

The Framingham Circuit

Newsletter of the Framingham Amateur Radio Association

Summer, Vol. 83, No. 6

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By Rick Zach, K1RJZ

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June 2

Tom Walsh, K1TW, ARRL Section Manager will be visiting FARA.

President's Message

Hi,

On 2 June we will be holding the last regular meeting of FARA for the 2015-2016 season. This month's speaker is Tom Walsh, K1TW, our relatively new ARRL Section Manager, whose topic is "What's New in the Section?"; he'll probably also have some insights to share on Field Day and other League activities.

In addition, we will be presenting the Bev Lees Memorial Scholarships; this year we have three recipients: Gail Bello, Linda Bursch and Timothy Weisman. On behalf of the club, I'd like to extend my best wishes for their continued academic success.

We will also be electing our officers for the 2016-2017 season.

As usual, the meeting will be held in the Framingham Police Department Training Room.

Early in May, we participated in the New England QSO Party, from our Shack. The band conditions were poor, but we still managed to make some contacts.

This brings me to another issue, the future of W1FY ... We have been extremely fortunate to have had a home for our club station, provided by the Town of Framingham, for nearly 40 years. As we have been suspecting for some time now, this arrangement is coming to an end. The town was notified that the state will not renew the Danforth Building's boiler certificate without considerable work being done, which it will not be - the cost is too high. Consequently, we have been notified that we must vacate our spaces by September. More from Summer on this on the next page.

Field Day is next on the docket - 25 June - once again we'll be having a picnic with radios. We will be setting up, as in the case of the last few years, at the Upton State Forest. Weather permitting, we'll be operating from 11 AM to 6 PM. Plan on stopping by.

Since this is the final newsletter for this season, I want to thank all of those whose contributions have made the club function:

Continued on next page...

FARA Horizons

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|------------|--|
| Jun 2: | Monthly Meeting- Tom Walsh, K1TW |
| Jun 25-26: | ARRL Field Day |
| July 13: | VE Session, FARA Shack |
| Sept 1: | Welcome Back! FARA Meeting ... |
| Sept 11: | ARRL New England Division Convention, Boxborough |
| Sept 14: | VE Session, location to be determined |
| Oct 6: | FARA Meeting ... |
| Nov 3: | FARA Meeting ... |
| Nov 9: | VE Session, location to be determined |
| Nov 19-21: | ARRL Sweepstakes (Phone) |
| Dec 10-11: | ARRL 10 Meter Contest |
| Dec TBD: | No meeting, Holiday gathering instead |

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- the Officers and Board of Directors,
- Jim, W1EQW, for coordinating our test sessions,
- Robert, N1UVA, for keeping the Circuit on the air,
- Eric, KB1PJN, for his work on our web-site and the repeater,
- the Saturday shack operators (we are, after all, a radio club),
- Sumner, W1VIV, for handling the club table at the Flea Market, among his many other activities,
- Steve, KB1NIV, who (once again) took over running the Flea Market,
- The many volunteers who helped make the Flea Market go as smoothly as it did.

The club functions due to the involvement of these volunteers, so my thanks go out to them.

I should also say "thanks" to those who participate in our activities - monthly meetings, contests or other events; it's your participation that encourages us to coordinate these.

I hope you all have a nice summer; I look forward to seeing you in the fall.

Framingham Radio Club – The Lack of a Shack

By Sumner, W1VIV, FARA Director

FARA has been told by the Town of Framingham that we are going to lose our comfortable old shack after all these years, and that we must be out by September. They are closing down the Danforth Building, because they can no longer maintain the ancient boiler. Whether we find a new location or not, let's face facts. We have entirely too much "stuff" and should have gotten rid of a lot of it years ago. Now, we have only a few months to do so. Let's assume the worst case, which is not having a place for our "stuff" at all in the future. This is very likely, and will put us in the same category as the great majority of radio clubs. We just do not appreciate how fortunate we have been all these years to have a heated, free location, with a roof for antennas and a room for our radios.

What will life be like for FARA after the Danforth Building?

Life goes on.

We will still have Field Day. Like most other groups, we will bring our personal radios, antennas, and batteries. It will be just as much fun as in the past.

We will still have monthly meetings at the Framingham Police Station Training Room.

We will still have the FARA Flea, but without the Club Table. However, we will have our last club table for the Flea scheduled for next April, and some of the equipment being sold will be former FARA Shack equipment.

We will still have VE sessions. We'll have to decide if we will only have them at the annual FARA Flea, or whether we will invite participants to come to the Framingham Police Station every other month for tests.

On the positive side, there is actually a saving from not having a club shack. What does the Verizon bill cost per year? This saving is about equal to the loss of income from the Club Table, thereby canceling the loss.

We are making every effort to find a new home for FARA at another town facility in Framingham. But if we can't, we will still be active and energetic in the future. FARA is still a great club!

Club Information 2016

President	Paul King	N1VAM		president@fara.org
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Emergency Coordinator				
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Newsletter Editor	Robert Hess	N1UVA	860-227-9188	circuit@fara.org
Webmaster	Eric Taylor	KB1PJN	508-653-7778	webmaster@fara.org

Meeting: Club meetings are normally held on the 1st Thursday of each month at 7:30PM in the Framingham Police Station

Club Nets: FARA Net: Sunday, 7:30PM, 147.75/147.15 - social/chat, ARES preparedness

Club Station: W1FY, the club station and shack, is open Saturday mornings from 9:00-12:00. Call the club number, 508-879-8097 to confirm.

Club Web Site: <http://www.fara.org>

Mail Address: PO Box 3005
Framingham, MA 01705

Dayton Hamvention 2016 report

By Rick Zach, K1RJZ

I have not attended the Dayton Hamvention in 8-years. This visit was fully pre-paid many months earlier so no matter what, this year was a definite “go”. Some things have changed and others have not.

The HARA Arena inside was and is filthy and still smells musty and moldy. The situation is much worse than it was eight years ago and is to the point of being unhealthy. Many floor tiles and wall tiles are simply missing. No ceiling tiles fell down so far. But unlike other years, the raw sewerage pipe did not overflow like it did five years ago so that is a positive. It rained overnight Friday but cleared for the Saturday flea. Warm jackets were required.

In spite of the economic challenges of the HARA Arena, the Dayton Hamvention is still worth every effort to attend.

All of the major players are exhibiting (Kenwood, ROHN, ICOM, Yaesu, ARRL, etc) but they attend because they need to. Many international exhibitors also had booths. But some items are breakouts in terms of new major attention-getters.

To no surprise, digital technologies are garnering the vast majority of the attention at Dayton. Whether it is HF SDR radios (Software Defined Radios) or VHF/UHF digital voice, those areas are getting most of the excitement and attention because they are new areas for hams to explore. The fact that they use some sort of digital modulation is irrelevant but what they bring to the table is significant. The excitement is because they are software-based and unlike hardware radios, SDR's are easily upgraded for compelling new features as technology changes. That means that you get a new radio every year without needing XYL approvals!

I attended the FlexRadio SDR customer dinner and it was a for-fee love-fest with about 225 attendees. Invitation only, \$40 for the buffet event but worth it for the insider info, sharing knowledge, contacts, etc. If you are a FlexRadio customer, you will receive an invitation for 2017. Like last year, the hotel buffet again RAN OUT OF FOOD because the ham demographic eats far more food than the statistical norm for regular human beings.

The customer growth at Flex is shooting up especially among contesters and now DXpeditions. New product sales have exceeded manufacturing projections by a factor of five. That is good for adoption

and bad in terms of deliveries. Their hot item is the Maestro which is an Ethernet-based front control panel WITH KNOBS and a Panadapter to control your HF FlexRadio from your living room or from the opposite coast. The ARRL booth had a Maestro controlling the K9CT HF super-station in Trivoli, IL. Your SDR radio box is really an HF ham radio SERVER with no knobs but buttons and knobs are available in many different forms. I am a casual, light-duty HF user and I really enjoy the new features that an SDR radio provides.

FlexRadio has an interesting offer from it's President. If you to purchase both the ICOM IC-7300 SDR radio and the Flex-6300, you can pick whichever radio you prefer to keep and FlexRadio will buy back the other one from you. That's gutsy.

WHAT'S'S HOT

If you follow the technology adoption curve (smartphones, laptops, the internet, whatever), there are certain common evolutionary phases that all must pass through. These are called the pioneer stage, the early adopter stage and then “the chasm”. If the technology evolution has survived the three previous stages, the technology then enters the mass adoption phase and then the lower-cost hockey-stick growth happens. Other competing technologies will need to change, adopt, or stay where they are and eventually fall by the wayside.

There is no question that the ham DMR technology (Digital Mobile Radio, a worldwide open standard with at least twelve manufacturers) has jumped the chasm and is now into the mass adoption phase to be followed by the low-priced commoditization phase. Commodity Chinese DMR digital voice + FM portable radios were being sold inside the Hara Arena for as low as \$109 with a color display and free programming software. None are Baofeng-class low-end



radios, the quality is actually quite good. Many first generation, used Motorola DMR radios (just less memory, same performance) were very common in the flea-market area. This by no means is to disrespect the competitive D-Star or Fusion or NXDN products, but in terms of the technology adoption curve, there is now no doubt whatsoever, at least at Dayton, that DMR is on a run and is now well into the low-priced mass adoption phase.

New items of mass interest:



There is a new USB dongle out called the DV4Mini that connects your laptop and portable radio combo to internet-connected systems using FM, P25, D-Star, Fusion, DMR, etc. Way cool at \$129. This uses the internet to connect to existing repeater networks. The DV4Mini is a tiny short-range, in-car or in-house repeater that talks to your existing ham portable. The VHF version sold out early on Friday.

The same Austrian company that makes the DV4Mini is now coming out with the DV4Home as a fixed station interface as well as the DV4mobile tri-band mobile on 2+220+440 that also does FM, P25, D-Star, Fusion, DMR, etc. in one box. That will be out in Q4. Price tba.

At a time when traditional FM repeaters are largely inactive except for nets and some special events, the sponsoring clubs have had a difficult time in keeping their momentum. D-Star is established and is not going away but it is also not experiencing any meaningful growth. In-fact, quite the opposite as many D-Star repeaters in New England have been converting to DMR due to far cheaper radios, better performance, more features and far superior networking. The native ICOM D-Star repeaters have not been highly successful in the high-RF environments that are typically found in skyscrapers and highly desirable mountaintop sites. At clubs like CNHARC and MMRA, clever hams have designed workaround methods to use non-ICOM RF guts for their repeaters and those has been successful. But it also takes some smart techie-hams to pull that off. A tip of the hat to them!

Many clubs are wisely taking advantage of

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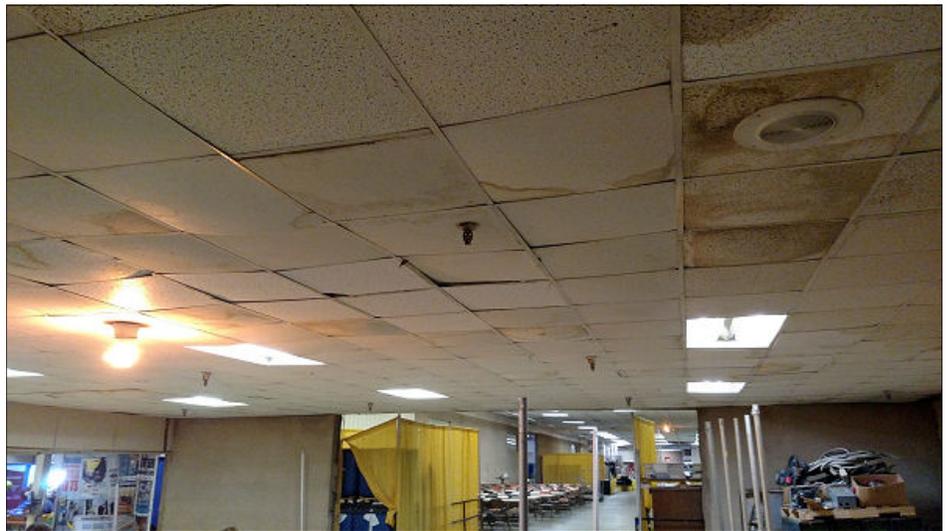
the subsidized Yaesu Fusion repeater offers but most are using them in either dual mode FM+Digital or FM-only Modes. Fusion in true-digital mode has been slow to get traction in many areas. It is not a bad format but they came to the game very late and has far fewer working features than other technologies. NXDN, another commercial digital voice format, has some pockets of activity such as in southeastern Massachusetts but nationwide adoption is very slow. I don't want to sound biased, I'm just reporting what I am hearing from multiple face-face sources and Dayton presentations.

Personal opinion:

None of these digital voice technologies or FM will go away and all of the digital voice modes are generating a much-needed boost of interest in the hobby. This is an exciting time! They are all fun and if you are a ham, you will have a ball trying them out. I have used D-Star for years and have yet to try Yaesu Fusion but I am very much looking forward to it. But from what was seen in Dayton and from the introduction of low-priced commodity radios for \$109, DMR is the hands-down clear winner of the digital voice technology in the mass-adoption phase.



Standing room only at the Dayton DMR Forum



Conditions inside HARA Arena



Great Britain



Germany



Qatar