

Alachua ARES/NFARC/NF4AC Clubs

MINUTES

April 10, 2024

Attendance: 15. The meeting was held in person at the Queen of Peace Catholic Community and online via ZOOM. Meeting attendees are not specifically noted as attending live and in person or via ZOOM.

Gordon Gibby
Leland Gallup
Susan Halbert
Eric Pleace
Earl Sloan
Dean Covey
Brian Joy KQ4BWH
Earl McDow
Manish Sahni
David Huckstep
Scott Roberts (guest SM Zoom presentation)
Reid Tillery
Mike Hasselbeck
Rosemary Jones
Late arrival (I recognize as an amateur but I didn't get the name)

Introductions. From 1830 until 1900 when the meeting commenced. KX4Z gave a warm up overview of a great number of activities undertaken by this group; we must in all honesty say that this was under the leadership of KX4Z. Introductions by all attendees, including Zoom participants.

- 1. INTRODUCTION/APPROVAL OF MARCH 2024 MINUTES/ARES HOURS.** KX4Z went over a slide with a variety of the ways that folks can get involved in our efforts. This coming Thursday, for example, we will practice a VHF simplex net. March 2024 minutes approved. KX4Z relayed W4UFL's statistics, as W4UFL was traveling. 111 hours for March. For a group as small as we, this is commendable. KX4Z broke down the total, showing what we did. This included, for example, writing content by KX4Z for QST, groundbreaking of new fire station, Lab N'Lunch (lots of hours) and a great variety of other things.
- 2. SECTION MANAGER PRESENTATION BY SCOTT ROBERTS.** KX4Z reported that Scott agreed to talk with us. Scott then appeared by Zoom. The other candidate has not responded. Scott commended this group for the ARES related hours, as just reported by KX4Z. He says many clubs pattern what they do on what Alachua ARES is doing. Scott provided his contact information. Scott gave his bio. Licensed in 2011. 2012 upgraded to General, then a year after that upgraded to Extra. Has held several positions in Clay County, among which were PIO [Sec'y note: could have been wrong on Clay positions], Assistant Section Manager then Section Manager in 2022. Had significant medical issues last year but says that he is improving. He stresses that we are "guests," meaning we are guests at our served agency locations. We are

there to serve them. Building relationships, especially with our served agencies and communities, is all important. In February we had 3400 amateurs in our section. 23.4 % of the members of the section are members of ARRL. He encourages people to join ARRL – can't change the League if you are not a member. He showed FL stats on FL amateurs – 42819 licenses amateurs, with 9988 Extras, 11810 are General, 18142 are Technicians, 2462 are Advanced, and 417 are Novices. Showed number of vol hrs in NFL: 23,641 hours. Run the numbers at \$31.80 per hour: this means that we contribute the billable equivalent of about 750\$K to our agencies – and this is very likely a gross understatement of what amateurs are actually doing for the served community. All that time counts! The 750 is representative of our value. “Renewed commitment” is his platform for reelection as SM. Scott believes that his recovery from very serious medical crisis has motivated him to get things done. He would be honored to be our SM for another two years. What does renewed commitment mean? More visits to clubs and events, activations, where-ever there is a need. Being more available to members in the section, whether by text, email, or Zoom. Won't hold bimonthly Zoom sessions, but will do town hall formats with guest speakers (presumably with video/Zoom?). These will be guest speaker sessions that are at least an hour long. Will do training. Wants to improve statistic reporting and gathering from the entire Section, so that we have a better idea of what we are doing. He wants these meetings to have an open question time. All of these above ideas will be touched on in these town hall meetings. “I serve you” to help make things work better for you in your County.

- 3. QUESTIONS FOR SCOTT ROBERTS.** Dean Covey had a question. He asked about the 31.80\$ figure. KX4Z explained how, in declared emergencies, these are used. Scott was asked about when he'll start Town Halls – probably after FD. He'll advertise in the NFL Newsletter. And he'll put out a Zoom link for all hams to join. Scott praised Arc Thames for improved relations with the State, and for moving ahead on how to better serve Counties who don't have an ARES group -- for how they can contact the State to those Counties that need them. Question: how to build counties without a good ARES group. “Difficult to do.” He used as an example the county adjacent to his. He has met with the “seed” for a group in those counties with no organized groups. This is an example of building relationships. Let Arc and Scott know about counties with no or under-performing EC's, so that information can be sent to those counties to try and get groups together. How many counties in NFL? 43 counties, all the way from the east to Pensacola to just south of Orlando. He is working on getting Arc some help; needs the “right fit of people in the right places to get coverage.” Exercises? Arc is working on an exercise. Scott has no information on it. It won't be before hurricane season. KX4Z asked a “harsh” question. He talked about the ARRL training program, and the ARRL requirement that EC's achieve Level III. A large number of North FL EC's don't seem to have fulfilled this requirement. Scott says that he is committed to this – he personally is now a Level III. According to Scott, the ARRL put this out because it thought it would be good to have a universal baseline standard, which turned out “not to be the case.” So there may be refinement to the ARRL task list – reason, for example, is that FL is becoming an AUXCOMM state. Thinks that the State has now refined what it thinks it means, so that Scott/Arc are discussing what to do about EC's and a timeline. Task list will be reorganized, but he expects the content to be fairly constant. ARRL is totally rewriting the emergency training course, and multiple levels; will try to reorganize/recategorize so that then the EC's will have a timeline for a revised listing and time to do it. Susan Halbert asked about AUXCOMM. KX4Z encouraged Scott to get in touch with Doug Lynch about AUXCOMM (and, presumably, their job book). KX4Z told Scott that we've not been entirely happy with the State – “we don't deal with them.” Trying to work to get more AUXCOMM classes locally. KX4Z finished with comment that

AUXCOMM position task book is logistically hard to complete. Gordon thanked Scott. Scott put his QR code with contact information.

- 4. RASPBERRY PI EMERGENCY EMAIL SYSTEM.** Presentation by Earl Sloan. Jason, KM4ACK developed this system. Jason has a lot of information on his Channel. Earl took his ideas from Jason about how to set up a system. Earl showed a Raspberry 4, with a fan and a heat sink in an aluminum case. Has a 250GB drive in it. Earl put an antenna on it because he wanted to be able to get up to 50' of connectivity in free space. The Pi config file will be put on our website. WiFi connectivity with the Pi had been an issue that Earl had to struggle with. Earl showed a line of code at the end of the config code that kills the internal WiFi to use external. April 2022 issue of QST had Jason as spotlight member. Earl showed the screen he gets when he remotes into this Pi. It showed, for example, that several programs were or were not running on the Pi. He has integrated a GPS "hockey puck" with the Pi so the Pi auto gets position and time. Earl then demonstrated use as an Emergency Email Server – Earl asked people to use their phones to get WiFi Hotspot from the Pi. Earl showed how, when connected to the Pi, use your browser, and enter IP information for the Pi. You can then get a screen showing how you can use to send/receive from this server. Gordon got in and put a message into the queue. In it's unconnected form, this server operates independently of the Internet; but if you know a participants provider and phone number, you can send a person a text through the system, assuming you have a connection to the Internet. As set up now, Earl has set it up for "no replies." It's an information send system; useful, say, in a shelter or somewhere where it can communicate by RF without the Internet. Earl showed admin screens for users. Showed screens for how to see replies, how to post replies. This is a Winlink system that goes over amateur radio only. Earl showed live messages queued and actually sent/replied to. Can also be "plugged into" an RMS gateway if that is possible and desired. In effect, he has taken a shelter server and added email to it. Next, Earl demonstrated a GMRS repeater, which is full duplex. Not very many watts, but it does provide enough, and with enough TX/RX isolation, that it is usable over some distance.
- 5. YAGI REBUILD UPDATE FROM LAB N'LUNCH GROUP.** KX4Z recalled how the caulk that was used to rebuild the system was actually conductive, so all of that had to be removed. Then it turned out that a screw used in putting the elements together was actually shorting out the system. He will see if he gets a greater front to back now after the shorted trap has been discovered and removed. KX4Z talked about how the elements are put together.
- 6. FIELD DAY 2024 PLANNING.** KX4Z put out a sign up sheet that can be used to establish an appropriate number of stations (2A, 3A, etc.). He went over the improvement plan from last year's FD. Items one through 8 were walked through. One and two were done. 3 not yet done. 4 is documented...(see the list that is on the web site). Another...outreach not needed. Bluetooth unnecessary. Reducing antenna setup will be a HUGE blessing. Altogether....35 improvement items (can't cover here in these minutes – see website). Talked through operations on the same band, using antenna separation, horizontal/vertical offsets, ultra sharp receiving filters; this means, e.g., that the CW guy won't have to hear the FT8 operations. And LC trap is what makes this possible (read the article!). Need common mode choke, etc. Showed photo with overhead showing how much separation possible onsite at our FD location: two stations separated by 700/800 feet. Our big money makers will be CW and FT8/4. Gordon needs filter. Eric Pleace offered to build a filter to get 80m separated.

- 7. ANTENNA INTERACTIONS AND POSSIBLE NARROW BAND RECEIVING FILTERS.** Reason? These receiving filters hold out the prospect of operation by several widely separated stations ON THE SAME BAND. See the above discussion. Gordon discussed this at some more length at the “prelim” before the actual meeting set.
- 8. EAST ALACHUA COUNTY NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH GROUP.** Report on progress by Reid Tillery. He talked about the monthly GMRS nets in Melrose on Channel 16. Earl Sloane and he will have a booth at the Island Grove blueberry festival. Working on the repeater in Windsor. Idea is that nets will include at least one ham who can reach out to the EOC and thereby get some crisis cross work from GMRS to amateur comm systems. Gordon commended Reid for his great work in knitting together these efforts on behalf of the east side of the County.
- 9. TRAINING FOR FLORIDA QSO PARTY.** Gordon showed up the signup sheet and was asking for additional volunteers. Eric worked through the logistics of how we’ll operate from one county for awhile, and then the travel, set up, operate, and breakdown. Monday, April the 15th, will be a recon trip to Fanning Springs. Gordon showed a time schedule. Actual QSO Party will be on April 27, 2024.
- 10. ALACHUA COUNTY VHF SIMPLEX NETS.** There will be one, for example, Thursday night, 11 April. Get used to changing your radio’s VFO so you can be agile. Discussion as to how this will work. Eric will be at the EOC. Write down every call sign he can hear. David will go back on the .82 after all is over.
- 11. HAM GROWTH.** KX4Z noted that the group’s composition is fairly static and getting older...which is why reaching out and getting new hams is a challenge. Equipment? Listing our equipment that a younger person may be able to use/acquire (donations?). What is your (our) plan? Facebook? License tests? Showing up at Veteran’s Day? Appearing with a package of gear at booths for outreach? Ask people who obviously have amateur equipment (tower farm, etc.) Approach folks with vanity license plates? Prepare a 30 second canned approach speech?
- 12. HAM RADIO NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH GROWTH: HOW?** Gordon showed a list of some 80 County neighborhoods. What if we tried to get a rep from every neighborhood, whether on GMRS or Ham? Information to be flowed to the EOC. This would take the hams from GARS, the Lofton crew, the University guys, and etc. Volunteers would have to be sought. Earl Sloan talked about how he will be doing this from Island Grove. Gordon asked whether it is worth pursuing this as a group or whether it is too much effort. Manish Sahni mentioned that students in schools need vol hours and a concept such as this would be useful in getting them vol hours. So...the concept is on the table for future development.
- 13. ADJOURNMENT.** At 2039 hours EDT.