

Champlain Regional Repeater Association
Meeting of the Executive

July 21, 2020

7 p.m. via Zoom (to accommodate the COVID-19 pandemic)

Present: Greg VE3ECI (Chair), Tim VA3PYC (Zoom host & note taker), James VE3KAW, Jim VA3GMZ, Robert VA3AGN, Graham VE3AMN, Allen VE3JGU

Regrets: Randy VA3RKS

Absent: None

The agenda for the meeting was circulated via email.

- Project updates:
 - STP VHF repeater FM QRM - Graham
 - STP VHF repeater DMR status - Graham
 - STP VHF repeater New Controller - Graham
 - STP site 1/2 internet radio link - Randy
 - STP-10 APRS iGate/d]Digi - Allen/Greg
 - YYX repeater plan (recruit VE3JKV) - Graham
 - New project proposals (EchoLink Pi, DMR internet linking, STP/YYX radio linking...)

- Special initiatives update:
 1. Membership status - James
 2. CRRA Website utilization & direction - Jim
 3. CRRA/STP history curation - Tim
 4. STP site 1 lease situation and future plan - Graham
 5. Technical Director transition - Graham
 6. ARES prime transition - TBD
 7. Social events - TBD
 8. AGM planning - TBD

- New business:

The meeting began at 7:05 p.m.

A motion to accept the meeting agenda as presented (moved by Tim, seconded by Jim), passed unanimously.

A motion to accept the minutes of the previous meeting (moved by Tim, seconded by Robert) passed unanimously.

Business arising from the minutes: It was noted that James VE3KAW and Randy VA3RKS now have signing authority at the bank for their respective roles as treasurer and Vice President. James is now primed to take over the CRRA account.

Graham VE3AMN reported on the build of the new repeater displaying the new radios (see attached). He then began explaining our QRM problem requesting that more members monitor the SDR at the repeater site. We just need to download an app on our computer to do this.

There was some discussion about why we're not hearing as much interference (e.g., VE3KAW suggested that with COVID there may be fewer sources of interference on the air with the economic downturn).

Graham then provided an update on the DMR project. At this point he's ready to install the Motorola repeater, and he'll be doing this soon. Members have been cautioned to activate the 114.8 CTCSS tone on the receive as well as the transmit now. Graham summed it up by "we're ready to go!"

Graham explained that the XPR8300 with DMM doesn't "play nice" with analogue networked repeaters & add-ons such as EchoLink. Together, the XPR8300 & DMM don't even "like" external repeater controllers - not even simple ones. However, we will cut over to DMM with the "Plain Jane" Moto recommendations and the built-in Moto controller. No fancy stuff, no courtesy beeps, no external controller. I/D will be as proscribed by the FCC, and adopted by Industry Canada. "Silent" MCW. He recommends - and with our support will proceed - to integrate the new RC210 repeater controller AFTER cutover

Graham has been testing the RC210 at his QTH. It is remotely (over the Internet) configurable/controllable in addition to being controllable over the air by DTMF

The new EchoLink terminal will have to wait for the new controller to be tested & installed

In terms of Project 3, Graham noted that the Dynamic Mixed Mode (DMM), while it "gets us started" in the world of VHF DMR, won't allow our repeater to be connected to the Internet. DMR without networking might be called "lonely." We need another VHF pair of repeater frequencies, and we need to build another VHF repeater system to replace the present Moto for VE3STP VHF FM.

To this end, Graham has built a VHF FM repeater panel based on reliable Motorola rigs. (Note that the XPR8300 itself is comprised of two mobiles). Pictures of the new panel are attached. Graham is awaiting Motorola connectors to complete the cables that run between the rigs and the Arcom 210. He has requested a 15 kHz narrow band repeater pair. (46/06 is a 30 kHz wide-band pair), from the St. Lawrence Valley Repeater Council.

We already own a second Sinclair duplexer, and Graham is collecting the paraphernalia needed to “bring it down” to 2 Metres. Some mathematics and assembly required! The DMR repeater will start barefoot. No PA yet.

Ultimately, the DMR repeater will be multi-coupled to the “Main Array” but some more mathematics and experimentation awaits us. We will start with the 4 element “Packet Antenna” located half-way up the tower

Greg VE3ECI asked if the eventual dedicated DMR repeater will share the upper Sinclair array with the FM repeater. Graham confirmed that we will start off with using the Packet antenna and then move to the upper array.

James VE3KAW asked if the DMR will be on the same frequency as STP? Graham said that yes, it will be. James asked what happens when both modes are operated at once? Graham explained that all modern radios have an option to choose an option of what to do on a PPT. Typically a CTCSS tone might be all that separate the various users. By practice, we are supposed to listen first. Now, Motorola has a block such that if someone is on the channel you simply can't PPT. We want everyone who activate their code plugs to activate this feature. James KAW strongly recommends that we work together to test it once installed to ensure this compatibility. Graham said when we get a second pair of frequencies these will be separated, but we will still want to consider how we can associate them as we might want.

Finally, in terms of the Arnprior fire station, Graham reported that it and/or its antenna are defective and the system is not available for use. It is possible - but we cannot know without a site visit and some testing – that the transmitter has failed again. It has failed before, and Sandy VE3AAC and Graham purchased a replacement rig, and AAC and Allen VE3JGU re-installed it.

From time-to-time, the firemen turn off the AC power and forget to turn it back on. The site needs “a champion”, and one of these days it will probably need a new antenna (we have a Sinclair 310-C4), and if the repeater is to stay at its present location it will need a whole new attitude on the part of its hosts and a strong relationship with amateur radio operators.

Graham's recommendation is for the president, Greg VE3ECI, and vice-president Randy VA3RKS to visit the site, meet with the hosts to ascertain the future direction. If the hardware has failed again, a “new” Motorola panel such as the one shown in the attached pictures should be built. Graham will provide guidance if any is wanted/needed

Graham reported having no further interest in the Arnprior project, and he prefers to leave it to others to complete. Certainly even if the radio has not failed, a new antenna should be installed. Roland (not an amateur, friend of Graham) gave us the antenna, and they are at VE3AAC's QTH. Graham noted that whomever gets involved in this must be able to work well with the fire department. He suggested we might consider another site nearby such as the site that GoZoom is located, because it's a better tower location overall.

With respect to STP site 1/2 internet radio link, Greg reported that we need some height on site 1. He asked James if he might get Phil VE3HOA if he would climb tower 1. If he agrees, Greg will get Randy VA3RKS and the whole group could make the trip.

Allen VE3JGU reported on the STP-10 APRS iGate/Digi project. Greg asked Graham about the antennas at the STP site in relation to this project. The packet antenna could be used, as Graham would take a different dipole for SDR monitoring. Allen noted that the packet antenna is not used very much by club members, but it is by a few people in northern New York as well as VE3YX. Allen asked if we'll have to move this packet antenna next year. This discussion was deferred. In the meantime, the packet antenna is available for this project.

Under new project proposals, Greg noted that our Echolink is not very reliable. **Greg noted that we want to move to a dedicated Pi controller.** Steve VE3KEG and Randy VA3RKS have expressed an interest in taking this project on, but we need to check in with them on time and resources. Graham has delivered a Pi and other materials to Steve. Greg noted that it would be nice to get this project complete before the winter snow arrives.

For the second part of the agenda on special projects:

1. Financial Report and Membership status – James VE3KAW reported that the account balance is \$2220.14. As far as membership is concerned, there are 21 paid-up members. There are other members on the list, but dues are outstanding. James was not familiar with everyone on this list and asked to consult with Greg to learn more about the membership.

2. CRRA Website utilization & direction – Jim VA3GMZ reported that he recently updated the menu, added more pictures, edited some pages, reorganized the history and tech, making things more logical to view. One of the outstanding issues is about removing the forum. No one uses it, there is no content and the structure isn't clear. Jim asked the executive to make a decision on removing it. In the future, Jim would like to consider editing the look and feel by changing the theme in WordPress. He would also like to add a picture gallery to avoid a long scroll of images.

MOTION: Jim moved (seconded by Robert VA3AGN) that we remove the forum. Passed unanimously.

Robert VA3AGN asked if there is content on the old website that could be moved to the new website? James VE3KEG recommended that we move everything over even if we keep it hidden just so we don't lose this content.

ACTION: Jim will get the URL from Steve VE3KEG so that he can access that content.

3. CRRA/STP history curation – Tim VA3PYC expressed surprise that he is the lead on this special project. Although he is interested, he does not expect to have time to consider this until the spring of 2021. He will consult with Jim VA3GMZ about this project in relation to the

website content, and he will contact Steve VE3KEG to see if he will participate. Interviews would be of interest, and this may be possible sooner than next spring. James VE3KAW noted that there are a number of boxes of materials available, and we should scan these materials when possible. James will donate a scanner to the club, and Tim will plan a “scanning party” to archive these materials.

ACTION: Tim will email Wayne VE3JSQ about the box of CRRA materials that he has and arrange to get it.

4. STP site 1 lease situation and future plan – Graham VE3AMN suggested we table this for another meeting. He has the lease, and there is potential for losing our site by next spring, but this discussion will be taken up at our next meeting.

5. Technical Director transition – Graham VE3AMN is working towards this transition, and he is not taking on “new” projects (apart from the many discussed tonight, that is!). He urged the executive to identify a replacement.

6. ARES prime transition – Greg reported that Steve VE3FTS has announced that he would like to relinquish this role by October 1, 2020. This will leave both CRRA and Almonte without an ARES prime. Robert VA3AGN discussed the ARES prime for Renfrew, and Greg asked if he would be willing to speak with them (e.g., George Dion) about filling this gap in the short term.

7. Social events – TBD Nothing to update.

8. AGM planning – TBD

9. New business

- James VE3KAW suggested we might use the 5 net controllers we have for the weekdays and leave the weekend open unless someone volunteers on any particular evening. Robert VA3AGN responded that we need to ask further before we make this change.

MOTION: Greg moved that we move to a weekday net only, moving Tim from Sunday to Tuesday night, and then Saturday and Sunday would be open for volunteer net controllers only. Seconded by Robert VA3AGN. Carried unanimously.

- Tim VA3PYC suggested that we host a Zoom DMR session.
ACTION: James will ask Phil VE3HOA if he would be willing to lead this.

The next meeting will be scheduled for September 15, 2020, at 7 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 p.m.