 2024 VETERANS' DAY EVENT.** Comments solicited from group. It was “great.” Susan Halbert noted that the ASO helo came in – we need more volunteers to help secure the field. Eric suggested a list specifically for the purpose of providing landing field security. Huckstep recommended coordination with Jim Carr as to airfield

security. Someone needs to approach Carr about this. GARS? Raise at the GARS meeting next week.

**5. SUGGESTION/IMPROVEMENTS FOR SANTA DELIVERY EVENT IN DEC 24.**

Gordon had a number of items on the tables and asked someone to take the items and deliver them for December 7's event. Eric Pleace suggested that a team take care of the items on the table. The "team" promises to deliver the items on the table. Gordon pleas for others to take on the burden of bringing equipment. Team assembled. Leland, Manish, and Eric will take all the gear on the table to the December 7 event. Gordon suggested more equipment to the 7 December event. Batteries. Antenna multiplexer system to reduce interference from nearby transmitters. Operational tips for the Santa Fe College site: avoid Lifesouth Bus (too much noise). More ways to engage children: 1) Arduino project; 2) Keyer with louder audio; 3) Testing display between two radios. Bring a flag.

**6. GMRS/ECI: IDEAS FOR INVOLVEMENT.**

Reid wanted to talk about his initiative that he has dubbed the emergency communications initiative (ECI). The purpose, certainly with respect to the eastern parts of Alachua County include providing additional eyes/ears and routes for emergency messaging. First step was getting antennas and towers at remote fire stations. The ECI group has done towers for Cross Creek, Melrose, and another fire station agreed at a town hall meeting last night, with the goal of a tower installation and an on-site. Waldo EOC radio is also a part. Ron Lewis offered to provide a node at Lake Cross. Reid says that there is a need for licensing courses to open up more operators to staff the fire stations. Reid's ECI group is doing well with VHF radios, but to expand to the local/general community, they need to extend into the GMRS world. This means socializing people to what GMRS is, how networks work, how messaging works, and getting a repeater. There are several GMRS repeaters being put up in the eastern side of the County. Many of the GMRS operators are also amateurs, so they can be interfaces with the amateur systems to "get the message out." As many people involved as possible is good. "Points of light" (GMRS operators) can act as nodes for collecting and transmitting messages through whatever comms system/network is available and can be used. Reid is interested in extending the interfaces between/among GRMS, VHF, and HF networks, to that the systems interconnect. The ECI initiative is local and can be scaled nationally. Improvements always sought! Reid's immediate drive is to get local people in his area licensed and up with GMRS. In Melrose, the sheriff/responsible official took over the amateur equipment and used it as part of the sheriff's radio (?). The ECI sees it as important to have folks deployed/located at the fire stations. Gordon: who authorizes operators to be at these private/contracted or local township stations. They are not Alachua County. Question: who is in charge of deploying? No centralized tasking authority. Each fire station operates on their own. The ECI doesn't require anything from the ARES group. He is asking that we help these people by taking information from them. In effect, Reid presented an information briefing.

**7. FIELD DAY FIXES – STATUS.**

We were 4A – four stations with all emergency power. We made many contacts, and were much improved over previous years! 186 groups listed in 4A – and we were #12 out of that whole group! One group in north FL beat us – they were located actually quite nearby – the Anthony repeater: the Sun Country Amateur group. Beat us only by a hundred or so points. The Sun Country group is small. Four years ago they were only 200 contacts. They are EXACTLY like us, and have improved with the same upward glide path. Four RVs set up on one property with generators, and they have fun.

- 8. UPDATE ON DEC 14 POTA/6M METEOR SCATTER/6M AMP UPDATE.** North entrance of San Felasco park. 0800 showtime there. 6M yagi. Will bring the new amplifier from the new EOC go box to provide extra power. MSK144 is the mode. We can hang other antennas of the tower so others can operate POTA as well. For example, EFHW with 2K plus low loss balun with an antenna multiplexer. Mike Hasselbeck recommended a dry run. Sunday, 1 December, 2:00pm at Gordon's house. Show of hands for the dry run, and the event itself. Mike offered to host people at his house to see it "alive" and in action.
- 9. ADJOURNMENT.** At 2058 EDT.