

Alachua ARES/NFARC/NF4AC Clubs

MINUTES

June 11, 2025

Attendance: **17**. The meeting was at the Alachua County Emergency Operations Center and via ZOOM. Meeting attendees are not specifically noted as attending live and in person or via ZOOM.

Gordon Gibby
Leland Gallup
Jeff Capehart
Susan Halbert
Dean Covey
Manish Sahni
Earl Sloan
David Huckstep
Earl McDow
Dave Pokorney
Reid Tillery
Charlie Scordo
Hugh Minnich
Karyn Shander
Mike Hasselbeck
Craig White
Brad Swartz

Introductions. From 1830 until 1900 when the meeting commenced.

- 1. MINUTES APPROVED FOR MAY 2025/PREVIOUS MONTH ARES HOURS REPORT/SWAP SHOP.** Total was ARES 91 hours. We did the State Exercise last month, the Shelter Meeting, etc. EC Jeff reminded folks to report their activities (e.g., participate in the Alachua Rural net). Introductions of meeting attendees.
- 2. PROGRAM TOPIC #1.** Mike Hasselbeck presented a brief overview of FT8 operations for Field Day. FT8 is a weak signal mode, 15 second sequences alternating between transmit and receive. Both FT8 and its faster cousin, FT4, permit the operator to switch the TX/RX sequences. FT4 is a contest mode, with 7.5 TX/RX sequences. Operators should emphasize using FT4 during FD. Consider moving to FT8 only when you run out of stations to work on FT4. Mike suggests practicing BEFORE FD. In the absence of hands on, use YouTube for tutorials, with Australian DX having a recommended tutorial. Mike Hasselbeck suggested that during FD FT4 will be cooking, because signals will be strong and a lot of folks are on the band – this means FT4 is your go to. FD is a special operating activity, so go to the advanced tab in WSJT-X for the settings for FD. Suggestion: make sure that two log files be blank or deleted before launching the program at the START of FD. Deleting these logs before FD means that you'll get the proper color coding – this is how you can see stations that have already been worked. Watch the waterfall – don't use a frequency that someone else is using. Position your

TX freq in a place where someone else is NOT operating. Pay attention to moving the red TX position indicator – hold down the shift button and right click to move the cursor to the place you want to operate. Even 15 Hz movement means that you might have an open spot. Check the “hold TX freq” button. Only if people stop answering your CQ should you start answering others. If people are not responding to your CQ’s, then consider changing the TX 1st/2d TX “slots,” you might have more success flushing out contacts after exhausting your original choice for TX “slot.” Dealing with QRM in FT4 -- the computer is looking for RR73 (TX4) – but because of QRM the other guy may not get your RR73, he may send you TX message no 2 again. The contact is not complete – but WSJT-X will assume if you send RR73 then there’s been a successful exchange. But this isn’t always the case – the other station sends TX message 2 if he DIDN’T get your RR73 – hence there hasn’t really been a successful contact, even though FT4 thinks there has been. This is when you have to take over and manually send the RR73 until you get 73 back, and not another TX2 message. This is a factor when operating FT4 with QRM (which you’ll meet on FD). If you see she’s sent TX2 after you sent RR73, you’ll have to make sure you enable TX and manually do TX4 again. You’ll know he didn’t get your RR73 if he keeps sending TX2 over and over again. QRM with FT8? Double click on the TX4 “radio button” and now it will read RRR. It will keep sending RRR until TX5 is received. This is different from FT4 – there is no “RRR” option on the TX4 radio button for FT4 – that’s why the operator needs to pay attention. With FT8, you can relax a bit, because the software will keep doing RRR until TX5 is seen, and you have a real contact exchange.

3. **PROGRAM TOPIC #2. MICROWAVE SPECTRUM BILL IN CONGRESS.** KX4Z discussed a Republican sponsored bill that would sell off spectrum that is currently part of the microwave amateur band segments.
4. **PROGRAM TOPIC #3. LOFTON GOTA DECISIONS.** KX4Z reports that no Lofton students have signed up, and that only one attended the Tech Course – and even that one for only one session. Susan recommended Halbert suggested we not get the trailer if the students are not there to operate. Decision of the meeting attendees: we will not go ahead with the Lofton student initiative, and we will not use the Lofton trailer as our GOTA station during FD.
5. **PROGRAM TOPIC #4. FIELD DAY REHEARSAL TRAINING JUN 21.** Earl Sloan reports that he is unable to act as the IC for FD. He can only do the cooking, and even there he has issues. Earl asks if anyone else is willing to pick up the IC command. No one raised hands, but later on Jeff Capehart succumbed to considerable peer pressure and was voluntold that he would be the IC. Dress rehearsal starts at 0800 on the 21st, at the ACSO campus and the EOC. Start with the MESH network and logging. If folks are going to bring their own computers, they should bring on the 21st, but bringing their own is not recommended. Earl, Mark McDow, and Susan Halbert were at the EOC today, 11 June to test the MESH system “for real.” In other words, they set up the antennas at locations that will be used for FD – inside the EOC and hundreds of feet away on the fenced area at the Hawthorne road entrance to the ACSO campus. Earl says that he has solved a problem that vexed us in the last years --- he found a way to disable the pesky “hibernate” switch. Doing so meant the logging and antennas system would not unaccountably disappear from operation. Instead, it stayed up and running for 30 hours during testing. Earl is convinced that the system will have enough power to operate for the complete FD period. Earl asked Gordon for the password for the GPS server – that will have to be found. Earl described the MESH signal architecture. Earl asked the KX4Z-prepared meeting slide that showed the FD need for 9 computers (!) so that he can assess how these might have to be worked on. Earl will provide the GOTA station computer. All the other computers are

accounted for. Gallup and Sloan will bring their computers on the 21st to see which/whether they can be loaded on the media room's monitor [Sec'y note: if Earl brings the GOTA computer, why is there a need for another machine? In any event, Gallup will bring a machine on the 21st for configuration "just in case." Reid Tillery offered that there will be an "in person" Tech Course on 13 nights in September and October. He'd like to know if the course could be offered at the Alachua EOC for the entire course. Also looking for volunteer instructors. Follow-on: Dave Huckstep said that October and September have been difficult because of hurricanes causing EOC activations. For this reason he offers that we might not get permission from the Director to run the courses – even in the evenings -- because of hurricane season. Dave Huckstep reiterated that the EOC concept is a good one, but there may be a permission issues. This issue is on the table. Manish suggests that libraries may be an alternative site for the courses. Jeff Capehart suggest the Santa Fe Blount institute on 6th street as an option.

6. **PROGRAM TOPIC #5. FIELD DAY ADVANCE SETUPS.** Saving the parking space in advance for the tower trailer (which will be sited on the back side of the EOC). This is so that a space can be secured for FD itself. So he is suggesting the Thursday the 26th as the day for parking the trailer. KX4Z wants to start at 0800. Mike Hasselbeck, Dave Huckstep, Leland Gallup, and Craig White, volunteered to assist with the tower/antenna by appearing at 0800 on the 26th. Gordon will buy the "hitch dolly" that will be used to manhandle the tower/trailer. Building the 3 element beam: when? The volunteers will help assemble the beam along with Gordon after making sure the trailer is in the right place. This, too, will be done on the 26th. A separate issue is when to set up the "Grassy Field" antenna; conclusion is that this will be done on Friday the 27th. Leland Gallup, Dave Huckstep, and Earl McDow will help Gordon put up the Grassy Field antennas, as Friday the 27th will also be the day to put the MESH system together.
7. **PROGRAM TOPIC #6 – BONUS POINTS.** Manish Sahni and Mike Hasselbeck will copy the bulletin on Friday evening the 27th. Time is about 2000. 20m best band for this. PIO media coverage – we have 100 points for an already published article in the Alachua Chronicle. Gordon will send out a blast of media material. At the BOCC meeting on 10 June, Dave Huckstep and Leland Gallup personally invited Commissioners to attend from 1600-1800 at the EOC on 28 June. David Peaton will give a talk to us at 11:30 on the 28th. 11:00am will be Satellite pointing, which Gordon will try to do. We will do Dave Peaton's talk in the main room. For the Public Location, we'll qualify for bonus points by having our usual banners on Gordon's trailer and at the EOC door. Gallup will take care of the Emergency Power solar generation points by charging a drained battery with solar controller and panel. That charged battery will be used for five contacts, which then qualifies us for the bonus. As to Emergency power provided by the EOC generator, we will need to get the log showing that the generator has been tested. Section Manager message points -- worth 200 points. This will be by VARA FM VHF in the evening to W4DFU-12 and cc: KX4Z or print out the SENT box for documentation. Manish Sahni will do the Sec Mgr messages at about 2000 on Saturday 28 June. Station "captains" charged with making sure the stations are prepared for FD. Leland Gallup will make sure Stn 1 (EOC radio room) is ok, to include a logging monitor. Stn 2 and Stn 3 are in Dave Huckstep's charge. Earl has two VGA monitors which he will bring. KX4Z will handle generator trailer delivery and position. Hugh Minnich will handle the diesel generator; he'll pick up Friday evening and transport it Saturday morning the 28th. He and Gordon discussed. Stn 4 is Gordon's station, computer, monitor, Gordon will take care of that.

- 8. PROGRAM TOPIC #7 – FIELD DAY SATURDAY 28 JUNE SETUP.** Satellite station setup – Gordon will try to do this, and showed a slide on where a satellite antenna could be set up. Susan asked about contacting the ISS – KX4Z suggests that this will be too much; this is an APRS digipeater – it is not easy – this was in response to Susan’s question about the protocols for using packet for the ISS. She needs help in trying this out. Media GOTA station – Gallup will do that – use his Yaesu, RG316 coax, his lightweight 40-10m OCF, carbon fiber mast and roll-on mount. He will park his microvan outside the EOC and use it for the antenna, running the RG316 under the door into the GOTA station area. Huckstep will help Gallup. We are scheduling the GOTA station to be ready for operation by at least 1600 on Saturday – how much use it will get is a function of “newbie” operators and others that show up.

- 9. PROGRAM TOPIC #8. OPERATING/LOGGING.** KX4Z showed a slide on how we’ve done better over the years in our FD operation. IC needs to print out copy of operating schedules so that we can see at a glance who should be operating where. New/recent hams can get on GOTA. The GOTA station is not on the logging network, but has its own onboard log that will be separately tallied. This is because the GOTA station is not counted against our station number for classification. Suggestion is that we invite people who have not been operating recently. Need a weather radio and communications gear. Need an IC who is free and can help folks get out of the gate.

- 10. ZOOM LICENSE CLASS UPDATE.** Touched on briefly.

- 11. OTHER TOPICS.** None.

- 12. ADJOURNMENT.** At 2036 hours EDT.