



ISSUE 12 FOR 2020

DECEMBER 2020

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AMATUER RADIO EMERGENCY SERVICE

By Kelley Becker, KD9LQW

If you are a Ham, most likely you have a natural instinct to lend a hand whenever you can. Having that natural tendency as a Ham puts you in a special category that would come in handy to Emergency Officials in certain situations. Most Hams have the know how, the equipment, and a license authority to operate the equipment that Emergency Officials need in a communications crisis. This is why the ARRL sanctioned the Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES).

The Amateur Radio Emergency Service (ARES) and the Radio Amateur Civil Emergency Service (RACES) consists of licensed amateurs who have voluntarily registered their qualifications and equipment for communications duty in the public service when disaster strikes. In Wisconsin, both ARES and RACES work hand in hand but are separate. ARES

is sanctioned by the ARRL and RACES is administered by local, county and state emergency management agencies, and supported by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) of the United States government, is a part of the Amateur Radio Service that provides radio communications for civil-

preparedness purposes *only*, during periods of local, regional or national civil emergencies. These emergencies are not limited to war-related activities, but can include natural disasters such as fires, floods and earthquakes.

Locally, La Crosse and Monroe Counties work with each other with training, sharing resources, and activation duties if the need arises.

La Crosse County ARES/RACES NET: on the RARC VHF repeater every Monday Night at 20:30.

Monroe County ARES/RACES Net: on the 146.805 repeater every Monday night at 20:00.

You do not have to be a member of ARES or RACES to participate in the Nets, every Ham is welcomed!

For more information about getting involved, contact your local Emergency Coordinator (EC) listed on the WI ARES/RACES website <http://wi-aresraces.org/>



See <http://wi-aresraces.org/> for more information

Santa at the North Pole

For the 15th consecutive year, The 3916 Nets will be presenting The Santa Net on 3.916 MHz. Good girls and boys can talk to Santa Claus, via amateur radio, nightly at 7:15 PM (Central) starting Friday, November 27, 2020.

The Santa Net will run nightly at 7:15 PM Central through Christmas Eve, December 24, 2020.



PRESIDENTS COMMENTS

At the November virtual club meeting Shawn gave a presentation on using a Comet CAA-500 antenna analyzer and I demonstrated my NanoVNA-F. Shawn was having problems with his network connection or his computer so he kept freezing up. Fortunately, Shawn had the foresight to send me his PowerPoint file in advance. I was able to show the slides while he just talked. It worked fine this way. These antenna analyzers are getting more and more capable. They sure can be a big help!

Saturday November 28th we will be working in Riverside Park for Rotary Lights. We will meet there at 9:00 am and probably work for an hour or two. They ask that we wear masks and practice social distancing. This is a fund raising event for our club so hopefully we will have a good turnout.

For the December virtual club meeting we will ask for nominations again then close the nominations. The secretary, Rick Kolter will send an email message to all club members with the list of candidates. Club members will then have Wednesday, Thursday and Friday to reply to his email with the list of 7 they choose to be on the board. Rick will keep track to make sure no one votes more than once and only club members vote. Sometime on Saturday December 5 Rick will send out an email listing the board members for 2021. Also at the December meeting David KB9EWG will talk about taking ham exams virtually. I will give a RARC year in review presentation. The Zoom link is: <https://zoom.us/j/4371634806>.

The National Weather Service is holding a virtual Skywarn Appreciation event this year on December 5th. For details see <https://www.weather.gov/crh/skywarnrecognition>. Feel free to contact me with comments and suggestions at AB9TS@yahoo.com.

73 de Dan Abts AB9TS



UPCOMING EVENTS FOR December 2020

RARC Sunday Night 2Meter Net is held on the 146.970 repeater at 8:00 PM. Net control operators for December are:

December 6, 2020	Kevin kc9zgd
December 13, 2020	Shawn kd9kgq
December 20, 2020	Carl kc9hds
December 27, 2020	Mark kb9ofk
January 3, 2021	Rick kd9gvs

- ◆ December 1...Program Night, nominations will be accepted for Trustees for the club for 2021. Also David KB9EWG will talk about taking ham exams virtually. Dan AB9TS, will give a RARC year in review presentation. Zoom link: <https://zoom.us/j/4371634806>
- ◆ December 21...Trustee Meeting held virtually. Contact one of the Trustees for info on joining in.

W9UP's BRIGHT LIGHT'S HELP ROTARY LIGHTS

By Bob Seaquist, W9LSE

Santa, reindeer, s'mores and lights and lights and lights are the treat offered by La Crosse's Rotary Lights during the holiday season. Elephants squirt water, dragons breathe fire, lights twinkle and children say "oooooo." Making that happen requires volunteers, lots of volunteers and that includes members of the Riverland Amateur Radio Club.

Club members have been with Rotary Lights almost since the beginning of the event. Roger Reader, KA9BKK, helped get the club part of the event. "Elmer Grassman was involved and I said we should be there helping," recalls Reader. Grassman was the retired principal of the school where Reader worked and, in his retirement, Grassman became a major participant in Rotary Lights.

Reader guesses the year our club got involved was in the mid-to-late 1990s.

During the early years the gig was for members to show up the Friday after Thanksgiving,

have breakfast together, then head to Riverside Park to finish preparations for the Rotary Lights kick-off that night. In those days incandescent lights were used and if you recall, it took one bulb to make a whole string go black. Club members painfully examined every bulb searching for the bad one. Bare hands in bitter cold! When the display went to LEDs, a much more reliable light, the club was reassigned to Saturday after the start doing clean up and finishing undone projects. The Covid-19 pandemic's bad luck did not curse our workforce. There was some cleaning, emptying of trash bins, hauling dirt and some other odds and ends but no having to check lights.

Volunteering at Rotary Lights for Riverland is a couple hours of cheerful work; it earns our group some money and is Riverland's only fundraiser. On the river side of the park Riverland has a tree with the

club's name prominently displayed which is good public relations. The tree is decorated with lights and ornaments, and importantly a Yagi (by Carl Thurston, KC9HDS) and HTs (by Hicks).

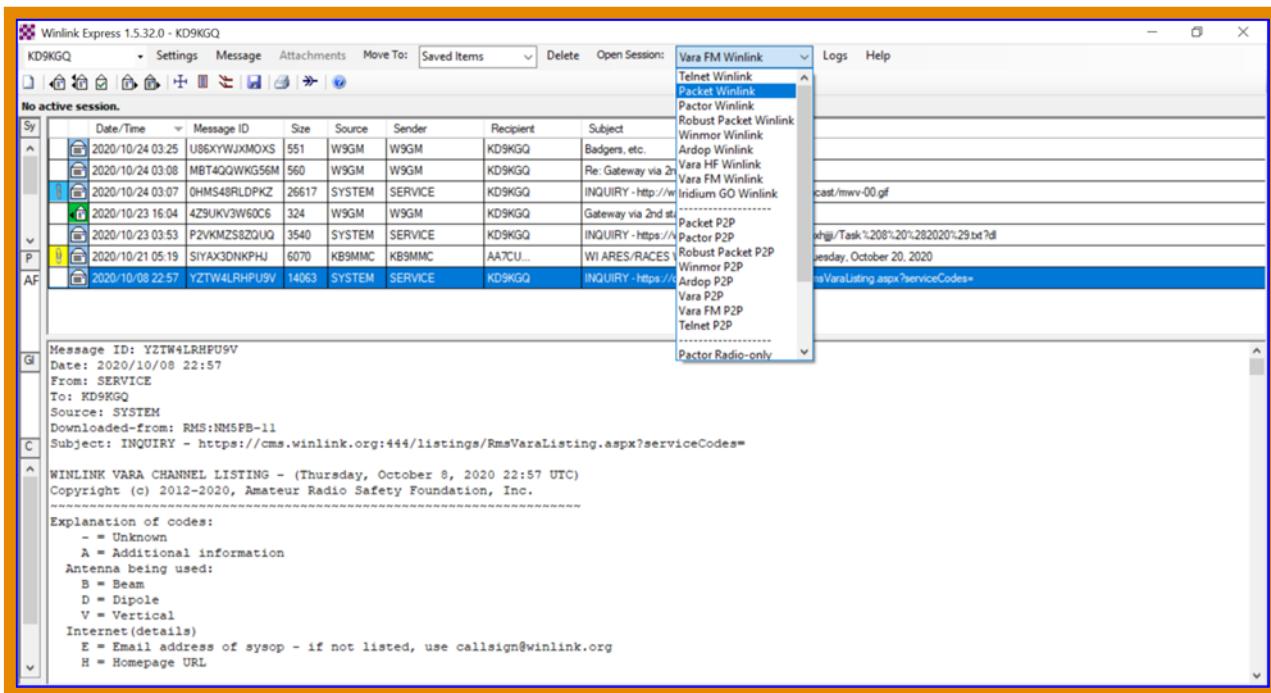
Participants in 2020 Rotary Lights work included, (left row top-to-bottom) Dan Abts, AB9TS; Carl Thurston, KC9HDS; Roger Reader, KA9BKK; Rich Olson, W9TIT. (right row top to bottom) Bill Wood, KE9XQ; Shawn Hicks, KD9KGQ; Drew Neve, AB9NE; Rick Kolter, KD9GVS.



FM Winlink Email

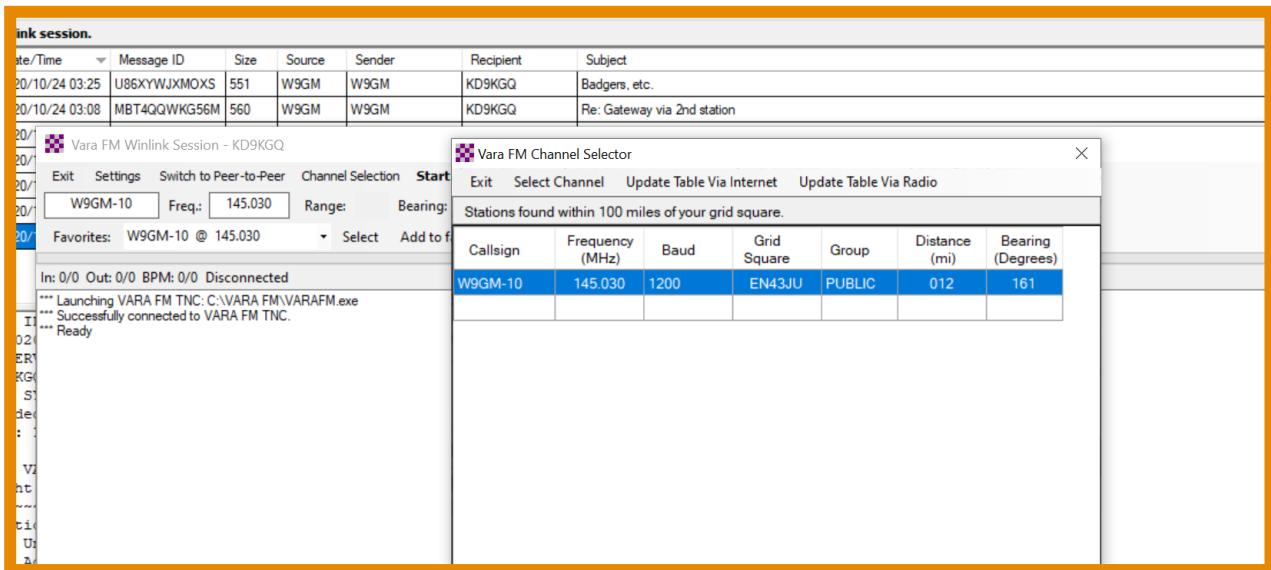
In a previous article I talked a little bit about Winlink and how a Ham could send email messages to distant stations around the country over HF. With a General class license, a minimal additional investment to what you likely already have for equipment, and a little patience and perseverance (better yet a good Elmer); you can send out Winlink email over HF to stations in Arizona, Arkansas, and up into Canada like I have done. These stations, which are connected to the internet, then relay that email to the World Wide Web. It is another tool that I think every Ham should have in their “Communication Tool Box”, especially if they are interested in the EMMCOMM, ARES/RACES aspect of Ham Radio as there may be times when the local internet infrastructure is down.

In addition to the Telnet Winlink (internet based connection), and HF software modes such as Winmor, Ardrop, and Vara HF within Winlink Express; there are FM software modes that can be used to send email over RF as well. What is exciting to me is that it opens this communication tool up to Hams that have Technician class privileges. Plus it does a very good job of handling email communications over shorter distances (such as within the county) as compared to sending them out over HF.



When I first started exploring the Winlink Express software and started researching it online, I became aware of the FM mode options. I had a Technician class license at the time, and it provided promise that I could use this mode to send email. However, I soon discovered there weren't any Gateway stations in our

area that I could realistically reach over 2 meters. I'm happy to announce that has since changed. Our very own RARC member Ken W9GM has created a Gateway at his north side La Crosse QTH that I can reach from my QTH in Holland Township (near Drugan's Supper Club off Hwy 53).



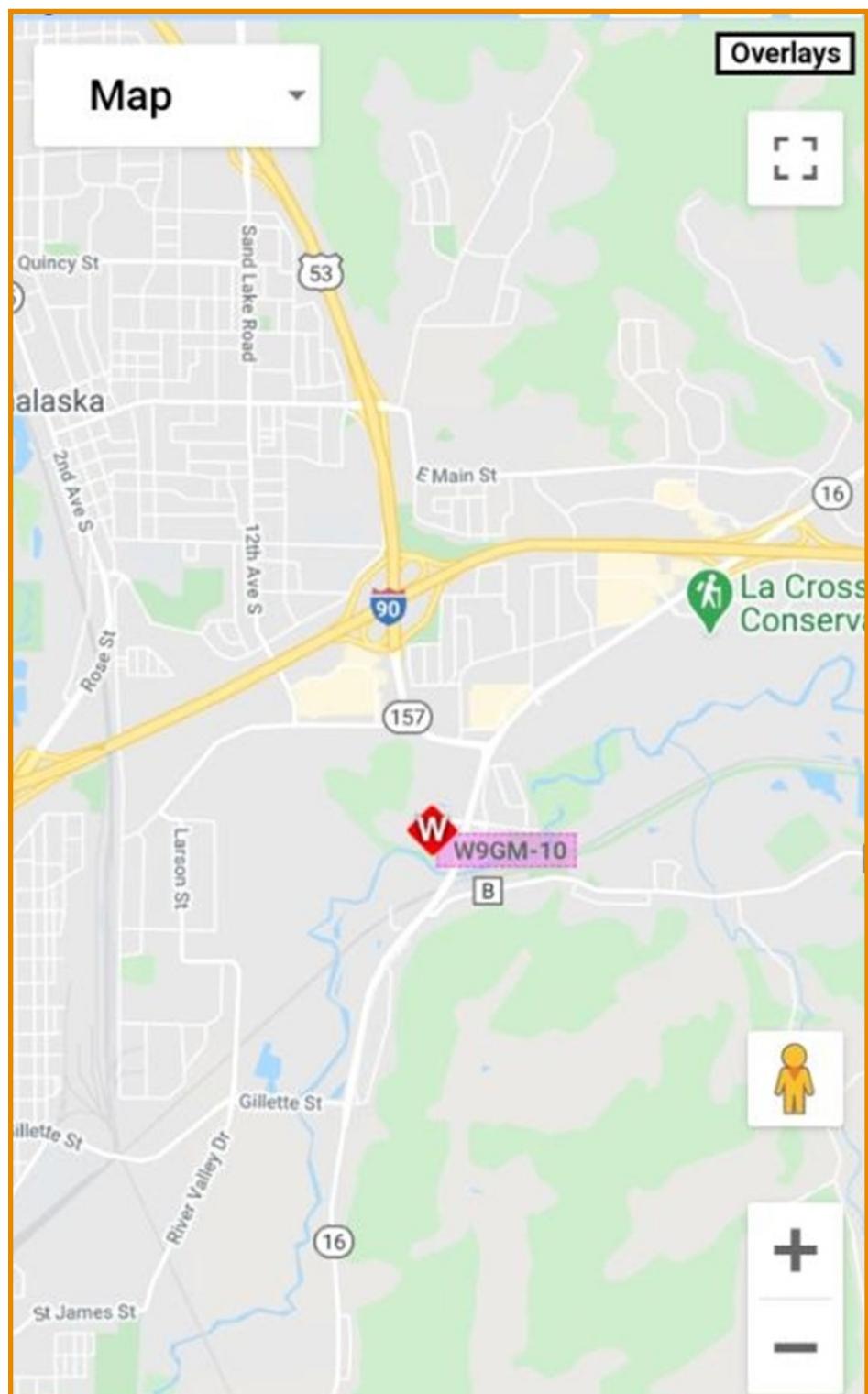
There are two ways to access Winlink through his Gateway station. One as shown in the image above is through Vara FM Winlink. For me this was the most straight forward way to get access. The software is contained within Winlink Express and is “free of charge” to use but it restricts the baud rate on the data being sent out over RF. It will ask if you want to purchase a onetime paid license fee that permits the maximum baud rate that the software, band conditions, and hardware will allow. It will ask you this every time you make a connection. I will be honest and say that can get a little annoying, but I would recommend holding off on paying the license fee until you’re really sure this is the way you want to access his Gateway. If you do decide to get the license (around \$69), it also allows you to use Vara HF Winlink at the unrestricted baud rate as well. I made the personal decision to do so a couple of weeks ago.

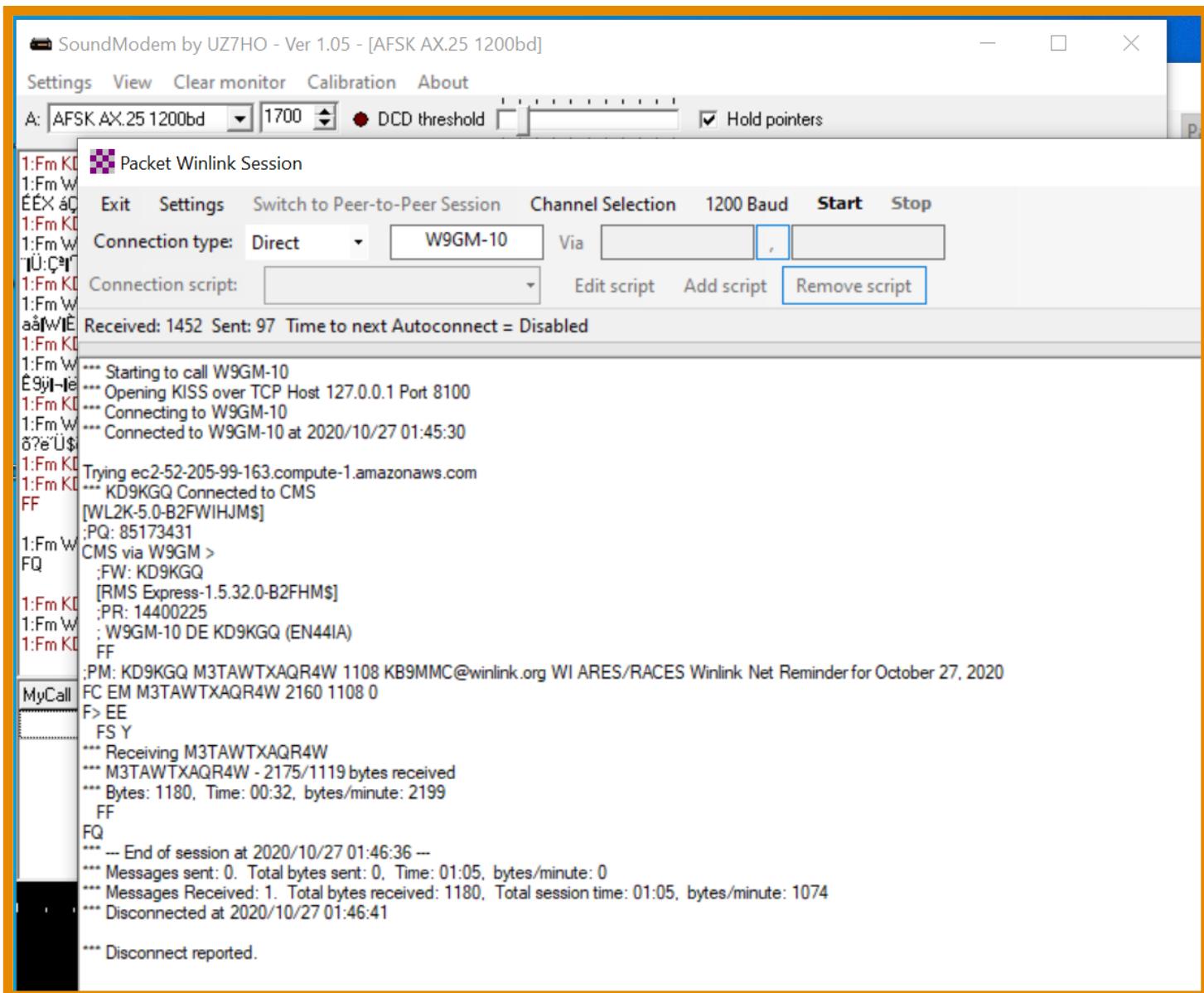
Using my Signalink sound card modem hooked between my Yaesu 857D (set to 145.030 Simplex) and my computer running Vara FM Winlink, I can make quick and easy connections to W9GM’s Gateway. Regardless of whether you have the paid license or not, the speed at which data is sent over FM is going to be faster for the most part than if you send over the HF frequencies. If you are in Simplex range of his QTH, shown in the map image below, you can connect as well.

There are size limitations but it is possible to send attachments such as Excel spreadsheets, PDF’s and JPEG files via Winlink email. In fact being a monthly net control operator for La Crosse County ARES / RACES, I have started to send our Emergency Coordinator an Excel spreadsheet containing that night’s check-in list. Vara FM Winlink is allowing me to send it relatively quickly. Don’t get me wrong, the email isn’t going to be

sent with the lightning speed of a Charter internet connection. However, if you were handling traffic during a natural disaster when direct internet access isn't available in your vicinity; then yes this mode will perform very well.

The other way to access Winlink FM through W9GM's station is via Packet Winlink. While this way is a little more involved in getting set up, it is certainly a viable and robust method. To use this method, I had to download some free ancillary software. In the image below you will see two Windows screens. In the background you have the free "SoundModem by UZ7HO" software that will run behind the scenes when using this method for email. The foreground Window shows the end of the email transmission through W9GM's Gateway. If you look real close about half way down the screen in this Window, you will notice that Winlink is retrieving a WI ARES / RACES Winlink (digital) Net Reminder email from KB9MMC@Winlink.Org. When the complete email transaction has occurred, the bottom of the Window will indicate the number for messages sent and received.





It is difficult to cover all of the nuances of setting up your radio, software, and equipment to run either of these two FM Winlink modes in a short newsletter article. Some radios may not require a Signalink external sound modem. Vara FM Winlink will not require downloading additional software beyond Winlink Express. Each Ham's setup maybe a little different from the one I had to configure to make Winlink work. My intent was to make you aware of the existence of this mode and hopefully generate some interest in using it in the La Crosse area. I have and continue to rely heavily on Ken W9GM's expertise in learning about this aspect of ham radio. He has been very gracious with his time and seems to share my desire to make more use of this mode in our club, ARES / RACES and other community based service events for which we as Hams volunteer. I have a lot more to learn, but I hope you have learned a little from my experiences.

73, Shawn KD9KGQ





RIVERLAND AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

Monday, November 16, 2020 Board Meeting

MINUTES

Call to order: 5:35 PM

Members Present : Dan AB9TS, David KB9EWG, Bill KE9XQ, Shawn KD9KGQ, Drew AB9NE, Carl KC9HDS, Rick KD9GVS

Approval of Minutes: October minutes approved as written.

Treasurer's Report: Available upon request from Drew, AB9NE

Old Business:

Newsletter articles – Carl will be sending one in for December, Kelley KD9LQW, has volunteered to take over the “Key” publication. Shawn sent in an article for last month’s newsletter that did not get published as of yet.

Fox Hunt – postponed to 2021.

Rotary Lights – Shawn is coordinating volunteers, we have as many as 11 possible names. Meeting at 0900 in Riverside Park. Masks will be required of all volunteers.

Oldest repeater, controller, and cavities is now stored at Greg’s, Rick volunteered to research possible value of this equipment. Rick gathered what info he could on this equipment, see his email for details.

Committee Reports:

Repeater committee – Wires-X room 63956 is currently down due to computer issue. Control operators – Shawn was successful from various locations mobile, but not from his home QTH. Rick was not successful from his mobile in the La Crosse area as of yet.

Acentek provided us a no-cost internet connection at WXOW repeater site.

Wires-X node still at AB9TS home QTH using Rick’s FTM-100DR until computer can be remotely controlled.

New Business

Annual Audit of club finances – Drew has the report, Dan and Bill will do the audit.

Membership drive for 2021 to be conducted as in the past by regular mail.

Monthly Program List

December – Final nominations for club board members will be taken, then an email will be sent to the membership for voting. Dan will submit the voting procedure in an article for the Key so the membership is aware. Also Dan will present his “what we accomplished this year” summary.

Dues for 2021 will remain the same at \$20.00 per member.

Motion to Adjourn: 6:30 PM

Coping...By Carl Thurston, KC9HDS

Recently I was Net Control for the RARC Sunday Night Net. It was my turn to do it as I am one of several Hams that take turns to host this weekly event. A task that I have done with some alacrity for several years. I've always felt that I needed to do something to add a bit of zip to my presentation. Some of the younger and more imaginative Hams in the rotation have been much more animated than I at hosting this Net. To tell the truth, I've thought about dropping out of the rotation as I found my performance substandard by comparison. I couldn't do that as it would be failing the others in the rotation and all of those Hams that religiously check into it week after week. It isn't that I don't have the time or the ability to put some spark in my turn as Net Control. After all, I do write articles for "The Key" and have done so for many years. I just needed to come up with something to get the Hams that check in to talk more on the Net.

What to do, what to do? As the time for my opening of the Net drew nearer, I puzzled about how I could get things going in a meaningful way. As I pondered my situation, it dawned on me that that was the answer! After the usual intro I could pose a question as to how everyone was "dealing with the current Situation..." I purposely phrased that challenge in a very broad and vague way to give everyone lots of room for a unique answer to that challenge. You might say that "The Elephant in the room..." was obviously the COVID-19 crisis, but by not mentioning it at the outset, I laid the stage for what ever everyone else felt the most pressing issue of the situation and I wasn't disappointed. As the check ins came rolling in I compiled the list of the check ins and when everyone who wanted to check in, had done so, I went down the list and asked each one the same question about how they were dealing with the Situation. This could have been interpreted in many different ways, but I was fairly certain that they would devote most of their responses to the pandemic either directly or indirectly. All of the answers were more or less centered around concerns about the virus and the positive out comes of so many who were tested for it.

In spite of the fact that nearly everyone included concerns about the resulting stay at home orders and the restricted personal contact with others, there were a number of rather novel approaches to this question: Several expressed the fact that they were forced to work from home. This posed a variety of dilemmas. Most adjusted well to the change of working at home. All seemed to be doing well and one Ham must really like it as he has been able to get in several rounds of golf as a result. Another Ham has been enjoying his staying at home by making wine and brewing beer, which the drinking of which he says helps him cope. Yet another Ham told of his being able to devote more time to his radio as he can now monitor it as he is working, and as a result has made many DX QSOs. This situation has presented challenges for one Ham's church attendance. With the fair weather, his congregation has been able to hold services out in the open air in a park.

I marveled at the ease with which so many Hams were able to adapt to this otherwise rather distressing situation. We can no longer have our normal monthly meetings, opting for Webex or Zoom meetings on line instead, and most of our normal events and get togethers have had to be canceled, but we continue to find new ways to communicate. Some of us are even getting on the radio and meeting with others that way. Imagine that! Hams getting on the radio more, making more QSOs and meeting new friends. Things may be more restrictive than many of us would like but somehow we will get through this. After all we don't really have much of a choice. Remember, we are all in this together, even if we can't actually get together, we can still make contacts via the air waves. COVID-19 can't get you there. Keep transmitting, be well, stay safe. This too will pass. Nuf said. 73



CLUB INFORMATION

Riverland Amateur Radio Club
PO Box 621
Onalaska, WI 54650



The Key is published monthly and e-mailed to members and friends of the Riverland Amateur Radio Club by the 28th of each month.

The newsletter focuses on news, announcements and activities of the Riverland Amateur Radio Club. It may also consist of news and information of interest to the Amateur Radio community as a whole. Guest editorials and articles related to Amateur Radio are welcome. Contribution articles should be submitted NLT the 26th of the month.

Address any correspondence or anything that should be included in the newsletter to: Kelley Becker at KelleyLL23@hotmail.com.

The Riverland Amateur Radio Club maintains a website at rarc.qth.com. More information about the club can be found there as well as past copies of The Key.

RARC also maintains a Facebook page where members add information and share their Amateur Radio adventures. Please friend us at Riverland Amateur Radio Club—RARC.

RARC maintains a repeater that is located on the WXOW television tower above La Cresent, MN. 146.970 pl 131.8.

RARC holds a weekly 2meter net on Sundays at 8:00 PM on the 146.970 repeater.

Trustee Meeting is held the 3rd Monday of the month at Perkins Restaurant, 9428 State Road 16, Onalaska, WI 54650 at 5:30 PM, all club members are welcome.

Program evening is held the 1st Tuesday of the month at 7:00 PM, elmer session at 6:30 PM at 401 West Avenue in LaCrosse.

Below are listed your RARC 2020 Board of Trustees and contact information.

- President.....Dan Abts, AB9TS Email...ab9ts@yahoo.com
- Vice-President.....David Peters, KB9EWG Email...kb9ewg@gmail.com
- Secretary.....Rick Kolter, KD9GVS Email...rckolter@gmail.com
- TreasurerDrew Neve, AB9NE Email...ab9ne@yahoo.com
- Trustee.....Carl Thurston, KC9HDS Email...kc9hds@gmail.com
- Trustee.....Bill Wood, KE9XQ Email...ke9xq@charter.net
- Repeater Trustee...Shawn Hicks, KD9KGQ Email...eistim68@gmail.com
- Newsletter EditorKelley Becker, KD9LQW Email...kelleyLL23@hotmail.com